

# health club management

MAY 2015

No 224

## THE STRAVA COMMUNITY

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consumer engagement



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ON THE COVER

## TANNI GREY-THOMPSON

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## ***DIGITAL FITNESS HAS ARRIVED.***

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# Use research to inspire

The world of scientific research can seem impenetrable at times – lengthy papers full of Greek letters and shorthand – but it's a world we should get to grips with, because it offers new avenues to explore as we develop concepts, services and messaging to engage both members and prospects.

How about, for example, appealing to men by telling them two hours of front crawl each week will give them a better sex life, or offering women a similar payoff if they use pilates to strengthen their pelvic floor muscles? What about promoting yoga not as a way to boost flexibility or even sports performance, but as a proven method of relieving stress and high blood pressure for city execs? Meanwhile HIIT sessions could be marketed as the perfect way to pre-empt an indulgent meal; we have to accept that many people view going to the gym as a way to balance out the excesses elsewhere in their lives, and we either fight that, or we accept it and give ourselves a role to play.

But can we really make these claims? Yes, we can. On page 18–19, we highlight some of the latest research in the field of health, fitness and wellness. Did you know that exercise can not only help prevent breast cancer, but actually assist in its treatment? That high-intensity interval training can prepare adolescents' bodies for a high-fat meal, lessening the negative impact of that meal? Or that just two hours of strenuous exercise improves men's sexual function? I can't imagine there are many men who wouldn't have their interest piqued by that message.

And that's just a small snapshot of the research published over the space of just a couple of weeks; exciting new findings are unveiled on a daily basis.

I've previously used this letter to call on the industry to broaden its messaging to encompass mental health – something very few operators are doing even now – but actually it shouldn't stop there. If we want to engage

new segments of the population, we need to find different selling points – as yet untapped benefits of physical activity – that resonate with them. That means exploring the steady flow of emerging research and pulling out exciting new messages with which to tempt the 87 per cent of non gym-goers.

Because one size does not fit all when it comes to selling our services: we need different messages to inspire and motivate different people. The more diverse the benefits we highlight, the wider the range of people we're likely to at least get to listen to what we have to say.



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One size does not fit all when it comes to selling our services: we need different messages to inspire and motivate different people

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All of this doesn't undermine the need to prove the effectiveness of interventions taking place specifically within the gym – an initiative being spearheaded by the ukactive Research Institute. But although that evidence is vital if we're to prove our worth to health commissioners, the public at large is more likely to be inspired by eye-catching headlines that have an immediate relevance to their lives.

So let's keep an eye on the research coming through and get creative with our messaging. We need to be brave and try new things out, experimenting and learning as we go, if we're going to bring new people through our doors.

**Kate Cracknell, editor**

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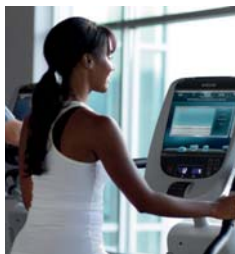
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## Reader services

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### Buyers' guide

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to **p85**



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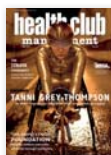
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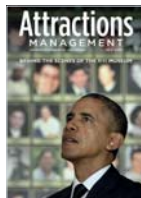
## SPORTS MANAGEMENT

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## SPA BUSINESS

- \* Donna Karan's Urban Zen Foundation – merging medical and complementary therapies
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- \* Ceramic artist Paul Cummins on his Tower of London poppy installation
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## LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

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- \* Trump's Aberdeen golf development
- \* Alton Towers aiming for short break crown



## SPA OPPORTUNITIES

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- \* Mandarin Oriental: meditative garden spa
- \* July launch for Beirut beach spa by Resense



## AM2

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- \* Hamleys debuts theme park concept in Moscow

# Write to reply

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



The Active Movement programme aims to get people out of their seats at work

## Workplace activity starts with just standing up more often

I was interested to read your recent news story about the 'On Your Feet Britain' campaign, which aims to get sedentary office workers up from their desks. We recognise that, while only about 13 per cent of the population are members of gyms, almost everyone can benefit from being more active.

Working in partnership with Dr Mike Loosemore, head of sport and exercise medicine at University College Hospital, we're offering local companies a programme to encourage low-level day-to-day activity. As Dr Loosemore says, it's about changing the culture of the workplace so people move around just that little bit more. Even just standing up can make a big difference to calories burned and how alert, creative and productive you are.

The Active Movement programme is a behaviour change concept that encourages individuals, departments or companies to enjoy the programme collectively. We contact all participants every week, as well as offering face-to-face clinics with Dr Loosemore, plus newsletters, articles and videos. Every business is different, so each programme is bespoke to the organisation, and we work alongside HR departments to set tailored criteria for reviewing the programme.

If some participants want to go further and join a gym, we've created an Active Movement membership with low intensity introductory programming, and free follow-up sessions and support.

**Phil Rumbelow**  
CEO, Jubilee Hall Trust

### We need to offer a holistic approach to wellbeing

Kate Cracknell raised some very valid points in her 'Food for thought' editor's letter in the February issue of HCM. Historically the fitness sector has not done enough to support customers in making educated lifestyle choices – we've viewed our remit as catering for the exercise environment only. There's a great opportunity to provide a more holistic approach, educating customers in lifestyle choices including physical activity, nutrition and reduced sedentary time.

At Everyone Active, we recognise the opportunity lies in creating a health hub within our facilities and through digital interactions. Our online offering encourages users to make healthier choices by logging activity, monitoring progress and getting rewards for making positive choices. Meanwhile our Everyone Health arm sets out to create a sustained, positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local communities: treating and managing health conditions and applying preventive strategies through education and community champions.

Partnerships are key, so we've teamed up with an online prescribed meal plan provider to make it easier and more affordable for customers to make healthier choices. Our owner, Castle View, has also acquired wellness intervention provider Weight Management Centre. We're looking forward to exploring opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of the communities we operate in.

This is more than a commercial opportunity. It's our responsibility to acknowledge our role in combating health epidemics and enabling individuals to lead a better quality of life across their lifetime.

**Tiffany Gould**  
Digital fitness development/national exercise referral, Everyone Active



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# UK news update

## Health club sector M&A activity on the rise: report

The health club sector is becoming an increasingly attractive prospect for investors, as evidenced by a significant jump in the number of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) seen over the past year.

There were 19 M&A transactions alone in 2014, compared to an overall total of 24 in the three years previously, found the *European Health & Fitness Market Report 2014*.

The report – presented last month by Karsten Hollasch of Deloitte at the European Health & Fitness Forum (EHFF) in Cologne, Germany – observed an industry that has escaped the doldrums of recession and is fast becoming an attractive prospect thanks to its growth. It noted that the large majority of activity was being driven by strategic investors and financial investors rather than private individuals, with only one of the 19 M&A transactions being driven by the latter during 2014.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=15e9C>

## 'Make physical activity the priority', say MPs



Committee chair Dr Sarah Wollaston MP

Tackling physical inactivity must become a frontline health priority for the UK's next government, ahead of the separate issue of obesity, says a recently published report from the Health Select Committee.

The report highlights the "huge health benefits" of physical activity and notes individual lifestyle interventions need to be underpinned by broader initiatives designed to improve the health of the population.

"The extraordinary benefits of exercise in improving physical and mental health should be made clear and accessible to everyone, whatever their current level of fitness," said chair of the committee Dr Sarah Wollaston MP. "The committee calls on the NHS, local authorities and the next government to work together to prioritise prevention and public health, and we have set out achievable recommendations which could help to transform lives and wellbeing."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=k3K2c>

## FIBO show hits new heights

Last month's FIBO international trade show for fitness, wellness and health, held in Cologne, Germany, attracted a record 138,000 visitors over the course of the four-day event.

The show has gone from strength to strength, having almost tripled attendance figures over the past five years. This year it recorded a 19 per cent visitor increase on 2014's show, as 725 exhibitors from 40 nations showcased their latest products.

"FIBO is among the leading trade fairs, with the strongest growth momentum worldwide," says Hans-Joachim Erbel, CEO of organiser Reed Exhibitions Deutschland. "The scale

of this development is unparalleled in the international trade fair business."

The gargantuan Exhibition Centre Cologne played host to FIBO 2015, which occupied 130,000sq m (1,399,308sq ft) of floor space. Organisers say next year's event will cover even more ground, with over 80 per cent of FIBO 2016's stand space booked already.

Health Club Management was on hand throughout FIBO 2015, live reporting on the latest developments throughout the show and posting them straight to the HCM website. To check out the highlights, follow the link below. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=h4g2G>



The event featured a number of live fitness classes and product demonstrations

## Virgin Active to be sold to investors

Global fitness chain Virgin Active has been sold to South African investment firm Brait in a deal that values the business at approximately £1.3bn (US\$1.9bn, €1.8bn).

Virgin Active has perennially been linked to potential IPOs – both on the London and Johannesburg stock exchanges – however a company spokesperson told *Health Club Management* that the deal means there are now no plans for a listing in the immediate future.

Brait will acquire an 80 per cent stake in the health club operation, which was founded by Sir Richard Branson in 1999. Virgin Group will retain a 20 per cent stake. The chain has 267 clubs worldwide and is Europe's largest



The global gym chain was founded by Sir Richard Branson

health club group by revenue. "We're delighted to play a part in this alongside Brait, another long-term investor with a strong track record in growing businesses," said Branson.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N6t5b>

## Tech is 'democratising' fitness



**Humphrey Cobbold (right) succeeded Peter Roberts (left) as Pure Gym CEO in January**

The rapid advance of technology is democratising fitness, giving consumers more choice than ever before and leaving businesses facing difficult dilemmas, according to new Pure Gym CEO Humphrey Cobbold.

Speaking at the European Health & Fitness Forum (EHFF) during FIBO week, Cobbold said technology is empowering consumers, providing choices where decisions were previously made for them, and he acknowledged that it's a struggle to adapt.

Citing air travel as an example, Cobbold said passengers are now able to choose their airline, flight, class, boarding options and seat

at the touch of a button. He noted the same technological advances are "democratising fitness" and said that gym operators – many of whom "have a fixed cost and asset base from which they have to generate a material profit" – face painful changes as they adapt their business models to embrace new developments. Cobbold, who previously helmed online cycling retailer Wiggle, said we're just reaching the "end of the beginning" in terms of changes driven by technology, and predicted that focusing on what young gym users want will be key to long-term success. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x4NSU>

## Fitness First targets LA's London clubs

Fitness First remains firmly in the running for the £80m race to capture LA fitness, amid hopes that a successful deal would help it corner the lucrative London market.

Fitness First global CEO Andrew Cosslett has previously said the chain wants to be the Audi A4 of health clubs, offering a premium proposition in high density urban centres.

LA fitness boast an enviable property footprint in London with 22 sites, including two 'premiumised' LAX clubs which have reportedly enjoyed initial success. A well-placed industry source told *Health Club Management* that the lure of LA's London presence would see Fitness First pursue the



**Andrew Cosslett wants to have a strong London presence**

deal up to its conclusion, despite the need for additional investment in a number of LA sites. Also in contention to buy LA fitness are Pure Gym, Sports Direct and investor Terra Firma. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q8v4U>

## HIIT looks set to remain hot, says Phillip Mills



**Les Mills chief executive Phillip Mills**

The fitness industry's love of high intensity interval training (HIIT) is unlikely to abate any time soon, according to industry pioneer Phillips Mills, who says its ethos makes it the ideal fit for modern lifestyles.

Consumer demand for HIIT has been huge in recent years and the Les Mills CEO believes the training will enjoy further longevity. "HIIT is going absolutely insane for us and it's all people seem to want at the moment," he said. "If you want a great physique – you want to do HIIT."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c3g6e>

## NorthEdge Capital backs Total Fitness takeover



**NorthEdge's Ray Stenton led the buyout**

Private equity firm NorthEdge Capital has backed a buyout of Total Fitness Health Clubs Limited – led by the gym chain's management team – to the tune of £11.5m.

The overall deal value is undisclosed, but it sees new majority stakeholder NorthEdge and Total Fitness management acquire the business from previous owners Barclays Bank, Co-op bank and RooGreen Ventures. RooGreen has also reinvested in the 17-club chain as part of the buyout, with RooGreen partner Warwick Ley remaining on the Total Fitness Board.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T7x3T>

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# UK news update

## Sports Direct scales up concept



A CGI of Sports Direct's retail / gym complex concept, which it hopes to bring to Dundee

Sports Direct is bidding to scale up its dual-use gym and retail concept – part of plans to create a 200-strong UK gym empire – with proposals for a £5m development in Dundee.

Sports Direct – which was founded by Newcastle United Football Club owner Mike Ashley in 1982 – hopes to capitalise on the synergy between its retail and gym divisions by locating the two offerings side-by-side under one roof. Drawing an already captive audience, the model is designed to drive both sales of activewear and football in the gym.

Having opened its first gym and retail concept in Aintree in mid-December, Sports

Direct is due to launch its third such site in St Helens in the next couple of weeks, taking the total number of Sports Direct Fitness gyms to nearly 30. The latest Dundee proposition is one of four more new-build dual-use complexes – two in southern England, one in Wales and one in Scotland – currently believed to be going through planning.

The application to Dundee City Council to transform a derelict former nightclub in Dundee's Stack Leisure Park outlines plans for a ground floor retail store beneath a 30,000sq ft (2,787sq m) gym spread over two floors.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e4c9v>

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Lucy Edwards  
Project Manager  
Cycle Rhythm

## Wellbeing memberships 'are the future'

Nuffield Health will make its customised wellbeing memberships a core focus of the company's gym chain moving forward, having been delighted with the initial results of the proposition.

Nuffield MD Andy Jones said the company was confident it had found a winning combination to keep members happy. The company's wellbeing membership – which harnesses an integrated pathway to give members regular health assessments, physiotherapy, access to dieticians, a dedicated advisor and access to online health tracking – was introduced a couple of years ago and has led to hugely improved retention levels. Those on



Nuffield Health managing director Dr Andy Jones

a wellbeing membership have a 90 per cent retention rate after one year – well above the industry average. "Clearly we're on to a winner and we need to roll it out," says Jones. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=A6v7s>





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## Independent news

### BaseFit banking on functional



BaseFit: In-step with the growing trend towards extreme fitness propositions

A new outdoor training facility in the heart of London's Shoreditch is offering functional training and an array of intensive classes for people who are serious about their fitness.

Aimed mainly at hardcore trainers who participate in decathlons, triathlons and obstacle course races (OCR), BaseFit is in-step with the growing trend towards extreme fitness propositions. Flanked by five-a-side football pitches and railway arches, the 2,000sq ft (186sq m) outdoor training ground features a container for equipment storage and functional rig on the outside. Classes on offer include Bootcamp, Insanity, Tabata and

other HIIT formats; there are also plans to offer official training camps for several OCRs.

The concept is the brainchild of fitness industry stalwart Andy Milne, who has spent 15 years working variously as a PT, health club manager and senior area manager for suppliers such as Technogym, Cybex and Matrix Fitness. Milne, who hopes to expand the brand across London, is self-funding the venture through his company Canned Fitness. He told *HCM* that, although the weather would present operational challenges, the business will have contingencies in place for the colder months. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n2p2E>

### Speedflex sets sights on in-gym studios

Circuit-based group training concept Speedflex is to launch a new £400,000 studio within Newlife Fitness in Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire, as the company seeks to expand its footprint in the UK health club sector.

Speedflex Europe already has several UK studios, but the investment in indie gym Newlife Fitness marks the first time a Speedflex studio has opened in an existing gym. The company is eager to capitalise on the rampant popularity of high intensity interval training (HIIT) and is actively seeking suitable studio spaces within existing gyms nationwide, as well as the possible acquisition of entire clubs. The new 2,400sq ft (223sq m) studio in the



The new Speedflex studio is due to open on 10 May

independent Newlife Fitness gym will deliver Speedflex sessions using the unique Speedflex machines and circuit, offering members an alternative to conventional exercise. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=5N9W>





# Shaping the future of skills

CIMSPA and SkillsActive are set to discuss the future of skills development at a key summit, amid calls from employers for major reforms, reports Jak Phillips

**P**hysical activity sector skills bodies are due to meet in the coming weeks to discuss the future of industry learning and development, amid growing calls from employers for these responsibilities to sit under a single organisation.

The recent ukactive-led Active Training Conference in Reading (see p24) saw SkillsActive and CIMSPA – the sector's key training and workforce development organisations – answer calls from employers for a unified outlook on skills. As a result, the organisations' heads will meet in the coming weeks to discuss these demands under three guiding principles:

- The custodianship of standards and the framework for skills to sit within one body
- A continuum of training provision across Further Education and Higher Education
- A minimum standard for assessment and delivery across all sector qualifications

There has recently been growing support for reform of learning and development in the physical activity sector. A coalition of leading leisure employers are now developing apprenticeship standards under the ongoing Trailblazer project, and many have called for a greater emphasis on employer-led learning and development for the sector as a whole.

A number of active leisure employers feel the current learning and development structure – whereby skills development sits under more than body – is diluting training standards and making it difficult for young people to follow clear career pathways in the sector.

SkillsActive is licensed as the Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure, but this status has recently been called into question by those advocating change. In January, 16 of the Trailblazer employers signed a letter sent to Sport England – of which SkillsActive is a national partner – and three other relevant bodies, calling for sector skills and development to be brought solely under the umbrella of CIMSPA. *Health Club Management* understands the letter was discussed informally between Sport England and SkillsActive. A spokesperson for Sport England confirmed that the organisation is currently looking into the matter.

One of the signatories of the letter, 1Life managing director Neil King, said the



(From left) ukactive's David Stalker, SkillsActive's Ian Taylor and CIMSPA's Tara Dillon

industry must act now to put its house in order and reform the skills pathway. "This is a huge opportunity to rectify a confusing and vague system by bringing all of the industry's learning and development needs under the umbrella of the Chartered Institute," he told *Health Club Management*.

"Industry learning and development should be employer-led and everybody behind the Apprenticeships Trailblazer feels that CIMSPA would be best suited to facilitate this. SkillsActive is a government creation that isn't owned or overseen by the employers. It no longer serves a role overseeing learning and development in our industry."

SkillsActive CEO Ian Taylor is due to meet his CIMSPA counterpart Tara Dillon in the next couple of weeks. Taylor said his organisation had been delighted to attend the Active Training Conference and support the growth ambitions of CIMSPA.

"SkillsActive is fully committed to working collaboratively whenever possible with CIMSPA to achieve its ambitions

to professionalise the management and leadership across our industry," he said.

"We're already working with a wide range of partners, collaborating to professionalise the sport, fitness, physical activity and outdoor sectors on behalf of a wide range of employers, and will continue working to improve skills, learning and professional development in the sector."

For her part, Dillon, who was recently appointed CEO of CIMSPA after impressing during a stint as interim COO, has committed to decisive action in the pursuit of progress.

"From CIMSPA's perspective, the sector has made it clear that it wants to take control of skills, so it's now time to get on with making this happen," she told *Health Club Management*.

"The forthcoming meeting with SkillsActive is about action and outcomes. CIMSPA pledges to maintain momentum and to act with pace to embed the agreed 'guiding principles' into workforce development norms."



# The future of health studies?

Apple's ResearchKit platform gives scientists instant access to a network of 700 million iPhone users and their health data. Is this the future of research? Jak Phillips reports

Apple has unveiled a new software framework called ResearchKit, which it hopes will enable 700 million iPhone users worldwide to participate in health studies and access diagnostic tools at the touch of a screen.

ResearchKit, which was recently showcased by Apple's senior vice president of operations Jeff Williams, is the technology giant's latest foray into health and wellness, following the launch of the HealthKit platform.

With the need to build a stronger evidence base – one of the key priorities to attract wellness aficionados – Apple's new framework could present significant opportunities. Traditionally, collecting participants for research studies has been an arduous and expensive task, but ResearchKit has instantly demonstrated its potential. Just 24 hours after the framework was introduced last month, researchers at Stanford University were amazed to find that 11,000 people had signed up to their cardiovascular study overnight using ResearchKit.

"Numbers are everything. The more people who contribute their data, the bigger the numbers, the truer the representation of a population, and the more powerful the results," said the American Heart Association's Dr Eduardo Sanchez in a statement on the Apple website. "A research platform that allows large amounts of data to be collected and shared – that can only be a positive thing for medical research."

From a user perspective, the studies' apps help people to track their conditions



ResearchKit will link to the Apple Watch



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Apple's ResearchKit could have major implications for participation in health studies

and access advice on how to manage symptoms. There are currently five disease-related apps: mPower for Parkinson's sufferers; My Heart Counts for cardiovascular disease; Asthma Health; GlucoSuccess for diabetes; and Share the Journey – for a study of the after-effects of treatment for breast cancer.

The apps make use of smartphone features such as accelerometers, gyroscopes and GPS locators to set study participants daily tasks and exercises – such as finger-tapping tests to check Parkinson's sufferers' speed of movement. The results are fed back to researchers, as well as the user, enabling both parties to track the progress of a condition.

As you might expect with health data, concerns have been raised that users' sensitive information could be put at risk. However, Apple has stressed that users will be in control of how and where their data is shared, with sensitive information only visible to medical researchers. "Apple will not see your

data," Williams confirmed during Apple's presentation of ResearchKit.

Critics also say that the data collected via ResearchKit is likely to be unrepresentative of the wider population, as iPhones are still too expensive for the poorer sections of society. Again, Apple is seeking to counter this, with plans to make the ResearchKit available soon on an open-source basis. Doing so would enable the development of apps for Android-based phones, which are often cheaper than iPhones, thus widening usage of the ResearchKit apps to a broader population.

There are more than 900 apps on the HealthKit platform already. ResearchKit can tap into data generated by its own apps, the Apple Watch and HealthKit – like daily step counts, calorie use, and heart rates – making it accessible to medical researchers.

There are also plans to develop more study apps on ResearchKit – by working in partnership with leading research institutions from around the world – to explore further conditions.



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## Exercise may help prevent breast cancer

A hormone released from muscles during exercise may help prevent breast cancer and boost the effects of chemotherapy drugs used to treat it, according to a study carried out at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in the United States.

Following on from recent findings that exercise can slow the growth of breast cancer tumours in mice, new research suggests women who exercise regularly have a 30 to 40 per cent reduced risk of breast cancer and improved survival rates if they do get the disease.

The team at UNM built on previous studies which had found that the hormone irisin increases with exercise and stimulates metabolism in select tissues, such as fat. Irisin was administered to both non-cancer and cancerous cells, which selectively killed aggressive cancer cells without negatively affecting normal cells.

The researchers observed a 22-fold increase in cancer cell death compared to untreated cells. When irisin was combined with a commonly used chemotherapy drug, the destruction of cells increased significantly, while cells absorbed less of the drug. This could mean that patients could be given a more tolerable dose of the drug. Details: <http://lei.sr7a=M4h5o>

## Research shows power of walking groups

Walking groups have good adherence and can reduce blood pressure, risk of depression, cholesterol and BMI, according to a review published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

The Hanson & Jones systematic review and meta-analysis took information from electronic databases, clinical trial registers, grey literature and reference lists, reviewing 42 studies that involved 1,843 people.

Reviewers found significant reductions in mean systolic and diastolic blood pressure, resting heart rate, body fat, body mass index, total cholesterol and depression scores. They also found significant mean increases in lung capacity and speed.

High levels of adherence were reported and virtually no side-effects.

These findings add fuel to the debate of whether health clubs should be reaching out beyond their four walls and organising community walking groups, to engage those who wouldn't normally venture into a gym and offer an entry level activity.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=V1E5v>

## HIIT defence against fatty food

Going for a long run ahead of a night of excess is a familiar ritual for many young people, but working up a sweat with a few sharp sprints may be a better strategy.

Scientists at the University of Exeter have found that a short burst of high-intensity interval training (HIIT) before a high fat meal is the best way for young people to protect blood vessel function. The new study found that high-intensity exercise is far more effective than moderate intensity for promoting vascular health in such instances.

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death in the UK, and the underlying process

starts in youth. An impairment in the function of blood vessels is thought to be the earliest event in this process, and this is known to occur in the hours after consuming a high fat meal.

The study compared HIIT against moderate-intensity exercise on blood vessel function in adolescent boys and girls after they had consumed a high fat milkshake. It found 25 minutes of moderate-intensity cycling prevented the fall in blood vessel function after the high fat meal. But just eight minutes of high-intensity cycling not only prevented this fall, but improved blood vessel function.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=C8t9p>



Short, sharp bursts of HIIT before a high fat meal could protect blood vessel function

## High fat diet alters behaviour

A high fat diet that changes the mix of bacteria in the gut alters behaviour and creates signs of brain inflammation – even in the absence of obesity – say researchers from Louisiana State

University. Non-obese adult mice received a transplant of gut microbiota from donor mice that had been fed either a high fat or control diet. Recipient mice were evaluated for changes in behaviour and cognition.

The animals that received the microbiota shaped by a high fat diet showed multiple disruptions in behaviour, such as increased anxiety, impaired memory and repetitive behaviour. Other detrimental effects were increased intestinal permeability and markers of brain inflammation.

The findings suggest the gut microbiome has the eventual potential to serve as a target for neuropsychiatric disorder therapies.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=S2J2h>



A high fat diet affects the gut microbiota



## Exercise boosts sexual function



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

**The study participants self-reported their activity levels and their sexual function**

Regular exercise can help men perform better in the bedroom, according to a study by Cedars-Sinai Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute in Los Angeles.

Previous studies have highlighted the link between better erectile function and exercise, but this was among the first to explore the impact on all races. It found men who exercised more were likely to have better overall sexual function, including the ability to have orgasms and the quality and frequency of erections.

For the paper, nearly 300 study participants self-reported their activity levels, which researchers then categorised as sedentary,

mildly active, moderately active or highly active. The subjects also self-reported their sexual function based on the aforementioned criteria.

Men who reported more frequent exercise – 18 METS a week, equating to two hours of strenuous exercise, 3.5 hours of moderate exercise or six hours of light exercise – had higher sexual function scores regardless of race. Men of all ethnicities who exercised less reported lower levels of sexual function. Additional contributors to low sexual function included diabetes, older age, past or current smoking and coronary artery disease.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=I9Z4u>

## Power nap helps brain retain info

A nap lasting 45–60 minutes produces a five-fold improvement in information retrieval from memory, according to a new study by Saarland University, Germany.

The researchers focused on the role of the hippocampus – the part of the brain where memories are consolidated and transferred into long-term memory storage. It examined a particular type of brain activity, known as 'sleep spindles'. The greater the number of sleep spindles in a person's brain, the better they remember newly acquired information.

The control group, whose members watched DVDs while the others slept, performed significantly worse than the nap group when



**Napping appears to increase 'sleep spindles' in the brain**

it came to remembering information including 90 single words and 120 unrelated word pairs. The nap group's memory was just as good after sleep as straight after learning.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D9F8T>

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## People news



Terry Gibbs has 20 years' experience

### Gibbs to head FitPro commercial development

FitPro has appointed Terry Gibbs as head of commercial development as the fitness organisation bids to progress strategic plans and drive sales performance throughout the company's business areas.

With more than 20 years' fitness industry experience, Gibbs has worked his way up from gym instructor and personal trainer, through to managerial and directorial sales roles.

As head of commercial development, Gibbs will focus on managing commercial business activity and identifying and securing new business. He will also build and consolidate relations with key accounts and corporate groups, as well as supporting the development of the marketing strategy.

"FitPro matched my career 'wish list' perfectly: a strong brand involved in delivering high quality education programmes, products and services within the fitness industry," says Gibbs. "To be heading up commercial development for the world's largest professional development firm is a coup. I'm looking forward to developing FitPro's stable of brands."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c4K2e>

## Physical Company names MD

John Halls has been appointed MD of family-run fitness solutions provider Physical Company with immediate effect.

John has literally grown up with Physical Company, having helped his mother Penny Halls when she started the business 26 years ago. In those early days, John and his brothers Nick and Jason would put together the orders and pack up products at the family home.

John joined Physical Company officially in 2006 as sales and marketing manager, while Nick focused on the logistics and Jason on finance and administration. The three brothers now run the business jointly; Penny Halls has officially retired but remains involved with the company as a non-executive director.

John became sales and marketing director in July 2011 and in the last four years has seen rapid growth for the Desborough-based firm.

"Physical Company has been part of my life for as long as I can recall, and I've thoroughly enjoyed my role in sales and marketing to help steer its course and support its growth," says John. "My role now is to continue to improve

product quality and ensure our customer service levels remain high as our business grows. This is definitely an exciting time to be leading Physical Company and I'm actively seeking further expansion and growth as our reputation as a total solutions provider builds."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=z8d5T>



Physical Company's new MD John Halls

## Molly Kemmer elected IHRSA chair



Kemmer joined the industry aged just 18

IHRSA has announced that Molly Kemmer will become the new IHRSA board chair as of 1 July 2015, replacing the outgoing Robert Brewster who will have served a full-year term.

Kemmer – who is the regional manager for MediFit Corporate Services/EXOS in Littleton, Colorado, US – was confirmed as the incoming chair at the recent IHRSA 2015 event in Los Angeles. Since gaining her Master of Science degree in exercise physiology and health promotion, Kemmer has worked her way through the ranks from an assistant manager of a small health club to positions of increasing responsibility at well-known IHRSA-member facilities.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=8P6CS>

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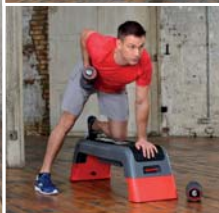


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## COME ON STRONG

After posting global sales growth figures of 19% for 2014, the pressure is on for the Matrix Fitness brand to surpass what has gone before, and, in their own words, 'Challenge the expected, deliver the unexpected'.

Understandably, the brand's relentless drive to innovate plays a key role in its success, and the latest product to enter the market looks set to continue this trend. Following a global launch at IHRSA, the Matrix Connexus Group Functional Training System was unveiled to the European market at FIBO 2015, to great acclaim.

## GET MORE FROM FUNCTIONAL TRAINING WITH CONNEXUS

Space is inevitably at a premium for most fitness facilities, and yet typical design and placement of traditional functional rigs encourages perimeter-based activities, with minimal use of internal space. The highly-versatile Connexus functional training system has been designed to give club owners and trainers maximum flexibility, repeatability, and expandability in their workout environment... without impinging on other gym-based activities or equipment.

Regardless of whether you choose a wall-mounted or freestanding unit, each point of the rig can be utilised, with a variety of attachment points available to accommodate a wide range of accessories and training modalities; ultimately eliminating waste, and offering a much more space-efficient functional solution.

As Global Product Manager – Personal and Group Training – Becky Jalbert explains, the premise is simple:

*“Every club is different, so we developed a functional training station that can easily be adapted and expanded based on the individual needs of owners, trainers, and end users. Connexus is a powerful training system that will help attract members, bolster revenue, and maximise space.”*

## WHAT MAKES CONNEXUS DIFFERENT?

While many functional systems restrict training potential due to static connection points, or they lack the ability to repeat multiple exercises, Connexus triumphs on both points, in addition to its more efficient use of space.

- / **SPACE-SAVING** – each aspect of the rig can be used to avoid wasted space on the gym floor.
- / **ADJUSTABILITY** – vertical and horizontal handles allow for quick class setup and fast transitions between exercises for efficient training.
- / **REPEATABILITY** – the option to repeat exercises or stations enables the trainer to more effectively manage their classes and provide a greater variety of speciality classes.

Although the pull up and horizontal bars are standard along with the vertical and horizontal adjustments, customers have the option to order additional features, and the freedom to customise their unit, or make each station exactly the same.

## OPTIONS

### 1 MED BALL TARGET

Divided into three training zones (low, mid, and high), the optional med ball target can be used with slam balls and a wide variety of med balls to enhance power training programs and offer program variety.

### 2 MAGNETIC CHALKBOARD

The optional magnetic chalkboard features a storage slot for chalk, a smart phone, or tablet, and allows trainers to post workout information in a highly visible area.

### 3 LANDMINE ATTACHMENT

For additional flexibility, the optional landmine attachment allows trainers to incorporate more explosive power training into their programming.



Connexus is ideal for small-group training and functional-training classes, where repeatability is important because it allows multiple users to perform the same exercise in unison. In addition, an expansion kit makes it easy and affordable to add capacity, or create multiple circuit-training stations in a single space.

The system's versatility also makes it ideal for bodyweight, resistance, and flexibility training for a wide range of individuals and ability levels, and it is supported by free, turnkey programming, and a vast exercise library for trainers to use too.

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# A WORKFORCE THAT WORKS

ukactive CEO David Stalker discusses the proposed move towards a single organisation covering all skills and workforce development

**T**he first ever ukactive Active Training Conference took place on 26 March, bringing together the sector's key training and workforce development organisations. Working with CIMSPA and SkillsActive, I was delighted to see so many key people in attendance.

The development of the individuals working within our sector has never been more important, and we saw a series of presentations – as well as extremely passionate discussions during the panel sessions – that focused on making sure this agenda continues to move forward. Only by having a workforce that's fit for purpose can we begin to deliver on the promise of reducing inactivity and making sure our sector is prepared for the years to come.

## One single body

What became clear throughout the day was the need and appetite for a single skills development body. The leading employers from the physical activity sector made calls for skills and workforce development to sit within a single organisation to provide a unified outlook on skills.

What emerged were three guiding principles of workforce development. Firstly, the custodianship of standards and the framework for skills should sit



**A minimum standard for assessment and delivery of fitness qualifications is needed**

within one body. Secondly, there should be a continuum of training provision across further education and higher education. And thirdly, we need a minimum standard for assessment and

delivery protocol across all qualifications within the health and fitness sector.

ukactive, CIMSPA and SkillsActive will now discuss the timeframe and details of delivering this sector-led change. However, the consensus is that the process should be led by employers – that it's vital our agenda is fully out in the open and truly led by employers. They, rather than the sector's skills bodies, should be the king-makers in this crucial process.

This all follows on from the ongoing Trailblazer project, in which employers were tasked with developing an apprenticeship standard. The future of apprenticeships was a key discussion point at the March event, with a clear need for greater levels of communication between education providers and employers.

For further insight into this topic, including details of the next phase of the review, please see our news feature on page 15. ●

## LEARNING FROM BEYOND OUR SECTOR

The conference also presented a great opportunity for the sector to introduce itself to a host of new organisations with a long tradition of developing workforces across sectors and ages. Of particular note was the presentation by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. This body, which is responsible for the wellbeing of the education workforce, was very forthright in its challenge to employers in our sector: to come and talk to teachers. Apprenticeships are all well and good, but how can teachers – without ever having been truly engaged by leisure as an economic unit – truly sell what we are all about?

On the flip side, groups like Pearson – the largest awarding body in the country (and dreaded producer of GCSE exam papers) – discussed how they have engaged other sectors with graduate-level recruitment. Of course we need the best and the brightest on the gym floor, but we need them at head office as well.

# HYDRO+

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- Water is used to transport all substances inside the body.
- Water increases the efficiency of red blood cells in collecting oxygen in the lungs.
- Water gives us power and electrical energy for all brain functions, most particularly thinking.
- Water helps reduce fatigue – it gives us the energy of youth.
- Five elements: water, salt, potassium, magnesium and calcium, are all involved in energy regulation inside cells.
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# STARS ON SHOW IN LA

Kristen Walsh rounds up some of the highlights from this year's IHRSA International Convention and Trade Show, which took place in Los Angeles in March



Keynotes included a session by futurologist Magnus Lindkvist



The Bash: Augie Nieto with Gavin DeGraw and wife Lynne

**A**t IHRSA 2015 – IHRSA's 34th Annual International Convention & Trade Show – thousands of fitness industry leaders came together to showcase the latest equipment, programmes and technology, to celebrate the successes of a thriving industry, and to reinforce the industry's commitment to increasing physical activity levels across the globe.

The high-energy event drew more than 13,000 health club operators, suppliers and fitness industry professionals from 84 countries, with 388 companies showcasing their products and services in a two-day trade show that occupied 178,000sq ft.

"I'm sincerely grateful to each and every attendee, exhibitor, sponsor and presenter for their dedication to this wonderful industry of ours, and to their commitment to helping people across the world live happier, healthier, more active lives," said Joe Moore, IHRSA president and CEO.

## Education highlights

Each day of the four-day event featured an inspiring keynote presentation. Arianna Huffington kicked off Wednesday evening with a message of personal health and happiness in her keynote, entitled 'Redefining success: The third metric that can benefit your bottom line'.

Thursday featured an impressive visual and audio presentation from futurologist Magnus Lindkvist on the topic of 'Thinking about the future in an uncertain world'. And on Friday, attendees learned from Adam Bryant's years of interviewing CEOs for his New York Times CEO Corner column, in his session entitled 'Lessons from leading CEOs on how to create a culture of innovation'.

And last but certainly not least, closing keynote Kelly McGonigal's presentation on 'The willpower instinct' provided convention attendees with plenty of science-backed understanding of willpower to take back to their health and fitness clubs.

The convention also included a special presentation from social marketing evangelist David Meerman Scott on 'The new rules of sales and service' during the Global Leadership Summit, and a Women's Leadership Summit with a presentation on 'The art of reinvention' by Cecily Sommers.

In addition to the four keynotes and the leadership summits, convention-goers could choose from more than 160 educational, exercise and networking sessions throughout the event, many simultaneously translated into Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Japanese. This included a well-received inaugural Health Promotion & Wellness category of presentations. Audio recordings from select sessions are available at [www.ihrsa.org/store](http://www.ihrsa.org/store)

## IHRSA board elections

During the convention, IHRSA welcomed Larry Connor, Missy Moss, Raymond O'Connor and Jim Worthington as newly elected members of the IHRSA board of directors. The board-elect will serve a four-year term from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2019.

Molly Kemmer was announced as the incoming IHRSA board chair, also effective from 1 July. Kemmer is the regional manager for MediFit Corporate Services/EXOS in Littleton, Colorado, US.

## 2015 award recipients

Three industry leaders were recognised during IHRSA 2015 for their commitment to the fitness industry and also for serving their local communities.

The Outstanding Community Service Award is presented to an IHRSA member that has made a long-standing commitment to making a difference in, and beyond, their community. Midtown Athletic Club of Rochester, New York, received this year's award. The club's involvement in its community is extensive, with just a





The busy show floor hosted product demonstrations and launches, with 388 companies showcasing their products and services

## One for the diary

IHRSA 2016 will be held in Orlando, Florida, US, on 21–24 March 2016. Orlando is one of the world's largest golf destinations, and home to Walt Disney World Resort, Universal Orlando Resort and many more attractions. Registration is already open at [www.ihrsa.org/go2016](http://www.ihrsa.org/go2016)

few of its initiatives including leading an annual American Diabetes Association 'Tour-de-Cure bike ride' – to raise funds for research, prevention, advocacy and treatment for Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes – and supporting The Equicenter, an equine therapy centre for children and adults with disabilities, at risk youth, wounded veterans and their families in the Rochester area.

Meanwhile, IHRSA celebrates the legacy of Julie Main by awarding the Julie Main Woman Leader Scholarship to a woman who exemplifies what Julie stood for: courage,

perseverance, excellence and professionalism. Lori Lowell, an owner, operator and innovator of Gold's Gyms in Virginia and Wisconsin, was awarded the 2015 scholarship.

"Julie Main was an exemplary female industry leader and I'm excited to see such continued dedication to a woman who exceeded the call of duty as an entrepreneur and leader," says Lowell. "IHRSA's ongoing acknowledgement and commitment to women leaders in the industry is honourable, and I'm grateful."

Twin Oaks Software received IHRSA's Associate Member of the Year Award.

### 10th Augie's Bash

For the 10th consecutive year, IHRSA proudly hosted The BASH for Augie's Quest, an aggressive cure-driven ALS research initiative established by fitness industry pioneer Augie Nieto, who has been fighting ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease) since 2005.

The 2015 BASH exceeded expectations by raising over US\$1.8m thanks to multiple event sponsors and moving performances from John Andrasik of Five for Fighting and

headliner Gavin DeGraw. Since 2007, Augie's Quest has raised over US\$44m in support of finding effective ALS treatments.

"I'm so grateful to my friends in the fitness industry for embracing this event every year and helping us fund this important research," says Nieto. "Ten years ago, at the first BASH, I didn't think I would see this day. Now I'm here watching my former peers stand by me for the 10th year in a row. It's unbelievable." ●

## About IHRSA

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

To learn how IHRSA can help your business thrive, visit [www.ihrsa.org](http://www.ihrsa.org). Locate an IHRSA club at [www.healthclubs.com](http://www.healthclubs.com)



Producing for domestic and commercial customers, Aachen Wellness is the UK's largest manufacturer and installer of wellness solutions for leisure. Our Lancashire factory offers UK made bespoke saunas and steam rooms, along with a wide range of treatment rooms such as, rasul mud rooms, dry salt rooms, ice stations, ice pedestals, tiled loungers and tiled foot spas for all types of leisure customers.

From concept to design, through manufacture and installation Aachen Wellness offer meticulous attention to detail, using quality materials together with highly skilled craftsmen, tillers, joiners and service engineers to present an end-to-end service second to none in the wellness market. Our design offices and factory have been producing saunas and steam rooms for nearly 20 years and so it is no surprise that Aachen Wellness products are provided to the UK's best known spa resort facilities.

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# Diary



Rimini Wellness, now in its 10th year, is one of the world's largest fitness shows

## MAY

### 14 | Retention Convention

**Venue** Institute of Engineering and Technology, Birmingham, UK

#### Summary

Paul Bedford, author of one of the world's largest retention studies, will explain how to develop a strategy to improve member retention. Other experts speaking on the subject of retention will include Dr Melvyn Hillsdon, Jan Middelkamp, Guy Griffiths and Rob Gregory.

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

### 20-21 | SIBEC UK

**Venue** The Belfry, Wishaw, 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](http://www.sibec.co.uk)

### 26-30 | ACSM Annual Meeting

**Venue** San Diego, California, US

#### Summary

This sports medicine and exercise science event covers the science, practice, public health and policy aspects of sports medicine and physical activity.

Web [www.acsmannualmeeting.org](http://www.acsmannualmeeting.org)

### 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](http://www.riminiwellness.com)

## JUNE

### 3-6 | SPATEC Europe

**Venue** Melia Villaitana, Costa Blanca, Spain

#### Summary

A two-day forum of one-to-one meetings between leading UK and European spa owners and operators and around 70 leading international spa suppliers.

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

### 24 | ukactive

#### FLAME Conference

**Venue** Telford International Centre, Telford, UK

#### Summary

FLAME is the leading educational and networking event for senior level professionals and decision-makers, and culminates in the FLAME Awards 2015.

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

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# Active women

The stats show women are less active than men and more likely to drop out of sport. Is the industry doing all it could to support them in being active, or are there some quick wins we could put in place?

If we do Parkrun as a family, my husband shoots off into the distance as soon as the whistle sounds, leaving me to coax the children round. While my exercise is limited to blocks of 20 or 30 minutes, snatched between work and childcare, he exercises instead of doing childcare.

I'm one of the lucky ones: there are many women living in the UK whose husbands, or cultures, stop them from exercising altogether. I also know he'd swap if I asked – he just doesn't think of it first. This is very important because, according to the team behind I Will if You Will – the Bury Council-led initiative aimed at women – I'm not alone in this. In fact, this is one of the common barriers

to many women being active: mothers are conditioned to put their children first. If childcare options or family activities aren't available, they therefore don't exercise.

There was a general consensus among the women on this panel that there needs to be a cultural shift whereby husbands and partners are supportive of women exercising.

But equally, the industry can also do its bit to make it easier for women. Allowing mums to bring babies in car seats into studio classes or poolside would be helpful, as would running sessions all the family can join; offering childcare; or putting on an adult class or swimming session that coincides with a kids' swimming lesson or activity.

There's a refreshing level of energy around the bid to get women active. Sport England's This Girl Can campaign looks set to be a gamechanger, opening up conversations with all sorts of women's brands from outside the industry. I Will if You Will – a project that encouraged women to support each other to become more active, and that inspired This Girl Can – had great success in its first phase, getting 7,500 women active. As it moves into phase two, it wants to take this further, working with more clubs.

So, is your club welcoming to women? What images are you using in publicity? Is your timetable convenient, your receptionist welcoming? Do you offer hair straighteners? What else could you do?

How can we get more women, more active? Email us: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)

## TANNI GREY-THOMPSON

Former Paralympian, parliamentarian, TV presenter & ukactive chair



"We need a cultural shift in how both sexes view women's exercise.

Time is a major barrier to many women being active: they can feel too caught up juggling work, family and other responsibilities. We need a public messaging campaign about the importance of women finding time for themselves, and men also need to support women in this.

Anything health clubs can do to facilitate this would help – for example, providing childcare so that mums with young children can exercise, running gym sessions and classes where they can bring their children, and organising activities that are suitable for all the family to be active.

Many girls drop out of physical activity during their teenage years, but health club operators could reach out to them with teenage gym sessions, classes and outreach programmes. I'd like to see more innovation from the industry.

Marketing is crucial. I'm a big fan of the This Girl Can campaign, because it reflects what people really look like when they exercise. I'd like to see more of this sort of imagery in marketing campaigns, not the size zero model in lycra doing yoga. Finally, I'd like to see clothing companies making more flattering sports clothes in larger sizes."

## JENNIE PRICE

CEO • Sport England



"From our insight work, we've learned that lots of women and girls feel judged at sports and health clubs. They feel they don't belong, either because they're the wrong size, shape or not wearing the right clothes. We want to take these insights and make sure clubs place them at the heart of their offering.

The easiest and most powerful thing any club can do to become more female-friendly is to ask women who aren't currently using their facilities what they want. Reach out to former members, the local WI, NCT or colleges and find out why women aren't coming to your club.

There's a sharp drop-off in activity during teenage years, which is partly due to interests changing during puberty, but also because at this age sports clubs start focusing on talent; the average ones get left behind. Health clubs and sports clubs need to think about what they're offering these girls and give the opportunity for teenagers to dip in and out of a range of activities. Unless they're especially talented, teenagers don't want to do a single sport. The activities that are growing are those where the user is in control, such as running and cycling. People also want to be casual, so all clubs need to react to that, offering the opportunity to be spontaneous."



**I Will If You Will encouraged women to support each other in becoming active, and inspired Sport England's This Girl Can**

#### **JACKIE YEAL**

Operational lead • I Will if You Will

“Talking to women through social media has enabled us to understand what local women want to do and helped us reach out to females so we understand the barriers they face.

In terms of what operators can do to appeal to women, programming is very important. Women are time-poor, so they want things like a 20-minute class at lunchtime, or just before or after work. Timetabling is crucial: classes must be run at a convenient time. A more relaxed and supportive approach to bringing babies and children along is also needed.

Many women are intimidated by gyms because they think they'll be full of people who look like the women in the adverts. We didn't use any stock images for I Will if You Will: using local women in our publicity encouraged more people to give it a go.

There are also a lot of important considerations when it comes to facility design and changing room provision. We've worked hard with our studio team and deliverers to ensure we offer an encouraging environment at all times, reinforcing the positive messages of I Will if You Will. Providing blinds and screens for women-only sessions gives some females more confidence, and offering female-only sessions – such as learn to swim lessons – has given them confidence to start swimming on their own.”



#### **JIM GRAHAM**

COO • The Gym Group

“It's to the benefit of our industry to have more women as members. An even gender mix creates a better vibe and the sexes use gyms differently, driving better use of space and equipment.

Our research shows females can struggle with the idea of a gym membership. They often perceive gyms to be intimidating places that are not for them, or that sport generally isn't their thing. Our member base is currently 40 per cent female and we're working hard to increase this through our environment – a gender-neutral, light, airy and non-threatening space – and by offering more of what our female members want, such as functional training and group exercise.

We're partnering with Sport England in an open weekend aimed at women in May, hopefully showing prospects that our gyms are places they can see themselves spending time in. Working out with friends is a great way of motivating repeat exercise behaviour, so we're encouraging people to come with a friend. Role models are also key to getting people active, and we think female sporting role models are not yet celebrated to the extent of males. To this end, we're sponsoring the Sporting Role Model award at the Women's Sports Trust's inaugural Be A Game Changer Awards.”



# COLIN GRANT

A rainy day on a golfing holiday in Whistler led to the birth of Asia's market-leading lifestyle brand, as Colin Grant – CEO of the Pure Group – explains to Kate Cracknell







Pure Fitness was launched in 2003 to complement Pure Yoga

“There’s nothing wrong with a mistake, as long as you don’t make it twice. You have to just try things,” says Colin Grant, CEO of Pure Group – the market leader in Asia, which encompasses fitness and yoga, dining, nutrition and apparel in its lifestyle portfolio. “What’s the worst that can happen?”

For those of a more conservative nature that’s easier to say than it is to do, but this approach has stood Grant in good stead throughout his life – not that there seem to have been too many mistakes along the way.

A serial entrepreneur from the age of 12, when he became the sole agent in Hong Kong for a West German tennis brand, importing 300 rackets – a number of successful start-ups ensued. Aged 15, Grant set up his

own tennis racket stringing business, catering for both the local club and professional tournaments, and in 1985, at the age of 18, he founded movie rental chain Movieland in Hong Kong – a business his brother still runs – followed by Mr Bean Coffee in 1991.

And that’s not to mention his semi-professional tennis career, ranked number one in Hong Kong for over a decade and competing in international competitions including Wimbledon and the Davis Cup.

For many people that would have been enough but Grant, it seems, isn’t one to sit on his laurels. “My video rental business was going well. I owned it 100 per cent and I was making good money. I had 22 staff and I had a great life,” he says. “But it really wasn’t challenging me, and it took up literally a couple of hours a week, so I was starting to look for something else.”

### Blazing a trail

The next step – into yoga – happened quite by chance. “It was July 2001 and I was on a golfing holiday in Whistler, but one day we couldn’t play golf because it was raining. Someone suggested we do a yoga class, which to me was a crazy idea – I went to the gym and I played tennis, but I’d never done yoga in my life. But we did a 90-minute class and to this day I can remember how it felt coming out of that class. It was a totally different feeling from coming out of the gym, and it felt amazing. So the next day I actually cancelled golf, even though it wasn’t raining, and did another yoga class and really enjoyed it.

“I went back to Whistler the next month and just did a week of yoga, and again I really liked it. But when I got back to Hong Kong there was nothing like what I’d experienced in Canada, so I decided to look into opening a yoga studio. ▶

## PURE GROUP – a potted history

### January 2002:

First Pure Yoga opens in Hong Kong Central

### December 2003:

First Pure Fitness opens in SoHo, Hong Kong

### September 2004:

RED Bar + Restaurant opens at IFC mall, Hong Kong Central



### November 2005:

Pure Yoga opens its first international site, in Singapore



### April 2006:

Pure Yoga opens in Taipei

### June 2008:

First of two Pure Yoga studios opens in New York, operated by Equinox

### August 2013:

Launch of Pure Apparel and nood food



### October 2013:

Pure Yoga launches in Shanghai



► "I teamed up with a business partner, Bruce Rockowitz, who I'd known for 30 years – we actually did that first class in Whistler together and he'd loved it too. He agreed to fund the venture if I'd build it, and we became equal partners.

"At that point there were only four other yoga studios in Hong Kong, run by yogis and with a combined floor space of about 2,000sq ft, each offering maybe three classes a day.

"We did it differently. I wasn't a yogi, but what I had to my advantage were funds, resources and an entrepreneurial business background. Although hardly anyone in Hong Kong practised yoga at that time – people used to ask me why I was setting up a yoga studio – we were able to invest in what we believed people would want. In my mind, the worst that could happen was that it wouldn't work – I'd have survived.

"We put in US\$1m and bought 6,500sq ft of space, which we opened under the Pure Yoga brand on 21 January 2002. We had two big studios

At Pure Yoga, members can find yoga, fitness, apparel and food all under one roof

that could each take 35 or 40 people, a nice lounge area, a retail area selling clothes, changing rooms and lockers and showers – none of the other studios in Hong Kong had showers – and we provided mats and towels. We also had quite a comprehensive schedule of classes: when we first opened, we offered a full timetable with three types of yoga and great teachers.

"It really opened up the experience to the mass market – we'd get lawyers, bankers, housewives, bar tenders and students. Everybody could come because all they needed to do was turn up in shorts and a T-shirt.

"At the time we didn't know nobody else had done what we'd done, or that ours was the largest yoga studio in the world. Now you walk into our

Pure has essentially evolved into a lifestyle brand. If you want to work out and live a healthy life, you don't need to go far



studios and it's almost the norm – we opened one a year and a half ago that's 15,000sq ft and that does about 700 check-ins across 30 classes a day, while our largest site is 35,000sq ft and has up to 12,000 students a day – but back then it was very, very different.”

#### Brand extension

So how has the Pure Yoga offering evolved over the years? “We’re constantly trying to innovate and move forward. We’ve introduced new forms of yoga – aerial yoga, wall rope yoga, yogalates – and bring in guest teachers. We run workshops and retreats, teacher training and yoga conferences to keep it interesting and challenge our members to grow in their practice.

“We’re also about to launch a new online media channel – mypureyoga.com – as an extension of the Pure Yoga business. Anyone in the world will be able to log on free of charge, accessing a wide range of yoga classes from 15 to 90 minutes, covering

different yoga disciplines and catering for beginners through to advanced. The site will launch in a number of different languages and it will be our online portal for people to get the Pure Yoga experience anywhere in the world.”

But the Pure Group isn't just about yoga, having diversified fairly early on in its lifetime. “Yoga was becoming very popular with a certain segment of the market, but we wanted to complement that with a fitness offering. We opened our first gym – Pure Fitness – in Hong Kong in December 2003.

“In addition to fitness and yoga we also have our own clothing line, Pure Apparel, and Pure Dining. Pure Dining encompasses nood food – cold pressed juices and smoothies, salads and sandwiches, which we offer in as many of our locations as possible – and RED Bar + Restaurant, which is a full restaurant offering.

“At the moment, Pure Apparel is a ladies line, but we'll be launching a men's line in summer 2016, and fitness wear. ▶

## Operating in Hong Kong

“There are really three categories of health club in Hong Kong,” explains Colin Grant, founder and CEO of the Pure Group.

“The hotel gyms are super premium and charge £250–300 a month, and then there are the budget operators at between £30 and £50. We're in the middle, but we're not mid-market – there isn't really a mid-market in Hong Kong. We're a premium lifestyle brand and we charge around £100 a month for membership.

“For me, you can charge £100 – you can charge £200 – but it has to be good value. We're constantly innovating and for £100 you get an awful lot. We offer members free clothing – you walk in and we have a whole pile of socks and shorts and vests and shirts you can grab. You can take as many towels as you want, we have mobile phone charging stations around the club, and there are apples at the front desk; we spend £150,000 a year on complimentary apples.

“We also run a lot of loyalty events. It's all part of the brand and the experience, as well as building a community.

“A lot of boutique clubs are opening up in Hong Kong now, which is good for the market, but I'm not planning to go that route with Pure. I'd prefer to offer great cycling in our gyms. Because for me, the business model of the big box gym is really, really strong and it's long-term. We've had members leave and come back again, because they didn't actually get what they wanted at the microgyms, whereas with us they can get a lot of what they need under one roof.

“The biggest challenge in Hong Kong is the rents, and that's another reason for being comfortable with where we sit. If you go to a landlord and you're renting 30,000sq ft, you can get a longer lease and slightly better terms than if you're renting 1,000–2,000sq ft. If you rent 1,000sq ft you may get two years. We'll get 10 to 15.”



Healthy nutrition complements the whole Pure lifestyle concept

► We'll go from about 150 SKUs this summer to close to 300 SKUs by spring/summer 2016. We're in the process of launching our e-commerce site with global deliveries, and next year we'd like to launch standalone retail stores."

He continues: "When we started the clothing line and nood food two years ago, I thought it was a good move commercially, but I hadn't appreciated quite the impact it would have. They're very complementary and it's really brought everything together. Pure has essentially evolved into a lifestyle brand. If you want to work out and live a healthy life, you don't need to go far. We make it very convenient for people.

"What we're looking at doing over the next 12-18 months is building a very strong loyalty programme, so that every dollar you spend in any part of the business gives you points to redeem against juices or clothes or PT or workshops, as well as at other businesses outside of Pure."

### Steady and strong

So are there any other brand extensions Grant would like to explore? "I don't think so. I'd be surprised if we have more businesses in five years' time – I think we have enough with the four we have: yoga, fitness, apparel and food. They're all equally important – it's like having four children... you love them all – and together they provide a great basis for growth. If we wanted to go into a new market, for example, we could create a springboard by introducing the clothing line and the yoga channel before we even built a studio.

"But that said, I'm not planning to go into any new markets. We now operate

“  
As people in the health industry, if we genuinely want people to live healthier, happier lives, we have to help feed them  
”

in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taipei and Shanghai – with over 50,000 members and 1,300 employees – in addition to which there are two Pure Yoga studios in New York City, which we allow Equinox to operate independently. Thirteen of our 20 Asian locations are in Hong Kong, and I want to focus on getting Singapore, Taipei and Shanghai to mirror Hong Kong.

"We have four sites in Singapore now and I think we can take that to 12 or 13, and Taipei can also grow to about a dozen sites. In Shanghai it's early days so we'll see, but we'll probably open another yoga studio later this year.

"In Hong Kong I think we can get to 30 clubs. We opened an incredible Pure Fitness last month – 30,000sq ft over six floors, with nood food and the world's first 270-degree immersive studio – with two more gyms to come in September and October, plus a Pure Yoga in June.

"But I really don't want to be the biggest. I just want to grow slowly and

steadily and I want other people to say we offer a great experience – because that's for them to say, not us."

### Trends and opportunities

But even if he doesn't want to be the biggest, it's clear that Grant sees plenty of opportunity for Pure, and the fitness sector as a whole, to grow. "At a population level, in Hong Kong – and Singapore is also following suit – there's a larger group of the community that's looking to get and stay healthy. That's great news for us, with more people interested in our offering. We're at a lower penetration rate than the US and Europe, so the market is going to grow.

"Nutrition will be a big part of that, because all the processed foods and food scares and the chemicals and hormones that are in everything out there... I think they're going to contribute to increasing cancer rates and all sorts. As people in the health industry, if we genuinely want people to live healthier, happier lives, we have to help feed them.

"Then there's technology: wearables, RFID, NFC, plus things we're already trying out like immersive fitness and our online media channel. If it's what the customers want, we have to look at how we can make it part of the Pure experience. It's not a risk. I'd always see it as a positive – an opportunity to improve and enhance the experience. If it doesn't work, that's OK, but I don't believe in playing it safe.

"For me it's all blue sky. I'm excited. People in our industry need to look at these as opportunities to offer something better to attract new customers. If we do that, we're going to be very successful." ●



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# THE KEY TO GETTING YOUR RETENTION RIGHT

Retention starts at the very first club interaction, and members should be taken on an exciting yet structured exercise journey, says Les Mills UK

**T**his year thousands of well-meaning rookies will join gyms and fitness facilities with their resolutions at the ready. By the end of 30 days,


almost half of them will be back to square one, defeated, discouraged and no closer to a healthier life.

It turns out that fitness is just like any addiction: it all starts with a small dose. Too many people make the mistake of leaping into exercise when baby steps are what's needed.

A study conducted by Pennsylvania State University introduced 25 inactive adults to group fitness slowly by allowing them to 'dip their toes' into exercise. The result was that 20 of the group never missed a workout in 30 weeks. Not only this, they lost body fat, gained lean muscle and prevented the chances of developing cardiovascular disease.

But the really interesting news was that 20 out of the 25 study participants never missed a workout – a compliance rate of 98.8 per cent – almost unheard of in studies of this type. So instead of being overwhelmed by it all, feeling sore from overworking unfit muscles and giving up, they actually enjoyed it.

Here are three key things to keep in mind when welcoming your new



**Les Mills Smart Start six-week workout schedule**

WEEK	CARDIO	STRENGTH	CORE/FLEXIBILITY
1	1 x 20 mins	1 x 20 mins	1 x 10 mins
2	2 x 20 mins	1 x 30 mins	1 x 20 mins
3	2 x 30 mins	1 x 30 mins 1 x 20 mins	1 x 25 mins
4	2 x 35 mins 1 x 20 mins	1 x 60 mins	1 x 40 mins
5	2 x 50 mins 1 x 20 mins	1 x 60 mins 1 x 20 mins	1 x 60 mins
6	2 x 60 mins 1 x 30 mins	1 x 60 mins 1 x 40 mins	1 x 60 mins

**The next 12-week challenge**

WEEK	CARDIO	STRENGTH	CORE/FLEXIBILITY
7-18	3 x 60 mins	2 x 60 mins	1 x 60 mins

**Fitness is like an addiction, and it can all start with just a small dose of exercise**

Here are some great cardio, strength, core, flexibility and HIIT activities you could consider

CARDIO	STRENGTH	CORE / FLEXIBILITY	HIIT
BODYATTACK™	BODYPUMP™	CXWORX™	LES MILLS GRIT™
BODYCOMBAT™	BODYVIVE 3.1™	BODYBALANCE™	Rowing intervals
BODYJAM™	Free weights	BODYVIVE™ 3.1	Sprint intervals
BODYSTEP	Machine weights	Ab training	Tabata training
BODYVIVE™ 3.1		PILATES	
RPM™		Stretching	
SH'BAM™		Tai Chi	
Climbing stairs		Yoga	
Cycling			
Dancing			
Running			
Swimming			
Walking			

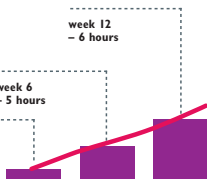
Researchers have developed an easy to progress set of recommended activity levels

**First  
12  
weeks**

**week 6  
– 5 hours**

**week 12  
– 6 hours**

**week 1  
– 50 minutes**







Too many people make the mistake of leaping into exercise when in fact baby steps are needed to ensure they stick with it

You should start introducing HIIT training after six weeks of the new exercise programme

HIIT	CARDIO	STRENGTH	CORE / FLEXIBILITY
2 x 30 mins	2 x 60 mins	2 x 60 mins	1 x 60 mins

members and customers into your fitness facilities:

- Start them slow – Don't encourage them to push their bodies too soon, ensure they feel comfortable about leaving classes before the end during the first six weeks
- Build gradually – Aim towards staying for a full workout as your fitness builds
- Mix it up – Include a mix of strength, cardio and flexibility training

### Increasing intensity

Despite fitness programmes being highly engaging, the real key is the gradual way in which exercisers adapt to this new routine. An initial six-week period encouraged them to dip their toes into fitness before ramping up the intensity with a six-day-a-week schedule.

The next step on this member journey is to increase the intensity. The idea is that once there is a base level of fitness, getting fitter isn't about more time, it's about the level of effort you put in.

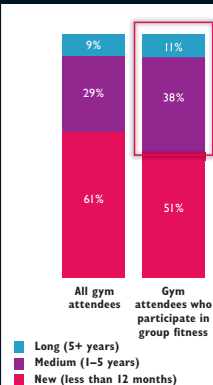
High-intensity interval training (HIIT) is scientifically proven to take your fitness to the next level, using short bursts of work followed by intervals for recovery.

An example of HIIT is a 30 minute LES MILLS GRIT™ workout. Here's what researchers suggest when you are ready to add HIIT to your fitness schedule: two sessions of HIIT, two of cardio, two of strength and one of core / flexibility (see table above).

Best in class facilities drive more than 50 per cent of their membership base into group exercise classes each week, with group exercise being cited as the biggest influence (49 per cent) on how long people remain a member of the fitness facility.

It's important to recognise that your customers' journey starts with the first club interaction. We need to move initial interactions with potential members from product to education, letting them make informed decisions around how they can reach their goals effectively. •

Membership tenure is longer among members attending fitness classes



For more information on the Les Mills Smart Start, or to attend a Les Mills Insight Seminar: +44 (0)20 7264 0200 / [lmuk.busdev@lesmills.com](mailto:lmuk.busdev@lesmills.com)

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# Tracking RETENTION

**Does personal physical activity tracking impact membership retention?**

**Dr Melvyn Hillsdon provides his insights, in the latest of his TRP 10,000 series**



Younger members are more likely to use a tracking device

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SYDA PRODUCTIONS

**W**earable devices and phone-based applications (apps) for self-monitoring of physical activity are becoming increasingly common. However, the level of use and their effectiveness among health club members is still unknown.

Using data collected as part of the TRP 10,000 study, this article will report on what proportion of members track their physical activity using technology and whether the use of such technology is associated with motivation, visit frequency, progress and ultimately membership retention.

### Data and analysis

Between July and September 2013, members completed an online questionnaire that asked them if they were using any product, app or system to track their physical activity, either inside or outside their club. Members who ticked the box to say they used an app were asked to list the app they used.

### Who tracks, and with what?

Overall, 27 per cent of members reported using some tracking device, with the majority saying they used a phone or web app (15 per cent).

Slightly more males than females reported tracking their physical activity (30 per cent versus 26 per cent) and levels of tracking declined with age (40 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds compared to 7 per cent of members aged 55 years and older). Long-standing members were also less likely to report using tracking technology compared to newer members.

Members reported an incredibly broad range of systems for tracking, but the most commonly cited was MyFitnessPal, an internet- and app-based programme designed to help people track their food and physical activity to assist with weight loss. All other tracking systems listed were used by fewer than 1 per cent of members.

### Higher motivation?

So is there a difference in exercise motivation between members who do and don't track their physical activity?

Members' motivation for exercise was classified into four types: fitness motivation, appearance motivation, enjoyment motivation and social motivation (see also HCM July 14, p48). For each motivation type – which were



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**More people made new friends at the gym if they didn't use tracking devices**

TABLE 1 Level of motivation by use of tracking and type of motivation (row %)

	Fitness	Appearance	Enjoyment	Social
Did not use tracking	60	52	55	49
Used tracking	64	62	65	51

FIGURE 1 Proportion of members reporting recent progress by use of tracking technology

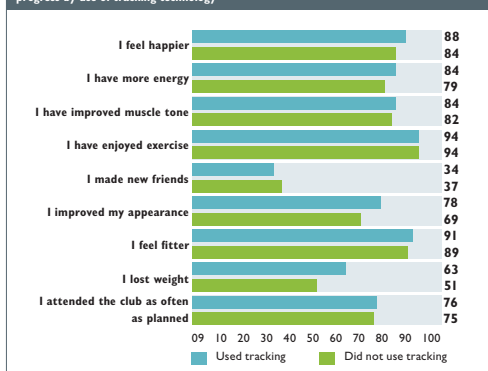
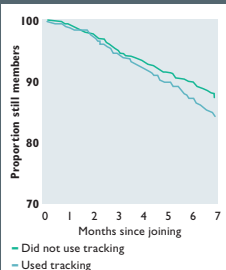


FIGURE 2 Retention rate by use of tracking technology



► not mutually exclusive – members' level of motivation was then classed as high or not. Table 1 shows the percentage of members with high levels of motivation, broken down by type of motivation and according to whether they reported tracking their physical activity. So, for example, 62 per cent of members who used a tracker said they were highly motivated by appearance; among those who didn't use a tracker, only 52 per cent were motivated by appearance.

In general, members who tracked their physical activity reported stronger motivation than members who did not track. But when considered together, only two types of motivation were significantly higher among members who tracked their activity: appearance and enjoyment motivation.

“Only two types of motivation were significantly higher among members who tracked their activity: appearance and enjoyment motivation”



## Visit frequency

The average visit frequency per month was 6.7 visits for members who reported using tracking technology and 6.7 for members who did not, so there is no association between tracking of physical activity and club visits.

## Tracking technology & progress

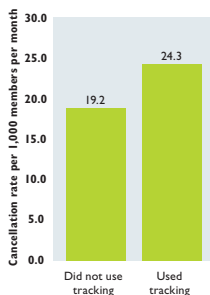
Figure 1 shows the percentage of members who report they have made progress in the last three months in nine areas, according to whether they reported tracking their activity or not.


Apart from making friends, all outcomes are in favour of tracking, although differences in reported progress between members who track their activity and those who don't is quite small. The largest difference is in weight loss, with 9 per cent more members reporting weight loss if they also reported tracking their activity. This isn't entirely surprising given the most common method of tracking reported is MyFitnessPal – specifically designed to help people with weight loss.

## Activity tracking & retention

So does tracking activity impact a member's likelihood of retaining membership? Figure 2 shows that a lower proportion of members retain their membership over seven months of follow-up if they report tracking their physical activity compared to members who do not: 87 per cent of members who didn't track their physical activity retained their membership at seven

FIGURE 3 Rate of cancellation (per 1,000 members per month) by use of tracking technology





Nine per cent more members reported weight loss if they also reported tracking

months, compared to 83 per cent of members who did track their activity.

The risk of cancelling during the seven-month follow-up period was 25 per cent higher in the tracking members compared to the non-tracking members.

Members who track their physical activity are younger than members

who do not, so it's possible this age difference accounts for the difference in risk of cancelling rather than the use of tracking technology – being younger and/or a more recent club joiner are characteristics that increase this risk.

However, although the additional risk of cancelling among tracking members

reduces to 7 per cent when we take account of differences in age between tracking and non-tracking members, this is still statistically significant.

Further, for every 1,000 members, four extra cancel each month if they track their physical activity compared to those who don't (see Figure 3). ▶



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WHAT WE LIVE FOR

## Tracking & retention – the key findings

- 27 per cent of members report using some means of self-monitoring their physical activity, with the majority using a phone-based app or website.
- The most commonly cited means of tracking physical activity was MyFitnessPal.
- Tracking physical activity was more frequently reported by newer, younger members and less so by the older and longer-standing members.
- Members who tracked their physical activity reported higher levels of motivation for exercise, particularly with regards to enjoyment and appearance, but less so for social motivation.
- Despite higher motivation levels, there was no difference in club usage between tracking and non-tracking members, suggesting that reported motivation for exercise doesn't translate into behaviour change (it's possible that behaviour changes away from the club).
- Small differences in recent progress were reported between tracking and non-tracking members, with greater progress reported for weight loss and appearance by tracking members – possibly reflecting the widespread use of weight loss-focused MyFitnessPal.
- Although members who reported tracking their physical activity had slightly higher motivation and reported a little more progress in some areas, they didn't retain their membership for any longer than those who didn't use tracking; they actually had slightly lower retention rates than members who didn't track.
- When we adjust our analysis for differences in age and length of membership, tracking members still have an increased risk of cancellation, albeit the difference in risk is slightly reduced.

MyFitnessPal is the most commonly cited means of tracking

“For every 1,000 members, four extra cancel each month if they track their physical activity compared to those who don't”

### ► Proceed with caution

Wearable technology for tracking personal behaviour attracts considerable press coverage and its use is likely to increase. It's possible that club operators will believe that either providing their own or encouraging the use of tracking technology will have an effect on their membership retention. This is intuitively appealing.

However, the results of this study suggest operators should be cautious. Even though members who choose to use tracking systems to monitor their behaviour report slightly higher levels of exercise motivation and recent progress on appearance and weight loss, this doesn't translate into changes in club usage or retention. At best there's no effect; at worst it actually increases the risk of cancellation.

We've previously reported that progress on weight and appearance do not increase membership retention, whereas perceived social and enjoyment benefits do. There is a danger, therefore, that a focus on tracking systems may detract from a greater focus on interpersonal relationships within the club – something we have shown are strongly and consistently associated

with higher retention rates in health club members of all types.

While some members will find tracking their behaviour helpful in making progress on appearance and weight loss, this alone will not improve membership retention. ●

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Since his landmark retention report in 2001 (*Winning the Retention Battle*),

**Dr Melvyn Hillsdon's** research into retention and attrition has led to the development of appropriate measures of retention, attrition and longevity that provide data for operators that can directly inform business decisions.

He will be presenting at the inaugural Retention Convention, which takes place on 14 May 2015. The event is sold out, but virtual tickets can still be purchased to join a live streaming of the convention. For more information, visit [retentionguru.cleeng.com](http://retentionguru.cleeng.com)





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***SPEEDFLEX***

# Should we trust tracking?

Recent research casts doubt on the ability of existing technology to accurately count the calories burned during exercise. But does being able to tell whether you've burnt off 400 calories or 450 during a workout actually matter? Crispin Andrews reports

**T**his February, BBC TV technology presenter Lara Lewington decided to find out whether wearable activity trackers gave people an accurate indication of the exercise they do. She spent a week wearing four of the latest trackers and found that they each gave a different record of how many calories she'd burnt off and the steps she'd taken: the range was 2,649 calories, with a 23 per cent difference in the recorded number of steps.

Not long afterwards, researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine and the Center for Health Incentives and Behavioral Economics at the University of Pennsylvania, US, claimed that smartphone apps are just as capable of accurately tracking physical activity as fitness trackers and other wearables.

Participants in this study walked on a treadmill wearing a pedometer, two

accelerometers, three wearables and two smartphones running four apps. The researchers counted people walking 500 steps and 1,500 steps and then checked to see what the apps and wearables had recorded. They found that wearables logged between 22.7 per cent and 1.5 per cent less than the observed step count, while apps recorded between 6.7 per cent less and 6.2 per cent more.

The researchers concluded that, if everyone has a smartphone and can download free apps, why – if there's not much difference in accuracy – would you pay for a wearable device?

In January 2015 there was more bad news for wearables. Iowa State University announced that seven of the most popular wearable devices provided inaccurate readings. The Iowa researchers gave 50 participants seven wearable devices each, and recorded how many calories the

devices said each individual burned off. As a control, they simultaneously tested each participant with a system that determines calorie burn by analysing oxygen levels in exhaled breath – widely recognised as the most accurate way to measure calorie consumption. The Iowa team found that all seven devices were at least 15 per cent inaccurate, with the worst offender out by 40 per cent.

## Acceptable margins of error

Newspaper headlines made much of the inaccuracies and discrepancies. However, Greg Welk, an Iowa State University professor of kinesiology, says a device that is 10–15 per cent out is actually providing a reasonably accurate estimate of calories burnt. Mitesh Patel, from the University of Pennsylvania, also said the devices his team tested were "all pretty accurate".



Even if not 100 per cent accurate, tracking data offers users a benchmark against which to measure their future performance



A study at Iowa University tested 10 trackers – a pedometer, accelerometers, wearables and apps – and none was accurate



The MioFuse is able to monitor heart rate by measuring the volume of blood under the skin

“ You can’t expect a perfect measurement. Ten to 15 per cent out is good – 5 per cent is difficult to achieve ”

“You can’t expect a perfect measurement,” comments Yang Bai, the lead Iowa State University researcher. “Ten to 15 per cent out is good – 5 per cent is difficult to achieve.”

Bai explains that the actual number of calories a person burns during exercise varies depending on the person and what they’re doing during the workout. She adds that tracking technology in fitness devices doesn’t take amount of resistance into account – say, for instance, if you’re running up a hill or lifting a heavier weight. “When the activity changes, or you change speeds, this will affect how many calories you burn off,” she adds.

#### Overstating calories?

And the challenge of accurately measuring calories isn’t limited to trackers, as Liz Dickinson, CEO of wearable company MioGlobal, explains, pointing out that counting calories based on steps taken gives only an indication of what an average person of average fitness might burn off during the exercise. “It’s imprecise,” she says. “Calories actually burn off depending on metabolic expenditure, which varies with age, fitness levels and gender.”

She continues: “If you input all this information it gives a picture of who you are, but you still only get a crude reading.”

So if the reading is only crude when all this data is inputted, what happens when people using fitness equipment in a gym just press ‘quick start’, or at most input

their age and weight? Dave Wright, CEO of heart rate system MYZONE, believes 99 per cent of people using a piece of fitness equipment don’t provide enough information to get any sort of accurate indication of the calories they burn off.

Wright also believes some equipment manufacturers overstate the number of calories burned. “It makes members feel better on their piece of equipment, which helps the supplier sell more of its brand to health clubs,” he says. “But if you want accuracy, the more data points you collect, the more accurate the equation and the more precise the calorie count.”

#### Everyday activity vs exercise

Returning specifically to the trackers vs apps debate, Doug McClure, executive VP of product marketing at FitLinxx – which has recently launched its AmpStrip device – doesn’t accept that smartphone apps do as effective a job as wearables in tracking fitness. “People might carry their phones with them all day, but the phone isn’t always on their person – it’s sitting on a desk, in a bag, or a drawer,” he points out. “If you’re running on a treadmill for an hour, then a phone app will do a similar job, but in the real world phone apps fall down.”

Dickinson says another drawback of smartphone apps is that – at least for now – they tend to measure steps, not heart rate. Meanwhile new wearables such as the Apple Watch and MioGlobal’s

latest general purpose activity tracker, MioFuse, use more advanced technology to measure heart rate. In the case of the MioFuse, electro-optical cell technology measures the volume of blood under the skin, with an algorithm calculating the heartbeat during the workout.

“This technology doesn’t calculate heart rate from an electrical beat of the heart, though, which would be more accurate still,” comments Wright.

“It also relies on the person’s arms staying still and the device being tight enough not to let light in from the outside. The algorithm predicts the movement of the wrist, which is OK when the movement is regular – running or walking. But if the movement is irregular, it can’t measure heart rate in real time. It will therefore give inaccurate readings during vigorous exercise.”

Wright believes these devices are good for the 23 hours of the day when someone isn’t exercising, but says they will need an accurate device, such as a chest strap, to more accurately measure what goes on during concerted activity.

And even then there are challenges to obtaining accurate data, because the analogue chips in cardio equipment rely on the heart rate belts that come with this chip, says Wright: “The issue with analogue chest straps is that, with multiple people exercising across numerous pieces of cardio equipment, you get cross-talk – your heart rate



FitLinxx's AmpStrip sticks to the body, so it tracks activity 24/7

“

If you can't get perfect data, don't worry about perfect data. Instead, measure relevant data.

”

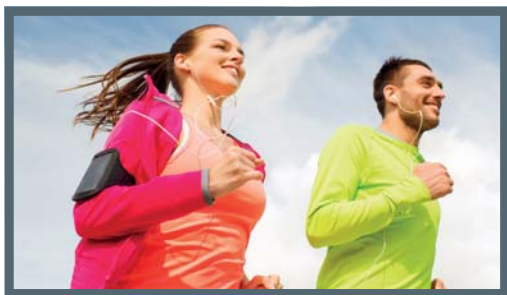


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/STAYA PRODUCTIONS

If trackers can help motivate and measure progress, is absolute accuracy so important?

► appears on someone else's machine. You can't guarantee the readings are yours."

Digital solutions such as Ant+ and Bluetooth can eliminate cross-talk.

### Progress or accuracy?

When it comes to accuracy of calculating calories, it seems the main issue is not whether the device is wearable, an app or a piece of gym equipment. It's more that, with current tech – or at least tech that's appropriate for everyday use – it's very hard to calculate calories accurately.

Mick Rice, operations director at Pulse, confirms: "There's lots of data we don't know and can't get at – for instance, a person's BMI. Anything other than an oxygen mask to some degree gives you an average." And McClure agrees: "The question is: how close can we get to that gold standard in a consumer-friendly environment?"

But if existing technology can't measure calorie count and heart rate accurately, how – short of people running around with oxygen masks on – can technology measure fitness progress?

"If you can't get perfect data, don't worry about perfect data," suggests Jeff Bartree, networked fitness product manager at Precor US. "Instead, measure relevant data."

He continues: "If you walk 10,000 steps or do 45 minutes on a cardio machine and you're told you've burnt 450–500 calories, you also know you'll burn even more if you increase the speed, the intensity or the time. You may not know exactly how many calories you burn off, but you'll get in better shape, and that's the real aim."

Rice agrees. "All this is just an index that encourages people to keep up levels of activity and track trends," he says. "Time, distance travelled or intensity provide more accurate indicators. Calories burned gives an indicator of sorts, so too heart rate and step count. So why not put them all into a wearable device?"

"People are motivated by different things. We want users to hold on to some method of keeping up an active, healthy lifestyle, so we should offer them as many indicators as possible." Bartree agrees, adding: "It's also useful if technology

allows you to record what you do across a number of different types of exercise."

### Watch this space

Eventually, technological advances will enable trackers to be more accurate. "We'll get better data recording, better algorithms and better ways of communicating this to users in meaningful and useful ways," says McClure. "Today's technology is much more accurate than early tracking tech and I don't see any reason why this trend wouldn't continue."

Bartree believes people, and headline writers, need to be more patient: "This technology is a relatively new thing for mass market fitness. It might not be accurate at the moment, but now it's caught on there will be lots of clever people looking at it. Over time, it will get more accurate."

Currently, the general consensus is that tracking relative progress and offering people different measures to motivate them – to be used as an index against which to measure progress – should be more important than absolute accuracy. ●






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Strava taps into an innate human desire to compete

# Strava society

Both riding on, and fuelling, the cycling boom, Strava has inspired people to get out on their bikes, trying to be King or Queen of the Mountain. Marketing manager Gareth Nettleton talks to Kath Hudson



WORLD  
FOCUS



Nettleton: "Strava is much more than a tracking app"

## What is Strava?

Strava is, at its heart, a global community of athletes. Through our mobile apps and website, we connect, motivate and inspire runners and cyclists throughout their experience, from exploration and adventure to training and competition. Designed by athletes, for athletes, Strava unites millions from around the world every day through the sports they love.

Although we allow people to track their rides and runs, we're much more than a tracking app. Similarly, even though we connect people, we don't call ourselves a social network.

Members can make a 'segment', which is a designated stretch of road – usually a hill climb – that they can compete on. People love to blast themselves over the segment. The fastest are named King of the Mountain (KOM) or Queen of the Mountain (QOM) for cycling. Runners are awarded a Course Record (CR). It taps into an innate human desire to compete: there are lots of bragging rights and desires to be that fastest person ever. It's very competitive.

Equally, the data and stats side is as important as the social and competitive side. Some of our members prefer to use Strava in one-player mode: they simply use the tool to get their own stats and track their progress over time. For them, beating their own time is just as motivating as competing with others. We often see this type of behaviour





PHOTO: JESSE GRUBER

among our female members. However, I feel that Strava is more fun when you have lots of friends and followers also on Strava.

#### **Q When and how did Strava come about?**

The two founders, Michael Horvath and Mark Gaiety, met at Harvard in the early 90s. They were in the rowing team together and came up with the vision of creating a virtual locker room: invoking inspiration, motivation and camaraderie. However, the technology wasn't there at the time, so the idea was put in a bottom drawer and they started another software company instead.

Fast forward to the mid-2000s: they had moved from rowing to running and cycling, and wanted another venture. With GPS being so accessible, they figured now could be a good time to dust off their original idea. They started off with one hill and gave GPS devices to some friends to test the concept. The feedback was great and Strava was born.

#### **Q How many users does Strava have now, and how quickly did it grow?**

We don't say a figure, because as soon as we do it's out of date. However, it's in the substantial millions and growing by

Strava has turned a small hardcore following in the US into millions of global users

100,000 each week. On the cycling side, there are more men than women, but the split is fairly even for running.

Initially, in 2009, it was small and reliant on a Garmin, but it still won a small, hardcore following in San Francisco, US. Exponential growth came in 2011, when the mobile apps

launch made Strava accessible to anyone with a smartphone.

It grew quickly in English-speaking markets from day one. We didn't go into a second language until last year, when we launched in France. Now we're in 15 languages.

It spreads via a network effect: starting with small communities, who tell their family and friends, who tell their family and friends, and so on.

#### **Q Who's your target market?**

Passionate athletes: not necessarily the most able, but definitely the most keen – those who have a real desire to get out there and be active. So we cut across both sexes and all ages: we have teens and septuagenarians using Strava.

We're not about getting anyone to their first 5k, or getting them off the couch – there are others aiming at that market. We're more about enhancing the experience for the guys who are really into their cycling and running. That said, although we were adopted by the pro cyclists in the early

► days, we've tried to make the product useful and engaging whatever your ability level. We feel that, if we could make it good enough for the pros, it will engage anyone.

#### Q How do you continue to keep your customers engaged?

If people aren't engaged we don't have a business, so that's where we put our focus. Our members are very active and also very engaged: 30 per cent of Strava users are active every single day, and it's through us that they're living out their athletic lives.

We have a mantra that we have to do three things really, really well: connect, motivate and entertain. So we try to keep it fresh and continue to develop new features.

Strava is a much more fun place when you have lots of friends and followers – the social impact of your friends will help to keep you engaged – so we make it very easy for users to grow their own network.

One thing we definitely know from our data: once you've been for three or four rides or runs, you're hooked. We don't tend to lose people, which means the product is engaging enough to keep people motivated. It's a good indicator that, if we can get people into the exercise habit, it keeps them exercising.

#### Q What are your current streams of revenue?

At the moment we're not profitable, but we're confident of getting there in the near future. The core experience is free for users, but we also have a Premium level – which offers more features, perks and benefits – that costs £3.99 a month or

£39.99 a year. Our aim is to keep growing our Premium member base, so that these members support everything else and bring us into profitability. We're actively working on features at the moment that will further enhance the Strava Premium experience. But equally, when we do come up with a great feature, there's always the temptation to make it available to everyone to help keep our whole user base engaged.

In addition, a small but growing part of the business is letting Strava athletes purchase gear as a reward for completing one of our challenges. This ranges from limited edition cycling jerseys to tech T-shirts for runners. The unique part of our model, though, is that people have to earn that shirt through sweat and hard graft. We think that's much more compelling than a standard shop model.

Strava Metro is another strand. We realised three years ago that we were collecting amazing data about where people run and ride – data that would be very useful to town planners if they were, for example, doing an analysis of where they should be improving infrastructure and making changes. Hopefully the end result of sharing this data will be that roads will become safer.

We talked to the Oregon Department of Transport in the US first, and then the UK's Transport for London approached us. They want to know the main cycling arteries into and out of the city, and which junctions are avoided.

Previously the only way to measure this was by standing by the roadside with clipboards, but we can supply them with minute-by-minute roll-ups of any stretch of road.

One thing that separates us is that we don't have ads in our product. We had a founding principle that we wouldn't litter the

Data from Strava Metro can help town planners analyse transport routes



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



app with ads. It means we haven't made as much money, but it's huge thing in terms of the user experience.

#### **Q Does the business face any threats?**

We're always conscious and aware, but what we've built in the last five years is pretty unique. On the cycling side, we've grown very quickly and critical mass is always a competitive advantage. Running is different: there are lots of running trackers and apps out there and most are older than us. That's why we're always looking for unique features to help us create separation between a Strava experience and the experience available on other sports and fitness platforms.

Equally, we don't worry too much. We believe that, if we keep doing good work – adding new features and keeping our users entertained and motivated – people will keep discovering us and good things will happen.

#### **Q What developments are you planning for the future?**

We're excited about all the new wearable technology. We try to be device agnostic and make Strava compatible with all hardware devices: we're the Switzerland of fitness platforms. We generally view it as a good thing, as it provides more ways to upload to Strava. Going forward, we're working on the overall experience so we better

Strava's aim is to become an indispensable product to runners and cyclists

serve athletes before and during activities. Historically we've been very strong post-ride and post-run, so lately we've been adding new features to broaden this, such as route planning and training plans, to help people plan their exercise rather than just looking backwards.

Also, we'll be working on our Premium product and putting our data to good use – for example, producing the best running and cycling routes and also identifying top stops, such as views, cafés and bike shops. Our aim is to become indispensable to runners and cyclists.

#### **Q How can the health club industry work with technology such as Strava?**

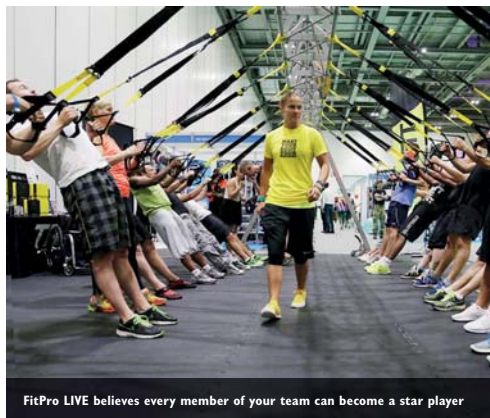
If someone is active, they'll use a number of places and methods to train. Pretty much no-one only runs or cycles – they'll have the appetite to do supporting activity like CrossFit, yoga and strength work, as having a great core is really important for runners and cyclists.

There are huge swathes of the world where people can't ride their bikes outside in winter, but they don't want to be unfit by spring. I'm sure Strava helps to fill group cycling classes all around the world.

What gyms could learn from technology is how to keep people engaged and motivated by using a social element. Gyms can be lonely, whereas Strava has opened up individual sports by creating a community. ●

# Building a winning team

**FitPro LIVE – the leading education event for fitness professionals – is an unmissable event for operators**



FitPro LIVE believes every member of your team can become a star player



Delegates can spend two days gathering fresh programming ideas

“We can’t train staff and we can’t keep staff.” Retention and education – the two most commonly expressed areas of complaint by fitness operators. Most clubs have one or two star players – the PTs who have an innate ability to inspire clients to achieve their goals and the group exercise instructors whose classes pack out the timetable every time. But it can be a challenge to make the whole team perform as well as the standouts. It’s easy to end up thinking that it’s innate ability – not a skill learned – that sets them apart.

The FitPro LIVE team believes that every member of your club staff can be as good as your best. They just need the right tools to unlock their potential. Education is crucial. It’s the single most important factor that can make a difference to how you retain both your clients and your staff.

FitPro LIVE at ExCeL London on 9–10 July is the UK’s only fitness industry event tailored to the needs of PTs, group exercise instructors and operators. Your team can spend two days stuffing their virtual kit bag with fresh programming ideas, new trends and the all-important interpersonal skills. As an operator you can network with peers, trial the latest gym floor equipment and assess breaking research.

## Working together

Industry leaders will cover ways to deliver bespoke treatment to clients: from working with mid-life female clients and other special populations, to dealing with the pressing issue of



## Education is the single most important factor that can make a difference to how you retain both your clients and your staff

clients' chronic pain and understanding nutrient timing. Further sessions include iconic calisthenics moves, Olympic lifting and mind/body fusion masterclasses, plus business workshops on topics such as monetising social media with killer content, running an online business and building empathy skills.

As an operator, you can bulk book and pre-select your team's sessions to ensure their learning stays on point, or alternatively allow them to choose their own timetable. All delegates can gain up to 6 REPs points – a worthwhile exchange for a weekend's investment.

There's an additional benefit too: as well as making sure your team comes back at the top of its game, you'll also be giving them a weekend of bond-building. With live demos to join in, competitive challenges and taster sessions as well as the workshops and seminars, FitPro LIVE 2015 is the perfect blend of learning opportunity and team building. A team that plays well together stays together – and creates a happier, ultra confident and measurably more profitable atmosphere in your club.

FitPro co-founder and director

### ALL STAR LINE-UP

- Brian St. Pierre is director of performance nutrition at Precision Nutrition, working with sports teams. The author of several nutrition books, he's a registered dietitian, certified sports nutritionist, and strength and conditioning specialist.
- Douglas Heel is a physiotherapist. He teaches his Be Activated system worldwide, which creates immediate changes in function and performance.
- James Earls, the director of Anatomy Trains, specialises in myofascial release and structural integration, and founded Ultimate Massage Solutions.

- Phil Richards is regarded as one of the leading strength, conditioning and nutritional experts in the world. He has prepared and transformed the careers of numerous athletes across many different sports.
- Brian Cochrane has been a Nike athlete since 2009 and is a master trainer for the Nike Training Club, TRX and Virgin Active health clubs. Cochrane has trained hundreds of instructors and also works on a consultancy basis for high-profile fitness/lifestyle publications, and frequently offers advice on exercise, diet and training.

Jane Waller comments, "FitPro LIVE is continuing its heritage of providing instructors and personal trainers with the latest knowledge and access to world-class educators within the fitness industry. As a solutions provider for clubs, centres and fitness professionals, we are keen to provide a rich vein of educational information that PTs and instructors can tap into." ●

**FitPro LIVE runs from 9–10 July 2015 at ExCeL London. FitPro is offering Health Club Management readers a unique two-day ticket pass for just £99. Book now at [fitpro.com/FLP15\\_HCM](http://fitpro.com/FLP15_HCM) using code FPL15HCM99. @fitprolive / facebook/FitProLive**



# PINK PLANET

Ray Algar reports on Planet Fitness' mission to raise funds for breast cancer



Evelyn H Lauder founded the BCRF, whose mission is to advance breast cancer research

**T**his month's Gymtopia story focuses on Planet Fitness, the fast-growing North American low-cost gym brand, and its four-year partnership with Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) to raise much-needed funds for the charity.

For the last four years, the project took place during May to coincide with America's celebration of Mothers' Day.

## How the project started

Back in 2010, Planet Fitness wanted to develop a project to coincide with Mothers' Day, which in the US is held on the second Sunday in May. The gym brand was seeking to support a cause with deep significance and meaning on a day that celebrated women.

Following considerable research, Planet Fitness decided to align itself with

the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, founded by Evelyn H Lauder in 1993, whose everyday mission is to prevent and cure breast cancer by helping to advance the world's most promising research in this area.

## Why this cause matters to Planet Fitness

Every two minutes, an American woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. Some of these women may have a connection with Planet Fitness – a possibility that becomes ever more likely as the gym brand continues to grow its 900-strong club network across the United States and Canada.

As Chris Rondeau, CEO of Planet Fitness, says: "We're committed to helping improve people's lives, through fitness and giving back to our communities, and with so many grandmothers, mothers and daughters touched by breast cancer, we felt this promotion was the perfect way to honour Mother's Day."

## Gymtopia – a place where clubs do social good

Gymtopia was conceived by founder and chief engagement officer Ray Algar, who believes the global health and fitness industry has enormous influence and potential to do good in the world, beyond its immediate customers. The idea of Gymtopia is simple: to curate and spread remarkable stories in which the fitness industry uses its influence to reach out and support an external community in need. It was created with the generous support of five organisations: Companhia Athletica, Gantner Technologies, Les Mills, Retention Management and The Gym Group. Gymtopia received an Outstanding Achievement Award in the ukactive Matrix Flame Awards 2014.

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





## Simple idea, big impact

For a one-week period each May, Planet Fitness donated to Breast Cancer Research Foundation 100 per cent of the \$10 enrolment fee it charged new members to join its clubs. It was a very generous and authentic act given that monthly membership is also only \$10 – authentic because, if the intention were simply to generate some PR buzz, the brand could have donated just a portion of the joining fee rather than all of it.

As the low-cost gym franchise grew across North America, so more of its franchise club network became involved, increasing the funds raised each year.

## Extending the campaign

But Planet Fitness' partnership with Breast Cancer Research Foundation evolved beyond a simple fundraising programme targeted at new members.

The partnership was also brought to life in-club via pink treadmills, which triggered a \$1 donation for every mile logged during the week, up to a \$25,000 total cap across the whole network. Limited edition T-shirts were also sold with a message on the back saying '100 never meant so much' – and again, 100 per cent of the proceeds went to the BCRF. Print and online media channels were leveraged to drive awareness of both the BCRF campaign and its mission.

## Influence drives awareness

Planet Fitness is a surprisingly large business. Back in March 2014, the



The chain donated \$1 for every treadmill mile logged



Chris Rondeau is CEO of Planet Fitness, which now has 900 clubs

company announced it had reached five million members across its then 750 clubs. One year on, with an additional 150 clubs, it should now be approaching six million members – larger than the entire population of Denmark. This means the brand has considerable influence to intervene and play a meaningful role in issues it cares about.

Importantly, it doesn't have to do this on its own. Its Mothers' Day campaign came to involve numerous contributors – including the media community, which donated \$50,000 of media services in 2014 encompassing billboards, public service radio announcements, direct mail and online campaign impressions.

## Financial impact

The Planet Fitness Mothers' Day campaign raised \$2.1m between 2010 and 2014 (source: BCRF). This is a significant sum that helped support the mission of the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, which annually funds more than 222 university scientists and global medical institutions.

Importantly, the money raised by Planet Fitness is not sitting on account simply accumulating interest, but is being invested in critical research. One recipient of Planet Fitness funding is Dr Dipali Sharma, an associate professor of oncology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, US, whose team is investigating how molecular changes caused by obesity trigger breast cancer.

Strategic long-term charitable alliances such as these are proof that gyms can have a purpose and reach that extends well beyond their club walls,

touching the lives of people who may themselves never be members.

Did you know that Havas Media, in its 2013 Meaningful Brands survey of 134,000 consumers, discovered that the majority of respondents wouldn't care if three-quarters of brands disappeared tomorrow? I see alliances like these as essential in helping a brand stay interesting, relevant and viable.

## What can your business do?

How can your club or centre harness Mothers' Day to celebrate the role of women and create some meaningful impact in your community?

As always, start with a cause your stakeholders genuinely care about, because this is a mission, not a chore. Also carefully identify charity partners and pay attention to how efficiently they deliver on their everyday missions. The BCRF, for example, is recognised as a highly efficient US non-profit with top evaluations from independent firms that assess effectiveness and impact. ●

### IN A NUTSHELL

**Project by:** Planet Fitness, US

**Web:** [www.planetfitness.com](http://www.planetfitness.com)

**Charity supported:** Breast Cancer Research Foundation

**Charity website:** [www.bcrfcur.org](http://www.bcrfcur.org)

**Project status:** Ran from 2010–2014

**Impact:** US

**Gymtopia keywords:** Health & Wellbeing, Medical Research

# Learning to be active

In the face of high levels of inactivity and obesity among the nation's children, a growing number of initiatives are rising to the challenge of getting kids moving again. Julie Fisher reports

## ACTIVE MOVEMENT

Mike Loosemore, lead consultant in sport and exercise medicine, University College Hospital, London

“**A**ctive Movement is a behaviour changing programme that uses two characters – Stan (standing) and Sid (sitting) – to introduce children to the fact that standing is good. It aims to engage children through recognition and familiarity, and instils greater self-awareness of their physicality. “Inspiring children aged 0–11 years, the characters are incorporated throughout the Active Movement programme and encourage standing up and movement within the daily routine.

“Initially a campaign of posters, language and role-playing, the programme intensifies in two further phases to be more dynamic through voiceovers, dolls, storybooks, nursery



rhymes, games, homework, community integration and even a 'live' visit.

“The Active Movement Community concept also embraces parents and staff, and an adult programme has been

developed that improves staff health while empowering them to educate children. Parents also become involved through children's homework and constant communication.

“Abberley Parochial VC Primary School in Worcestershire applied the programme across the whole school of five- to 11-year-olds. Pupils were given a series of daily movements to do, particularly during lessons when they would normally be sedentary for long periods.

“The Sid and Stan characters were incorporated into everyday language during the school day, as well as additional activities during playtime and team events. Special homework was provided, and a series of posters, announcements, comics, leaflets and posters helped to educate the children about the benefits of activity.

“The results have been astounding. There was an emotional connection with Stan and Sid, along with a clear retention of their positive health messages. Behavioural questionnaires completed by staff about the children showed improvements in self-esteem, health optimism, self-protection against illness and health commitment (in one case by joining a gym).

“Parent interviews highlighted an excitement and commitment to the programme that has led to discussions with local secondary schools, in a bid to maintain children's progress. A secondary school programme is now being developed and will focus on the curriculum, incorporating the scientific and biological dangers of inactivity compared with the physical, emotional and long-term benefits of being active.

“Overall, the programme aims to be a continuous and progressive process throughout school life, which we believe will make behavioural change more embedded and long-lasting.”



The programme uses role play, storybooks, rhymes, games and homework



Activities are delivered  
at playtime, lunchtime  
and after school

## ENGAGE TO COMPETE

Dean Horridge, CEO and founder,  
Fit for Sport

“Following the success of the Engage to Compete pilot project last year – in 27 schools in Manchester and 20 in Somerset, with 10,761 children taking part – Fit for Sport has been awarded nearly £200,000 of Sport England National Lottery funding to continue the programme in two new areas: Sandwell in Birmingham and Tower Hamlets in London.

“The programme aims to give primary school kids access to positive physical activity and school sport sessions, while simultaneously educating and involving adults and leisure/community providers in conducting the sessions.

“Fit For Sport provides training, support and mentoring for teachers and support staff, focusing on delivering a



range of activities at playtime, lunchtime and after school to ensure all children meet the recommended guidelines of 60 minutes’ physical activity each day.

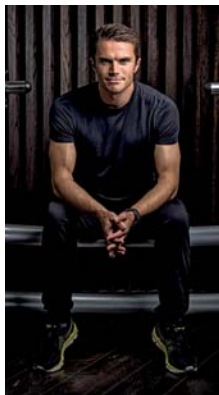
“We know schools are hard-pushed to get more PE timetabled, so we focus

on maximising playground ‘downtime’. Initially we focus on key skills such as running, jumping, ball skills, co-ordination and agility, and our main aim is to excite children into being active and show them it’s enjoyable.

“To demonstrate progress, three tasks – throw and catch, agility run and a jumping co-ordination challenge – are performed at three levels of difficulty.

“The project seeks to involve all children in some form of physical activity. It links in with the School Games competition – within individual schools and against neighbouring schools – but Engage to Compete is carefully named: we must engage kids before they start to compete. As not all kids will compete for their school, we need an ongoing high level of non-competitive activity to keep all the kids active, even if they’re not going after medals and cups.

“The overall aim is to instil good activity habits that will continue after the two-term programme has ended.” ▶



## FITNESS 4 LIFE

Matt Roberts, founder, Fitness 4 Life

“We launched Fitness 4 Life in 2013 as a social enterprise company with a policy to reinvest profits back into the programme. It provides a solution to schools that need to increase their children's activity levels and counter poor levels of fitness and exercise participation. “The system provides training for teachers, giving them tools to guide pupils through a structured, daily 20-minute programme of regular, fun and vigorous exercises. Daily exercise attendance is logged on the software and accompanied by an app that provides full video support, diarised session planning and graphs of the performance of each child and school. Termly results give the

school and each child ownership and pride in their fitness development.

“In a pilot programme at primary schools across the London Borough of Lewisham, fitness scores among the children tested increased over a six-week period by an average of 12 per cent, and over a six-month period by an average of 21 per cent.

“The programme empowers schools to re-invest in the teaching staff while upskilling the workforce, and not only improves students' fitness levels but also improves their self-confidence. It has also led to reduced levels of absenteeism and has even engaged teaching staff and parents into greater levels of exercise.

“We're working with Sport London to roll out Fitness 4 Life into schools in all the London boroughs during 2015 and 2016. We also have schools across the UK launching the programme, and in UAE and Brazil in the coming year.”



## SCHOOL GYM

Dr Mark Bellamy, project manager, School Gym / Leisure Lines

“School Gym is a concept that was developed and tested over a five-year period, and it's now been rolled out in Dyffryn Taf secondary school in Carmarthenshire and Cardigan secondary school in Ceredigion, both in Wales. It's a complete system for physical wellbeing and the development of physical literacy, in partnership with the schools and our team at Leisure Lines GB, and it's designed to tackle obesity in a fun, motivational way.

“When we originally met the PE team at Dyffryn Taf, it was clear they were onto something – developing a school



School Gym model is engaging even those not normally interested in PE or sports

gym that pupils actually wanted to use. We worked with them to produce a complete equipment mix to support physical development, ensuring the whole set-up supported the school curriculum. It includes software for pupil expert coaching and monitoring of attainment levels, plus developing 'train the trainer' programmes to ensure School Gym can be rolled out country-wide.

“We want young people to be in an environment where they can play while developing the skills and knowledge that underpin true physical literacy. Much of the equipment is geared towards the gamification of PE, with the pupils making up their own games, rules and methods of scoring – for example, throwing medicine balls at alpha-numeric boards to answer maths questions, or making a numbered track where teams run to blocks to earn points by answering questions correctly. This helps ensure pupils who wouldn't typically excel at PE become key members of the team.

“School Gym is having a significant impact on fitness and involvement levels – even among those not usually interested in PE or sports, many of whom are voluntarily attending additional sessions out of school hours – and obesity levels have dropped dramatically at the two schools. We've also seen the culture in the schools themselves change: staff have observed an improvement in behaviour, engagement, attitude, attendance, self-esteem and positivity among pupils.

“In addition, Estyn reports at both schools positively mention School Gym, and pupils who are moving from primary to secondary school are actively looking to attend these schools due to the School Gym. Cardigan School also has external students with special needs attending with their physiotherapists, using School Gym to exercise and undertake rehab work.

“Another School Gym location will open shortly, and we have a further three or four in the pipeline.”



## LOOKING TO IMPROVE P.E. AT YOUR SCHOOL?



School Gym is a health, fitness and well-being programme that allows all children to get involved in Physical Education at school, regardless of age, gender or physical ability.

It comprises of not only the physical environment but is supported by a software package that has been developed by leading experts in sports, fitness and sports psychology.



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## OCL KIDS' ZONE

Julie Hilditch, health and physical activity development officer, OCL



**T**he Kids' Zone exercise referral scheme, run by OCL and funded by the Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) Dragons' Den project, launched in April 2014. After just a year, it has helped 64.6 per cent of children on the scheme to stabilise their BMI, and 25 per cent to lower it.



Overweight and normal weight children all take part in activities together

"Nearly one in five children aged 10–11 years in Oldham are obese and, if the current trend continues, two-thirds will be obese by 2050. Kids' Zone specifically targets these children: initially we invited every reception and year 6 child taking part in the National Child Measurement Scheme who had a 'very overweight' BMI to join.

"Bringing them onto the programme gives them free access to a range of activities including swimming, trampolining, diving, gymnastics, badminton, climbing, table tennis and football.

"Stigmatisation can be a big barrier to uptake for many schemes, but Kids' Zone sessions are integrated into normal classes at OCL; although the children are chosen for the programme due to their weight, they don't feel singled out. No-

one needs to know why they're attending and this – plus the fact we encourage them to choose their favourite activities to inspire participation and increase attendance – helps them to feel part of the group, join in and get the most from whatever sessions they're participating in. It's this inclusiveness that has helped us get strong results.

"The project has already helped 103 children to become more involved in physical activity and lower their BMI. On the recommendation of the CCG, we've now broadened the scheme and made it available to children who are 'overweight', not just those who are 'very overweight'. What we really want is to prevent, as well as treat, obesity, so opening up the scheme to more children makes sense."

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE (M.A.D)

Mark Storie, Astley Sports Village director / M.A.D programme co-ordinator



**T**he M.A.D. – Make a Difference – programme is for significantly overweight, inactive students with self-confidence issues. Its aim is to re-educate them to participate in sport

or activities with their classroom peers, support them with emotional issues, and encourage them to be health-conscious and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

"The young people participate in a 10-week programme, in which they use their once-a-week tutorial periods to visit Astley Sports Village in Dukinfield, Cheshire, for an hour of group physical activity such as basketball or dodgeball.

"Students are encouraged to be active by running, throwing and catching, and to try to ensure their team wins. It's a big thing to get them to run for that ball and win that catch against a fellow student, so there's a focus on team spirit to overcome any apathy towards activity.

"This is followed by a 30-minute session in the fitness suite, which features networked Precor equipment that enables pupils to input a long-term focus, such as losing weight, and set targets such as distance or calories.

They can monitor their progress with the weekly goal summary, which indicates if they're on or off target.

"They also attend an after-school nutrition session covering food sources, meal plans, timescales of sensible food intake and portion control, and

complete a weekly food diary. A supermarket visit helps them explore healthy meal choices and choose their dinner for that night.

"The scheme launched last year with a pilot of 16 kids, and every member of the group improved their health and wellbeing, lost body fat and improved their cardiovascular system. Their outlook has also changed and self-confidence and self-esteem has been raised.

"PE teachers tell us that M.A.D. kids are now more active and committed to their PE lessons. They don't feel intimidated because all the children are going through the same thing – they help each other out – which frees them up to engage with the activities. Meanwhile parental feedback shows students have made new friends in and out of school, take more pride in their appearance and are eager to share their workout success and data at home.

"Another group of 12 kids are now going through the programme, and we hope to roll it out to other primary and secondary schools in Tameside this year." ●





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Before installing solar panels, check which way the roof faces: the closer the alignment to south, the more electricity generated

# NO PAIN, JUST LOTS TO GAIN

Adopting a more intelligent approach to your energy usage can save thousands of pounds a year without compromising service.

Simon Wright of energy consultancy Pure World Energy shares his top tips for leisure operators

Anyone who runs a health club, especially if it comes with a swimming pool, will be no stranger to eye-watering energy bills. It's one of the sizeable operating costs all owners face, and despite recent dramatic falls in the price of oil, long-term energy costs continue to rise. According to the Office for National Statistics, the past decade has seen energy costs rise 52 per cent above the rate of inflation. Electricity alone has risen by 130 per cent since 2000 – approximately four times the rise in the retail price index over the same period.

It's easy to feel powerless about these costs in the face of global geo-political trends, and club owners often assume there's little they can do to reduce

their energy bills without compromising service and potentially upsetting members: no-one likes a pool that's too cold or towel warmers that have been turned off as part of an economy drive.

But the fact is that, alongside some exciting new technology, there are many straightforward, simple steps owners and managers can take that will drastically reduce their bills without affecting the quality of service they extend to their customers.

## Out of sight, out of mind?

Many club owners would be shocked to discover just how much of their monthly energy bill can be attributed to sheer thoughtlessness. A recent example was a health club where the lights and heating were left on 24 hours a day for the cleaners, even though they didn't come in until 5.00am. In another instance, a leisure centre was keeping the pool heating and air handling on constantly, simply because a duty manager had changed the settings six months previously and no-one had remembered to change them back.

Because the plant operating these essential services is often out of sight and therefore out of mind, it tends to be overshadowed by the more visible front of house facilities when it comes



Health clubs can make huge savings simply by turning their lights off overnight



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

to operational decisions, investment and allocating funds for ongoing refurbishment. What's becoming increasingly clear, though, is that by adopting a proactive approach to energy management, clubs of all sizes are able to significantly reduce their costs.

Steve Bambury, head of commercial operations at 1Life – which won the Go Green ukactive FLAME Award 2014 – says “ongoing proactive energy management is essential for the long-term control of energy consumption and costs”. 1Life's programme to optimise its building controls contributed to a 12 per cent reduction in energy consumption. This contributed to 1Life rising to seventh in the CRC league tables – the highest position by a leisure company.

### What are you paying?

Energy experts identify three key areas where an impact can be made. The first is price: what you're actually paying for the energy you use. The second is the energy hardware, namely the systems and controls you use to introduce energy into your facility. And the final area is energy strategy, which is about the way you use the hardware to deliver the energy you've purchased.

Energy price is the amount you're charged for the electricity, oil, gas and

water you use. The first step towards regaining control of your costs is to familiarise yourself with your bill and understand the breakdown of your charges. Some suppliers bundle everything together, while others break bills down into different components, with significantly different prices charged for different times of the day. It's by no means uncommon to be charged four times more for a unit of energy at certain peak times, such as late afternoon or early evening, than at others.

If you're a larger organisation, you may be liable for TRIAD charges. This is where huge premiums, sometimes exceeding £30/kwh as against the normal 10p/kwh, are charged during three key half-hour periods each year.

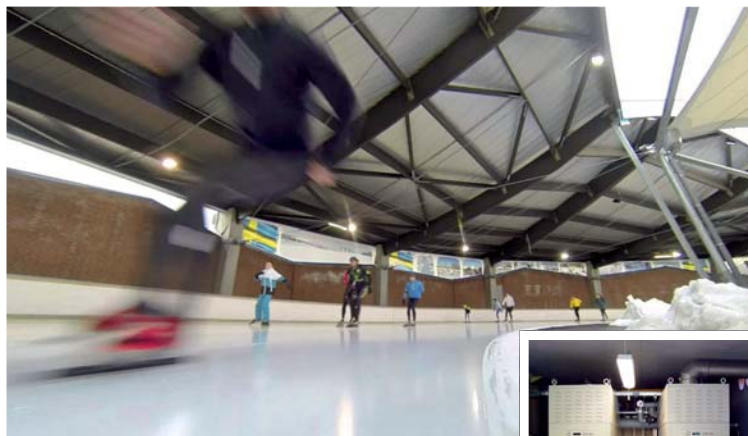
You may not be able to negotiate these charges down, but knowing what they are and planning your energy usage with them in mind can make a huge difference. Shop around, or work with an independent broker to secure the best deal. Energy companies make millions of pounds a year out of customer apathy and ignorance, from people who could be buying their energy more intelligently but don't bother and settle unquestioningly for the first package they're offered.

### Lowering energy costs: three key areas



### Investing in hardware

Energy hardware covers everything that delivers and controls your energy supply. It can range from a light bulb to full-scale plant room solutions such as Combined Heat and Power (CHP), which involves simultaneously producing electricity and heat from a single fuel source, such as natural gas, biomass, biogas, ground source, coal, waste heat or oil. For a club with a pool, which needs heating all year round, CHP can significantly reduce energy costs and carbon footprint. ▶



**Sports Centre de Scheg in the Netherlands offers a 400m ice skating rink**

► Solar photo-voltaic panels have gained a lot of publicity in recent years. As their name suggests, they generate electricity from the sun, resulting in no fuel costs and virtually no maintenance costs. Installing Solar PV panels is supported by the government's Feed-In-Tariff scheme, and while the rates for the scheme have dropped over the last three years, this has been more than matched by falling implementation costs.

However, any health club considering going down this route should first ask themselves whether they have the rights to put panels on the roof, and also consider the direction their roof faces. Put simply, the closer the alignment to south, the more electricity will be produced. Finally, they should check there are no obstructions, such as adjoining buildings, that will block the sun from hitting the panels.

Microturbines are becoming more and more popular among larger sports and leisure sites under pressure to reduce energy bills and minimise their carbon footprint. A microturbine is similar to a miniature jet engine and is contained in a case the size of a standard refrigerator. It has a single moving part supported by air bearings, and can operate on a variety of gaseous or liquid fuels.

The Sports Centre De Scheg in the Netherlands – which has a 400m ice skating track as well as a sub-tropical pool, sauna and competition pool – was struggling to cope with a 17-year-

old reciprocating engine. When that eventually gave up, the centre opted for a Capstone C200 microturbine linked to a gas compressor, heat exchanger and industrial ventilator. Hot exhaust air from the microturbine is diverted through the heat exchanger to increase overall efficiency and deliver ultra-low emissions. Other benefits include low noise levels, low maintenance costs and increased reliability.

The Quellenhof Sport and Wellness Resort in Italy is another convert to microturbines. With 150 rooms, 20 spas, eight saunas and 20 swimming pools, it's a significant energy consumer. Having relied on traditional boilers and local utility companies for its heating requirements, the family-owned firm took the decision in 2010 to install two Capstone C65 ICHP microturbines, with heat recovery modules installed on each unit to capture any wasted heat. Not only has the resort reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 800 tonnes a year, but it's also saved €75,000 a year – some €10,000 of which is in reduced maintenance costs. The return on the initial investment was achieved within three years.

#### **And if you can't afford that?**

While these state-of-the-art systems look set to provide benefits to places like De Scheg and Quellenhof for years to come, just because you're not in a position to make a similar outlay doesn't



**Quellenhof and de Scheg's microturbines allow for heat recovery and exchange**

mean you can't do anything about your energy consumption. What many owners and managers don't realise is the controls managing and operating these systems can be every bit as important as the systems themselves. The most advanced system in the world will still yield disappointing returns if it's not managed properly, while the intelligent application of controls can squeeze savings out of the most antiquated boiler.

The Carbon Trust, a government body set up to advise businesses on ways of reducing carbon emissions, estimates that up to 90 per cent of heating, ventilation and air conditioning building control systems are inadequate in some way, at an annual cost to industry of over £500m. According to its findings, fitting a full set of controls to an older heating system that previously had none can save over 15 per cent on energy bills.

Controls can range from a simple timer bought from a DIY shop to a full building control system. Increasingly, facility managers and those responsible for maintaining large buildings such as



Quellenhof Sport and Wellness Resort's 20 pools mean energy demands are high

schools, offices, hotels, leisure centres and health clubs are turning towards Building Automation Systems (BAS). These are centralised, interlinked networks of hardware and software that monitor and control the environment. The system ensures the operational performance of the facility as well as the comfort and safety of building occupants.

Typically, such control systems are installed in new buildings or as part of a renovation where they replace an outdated control system. Most of the automation comes in the form of devices mounted to equipment, or hidden underfloor or in the ceiling, and some personalised control can be added through thermostat-like devices.

From a central management perspective, the BAS resides as software on a computer or as a web page. Different controllers manage the equipment and the various parts of the network, while sensors provide input data to the controllers.

### What's your strategy?

It's clear there are some exciting systems, and increasingly sophisticated controls that make the most of their potential. But what shines through is that, whatever system you have or can afford, an energy strategy is key to successfully managing your energy costs.

Before you can programme your systems and controls, or instruct your staff when to switch off the lights or

turn down the heating, you need to ask yourself some basic questions. When do you want the lights on? What lighting is essential for security? When should the heating come on, and at what time does the building need to be at its optimum temperature? What temperature do you want your pool to be set at? This could vary according to your customer profile – for example, competitive swimmers prefer training in a cooler pool than schoolchildren might like.

Take nothing for granted and challenge every assumption, no matter how long you've held it. The rewards are out there and can be yours for the taking. ●

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Wright is finance director of Pure World Energy, a specialist energy consultancy that aims to give its clients real, long-term control over their energy expenditure without the need for capital investment or additional resource. Pure World Energy installs the technology and resources needed to implement the ongoing analysis, optimisation and generation of energy; it is remunerated through the savings it makes for its clients.

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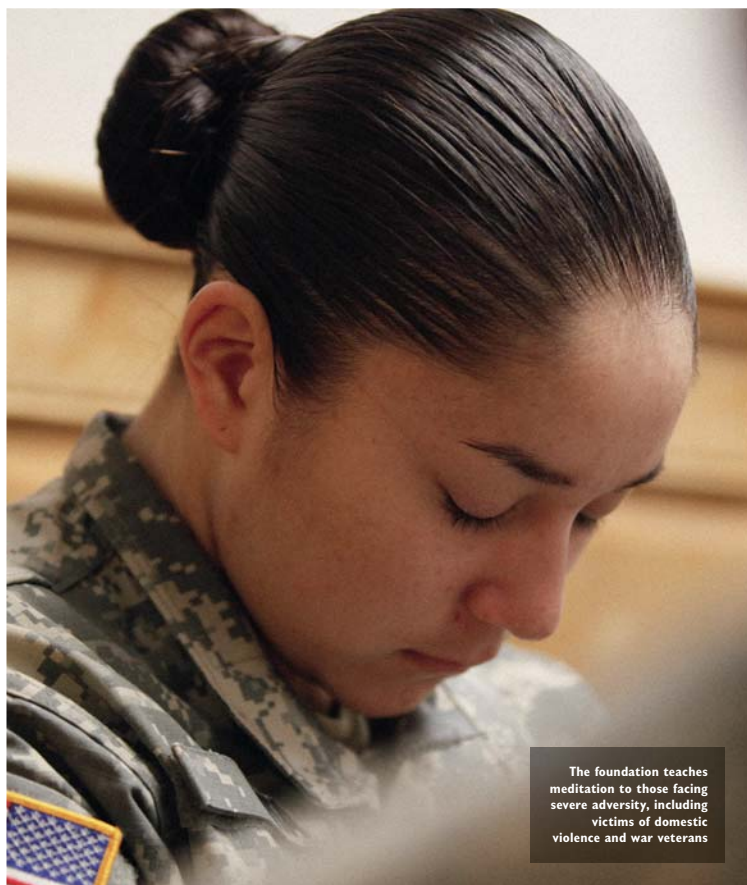
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# ALL IN THE MIND



The foundation teaches meditation to those facing severe adversity, including victims of domestic violence and war veterans

The David Lynch Foundation helps people overcome extreme stress by using the power of meditation. Its goal is to touch 100 million lives in the next decade. Julie Cramer talks to co-founder Bob Roth to find out more



A chance meeting brought Bob Roth (above) together with David Lynch (right)



**D**avid Lynch is at the centre of much media attention of late, as he starts filming a conclusion to cult TV series *Twin Peaks* after a 25-year break. The US director is famous for his surrealist style in films such as *The Elephant Man*, *Mulholland Drive* and *Eraserhead*. What many people may not know, however, is that he's also a firm believer in the beneficial power of transcendental meditation.

He explains: "I started transcendental meditation in 1973 and have not missed a single meditation ever since. Twice a day, every day. It has given me effortless access to unlimited reserves of energy, creativity and happiness deep within."

After a chance meeting with fellow practitioner Bob Roth a decade ago, the pair started the David Lynch Foundation and have since helped hundreds of thousands of at-risk people using this form of meditation.

Here Roth, the co-founder and executive director of the foundation, talks about its aim to help 100 million people in the next decade.

#### What's the main purpose of the David Lynch Foundation?

We're a non-profit organisation founded in 2005 by the film director David Lynch, dedicated to making transcendental meditation (TM) accessible to many different areas of the population.

In the beginning, our focus was on helping at-risk children in low-income urban schools cope with the extreme stresses they were facing. In less than 10 years, we've touched the lives of more than 500,000 students.

Over time, our work has spread to a wider range of people, from the homeless to victims of domestic violence, war veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and HIV/AIDS sufferers.

#### How did you meet David Lynch?

I was organising a TM conference and Lynch, who had been practising TM for around 30 years, was invited to attend.

He heard the horror stories about at-risk youth – of kids who witnessed and experienced domestic violence and gangland shootings and were then expected to go to school and learn

algebra. The idea of the foundation was born from this meeting and we created it soon after.

#### How does TM differ from other forms of meditation?

According to science, there are three basic approaches to meditation. The first is called 'focused attention', where you attempt to actively control your thoughts, clear your mind, or focus on your breath. This produces the gamma brainwaves that are associated with peak concentration.

The second is 'open monitoring', which includes many mindfulness techniques – you learn to observe your thoughts or emotions dispassionately. This produces theta brainwaves, which are very slow and present during the REM stages of sleep.

Third is 'automatic self transcending', which is transcendental meditation, where you learn to effortlessly transcend conscious thinking to achieve a profound state of calm, of inner wakefulness. It's like diving underneath a choppy ocean to the calm waters

► beneath. In this state, deeply relaxing alpha brainwaves are present.

Because of its simplicity and naturalness, TM is the easiest to learn – even a 10-year-old can practise it.

### What are the benefits of TM?

In a society where there's an epidemic of stress, TM helps people achieve a profound state of rest at will. It's been shown to instantly drop cortisol levels by 30 per cent, which is more than we get from a good night's sleep. There's also evidence that TM reduces high blood pressure as effectively as anti-hypertensive medication; that it reduces cholesterol, atherosclerosis and risk of stroke; and reduces anxiety, depression and insomnia.

Research also indicates that TM improves memory, creativity and problem solving. It wakes up the brain!

### How did you first discover TM?

I was at the University of Berkeley in California, US, in the 1960s. It was a time of riots, strikes and anti-war demos. Students were being shot and tanks were parked outside.

I wasn't a hippie or a druggie, but I was looking for a natural way to overcome the intense pressures of going to school full-time, working full-time and dealing with the social

upheaval all around me. A good friend who I trusted suggested I try TM. I'm a naturally sceptical person, but my friend was a no-nonsense kind of person so I decided to give it a go.

Its effect on me was immediate and profound. I experienced a state of rest and relaxation I never knew I could gain. My mind cleared up, I had so much energy and my grades soared.

I knew I'd discovered something really special and I knew I wanted to teach this to inner city kids.

“ I started to teach the technique to inner city kids, Death Row inmates and people in the business world at companies like Apple and General Motors ”

### Did you always want to teach?

Actually no. I was heading for a career in politics – I had worked for senator Robert Kennedy during his 1968 presidential primary campaign. But after he was assassinated, and the more I learnt about politics, the more I saw corruption and greed.

So I switched my focus to education. Along the way, I learned to meditate and in 1972 I attended a teacher-training course by TM founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Europe with 2,000 others.

I returned to San Francisco and started to teach the technique to inner city kids, Death Row inmates and people in the business world at companies like Apple and General Motors.

### How do you teach TM?

Well, it can't be taught to a crowd of 50 people. It works best when it's taught individually over four consecutive days, for an hour at a time. The first session must be one-to-one with a teacher, while subsequent sessions can be in smaller groups. If we're going into a school with 3,000 kids, we might initially send in 25 teachers so each and every child gets an individual first hour.

### How has your work helped people?

There are so many transformational stories. There's one about a young girl



Since its inception in 2005, the David Lynch Foundation has taught TM to more than 500,000 school children



**A war veteran mother was able to let go of anger and stress after learning TM and can finally sleep again**

who arrived at school with red paint splattered all over her dress. The teacher told her she had to go home and change – until it transpired that the little girl had just witnessed the shooting of her uncle and those red stains were his blood. She'd run to school for a safe haven, and because she didn't want to miss her TM class.

Then there's the war veteran mother who returned to her family from active service and was unable to sleep for three months. All she was offered was a handful of pills that didn't work. She learned TM and within a few days she was able to sleep through the night – and she still continues to sleep through the night now, four months after learning to meditate. And the best thing, she says, is that her children got a loving mother back.

#### **Has meditation and mindfulness now entered the mainstream?**

Yes, for sure. I speak regularly about TM at business and medical conferences including the Google Zeitgeist Conference, which is attended by the

For health club operators who want to know more about TM and how they can work with the foundation, email Bob Roth via:  
 • The David Lynch Foundation website, which can be found at: [www.davidlynchfoundation.org](http://www.davidlynchfoundation.org)  
 • The non-profit Center for Leadership Performance website – [www.tmbusinessnyc.org](http://www.tmbusinessnyc.org)

top innovative thinkers. We're also offering the technique at Wall Street companies. In the 40 years of my practising and teaching TM, it's really only in the last one to two years that I've seen a huge spike in interest.

There could be many reasons for this, but ultimately I think it's the huge amount of scientific research which shows that meditation benefits the mind and body. People today are plagued by anxiety, depression and insomnia. Their lives are simply unsustainable. Until now, the answer has mostly been medication like anti-depressants, which only mask the symptoms. We want people to self-meditate, not self-medicate.

#### **What are the foundation's goals?**

We have ambitious, but very do-able, plans to bring TM to 100 million people around the world in the next 10 years. It's a huge task but we think we can do it. We're in discussions with the UN and are talking to NGOs all over the world.

TM is already taught in over 100 countries, so all the channels and systems are in place. The foundation also has a branch in the UK. We want to reach more at-risk populations and work with international thought leaders to spread the teaching of meditation.

We're actively recruiting new TM teachers at college job fairs and we're particularly interested in graduates with a masters in education or public health.

#### **How do you see TM developing?**

More companies are switching on to its value for their employees and their

health. It can save them so much by reducing their healthcare costs as well as lowering absenteeism.

We've taught 400 employees at Oprah Winfrey's company and all 200 employees at Dr Oz's TV production company and, as I said, top Wall Street firms. Some companies are even installing meditation rooms.

In the schools where we deliver TM, it's been shown to improve both academic performance and behaviour. It's even had an impact on obesity levels as children reduce stress-related eating.

#### **How could health and fitness clubs latch onto this?**

Of course, exercise and good nutrition are obvious essential aspects of a healthy regimen, but it's also clear that there's a key mental component that must not be overlooked.

Increasingly, health-conscious people are starting to turn to transcendental meditation as an effective way to not only calm their anxious thoughts, but also to clear their minds and to literally wake up their brains.

Health clubs that want to capture this fast-growing segment of the population would be wise to incorporate legitimate stress-reducing meditation practices, such as TM, in conjunction with their physical exercise offerings. ●

*This feature first appeared in Spa Business magazine, issue 1 2015*



# STUDIO SCENE

We round up some of the latest products designed to bring even more diversity to your studio-based offering

## GUARANTEED HIT

New to the UK, the weighted RMT Club uses the principles of rotational movement training to improve power, range of movement, strength, co-ordination, balance and athleticism.

The clubs have a rubber handle for a safe, secure grip and soft, flexible heads made from durable materials that will withstand being slammed against padded surfaces and gym floors. An internal shifting weight also provides dynamic resistance as well as 'audible feedback',

which allows fitness professionals to identify weaknesses and imbalances and work with their clients to strengthen non-dominant areas.

The RMT Club comes in four sizes – 1kg, 1.8kg, 3kg and 3.6kg. Distributed by Physical Company, a training DVD comprising 21 functional moves, a 40-minute workout and an exercise wall chart are supplied with the clubs.

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



## FEEL THE POWER

PowerWave from Jordan Fitness provides a 20-minute workout for the entire body focusing on posture, core strength and endurance. It features a temperature-responsive gel and is weighted to aid posture in use.

The Wave20 workout repeats five different exercises four times within 20 minutes. Each round is 50 seconds long followed by a 10-second break, although less intense versions are also available.

Jordan Fitness offers courses for PTs and fitness professionals to qualify as PowerWave instructors. Mark Laws, trainer academy manager at Jordan Fitness, says the sessions get more difficult the fitter the individual, but that the exercises are also quick to learn and easily modified for beginners.

"There's scope for PowerWave to be the toughest workouts you've ever done," he adds.

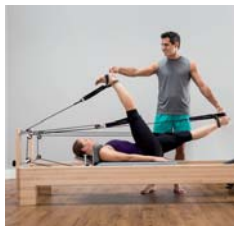
**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
Jordan Fitness

## GOING LOOPY

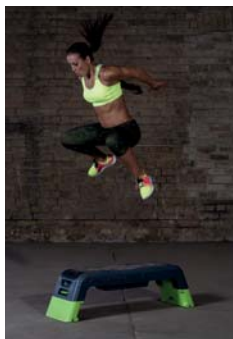
Balanced Body's Konconnector is a single-rope pulley system with loops for all four limbs, enabling independent, simultaneous movement of both arms and legs. Users experience constant proprioceptive feedback through the single rope, increasing awareness of imbalances and asymmetries.

Balanced Body's Tri Loops also provide a third 'hidden' loop to provide support for a full range of foot positions.

A simplified version of the system, Konconnector Lite, is also available, offering independent movement of two limbs rather than four.



**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
Balanced Body



## MUSIC MIXES

New programming for the Escape Deck 2.0 studio platform has been launched by Escape Fitness, with the company developing workouts set to music for very the first time, as well as adding enhanced PT education.

Deck 2.0 training includes access to an extensive library of exercises using the platform, while choreography and music mixes created exclusively for the studio sessions have been added.

Escape Fitness says the sessions are attractive to all levels of ability, as the workouts have the option to use the deck's height to fine-tune the degree of challenge for every individual.

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





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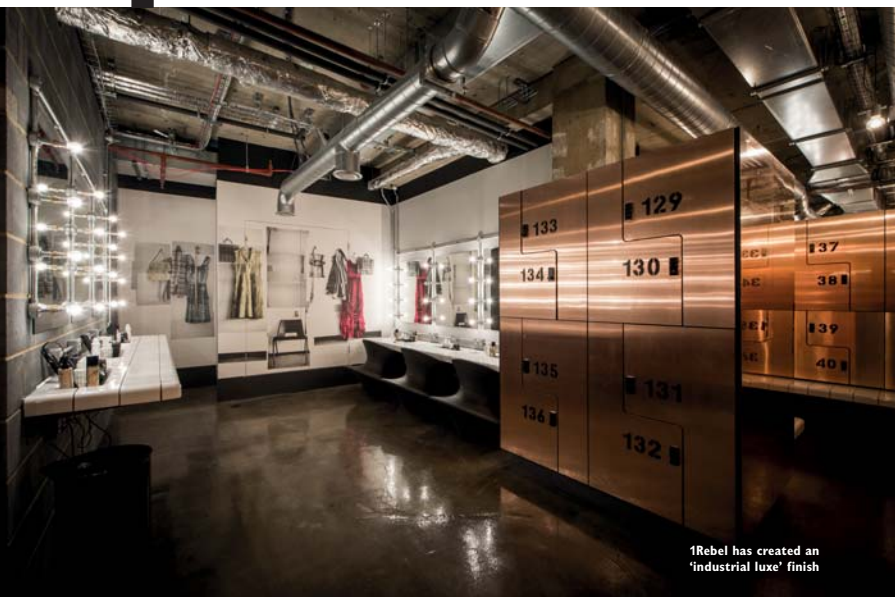
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# Changing places

Abigail Harris talks to a number of operators about how they are wowing customers with their changing rooms, from low budget local authority sites to high-end luxury boutiques



1Rebel has created an 'industrial luxe' finish

## INDUSTRIAL LUXE

Giles Dean, co-founder, 1Rebel

Site: 1Rebel St Mary Axe, London  
Supplier: Craftsman Lockers

“The copper and silver surfacing sets a shining tone to the changing room lockers at our vibrant gym, which opened in the shadow of the gherkin in the City of London in January this year.

“Our boutiques are built with a balance of beauty and function, with engineered layouts designed to inspire and motivate. Intrinsic to that vision are the changing rooms – we’re in no doubt about their importance. Their quality and size represent a major selling point. They’re fully stocked with top-end grooming and skincare products and feature vintage barbers’ chairs, unlimited towels, hair straighteners and charging sockets for mobile phones – not to mention the suspended glass panels in the showers and the hand shower attachments made from fire hoses. The club is designed to create an industrial luxe ambience, so we didn’t want our lockers to have a typical veneer-type finish. The metals suit and complement the overall feel we’re seeking to achieve.”

PHOTOS: WWW.SHOPIPHOTOGRAPHY.CO.UK



The club now offers a large number of full-length L-shaped lockers



## LOW COST, HIGH QUALITY

**Winston Higham, head of leisure,  
Sports Direct Fitness**

**Site: Sports Direct Fitness Aintree  
Supplier: Fit Interiors, distributed  
by Gymkit UK**

“We don’t believe low-cost should mean low quality. There are key areas of our club design and fit-out where we were not prepared to compromise – touchpoints where we believe members will notice extra attention to detail and investment. We wanted to make a statement in our changing rooms, offering high quality facilities in spite of low membership fees. “We chose Italian locker manufacturer Fit Interiors. Quality and durability are as important to us as the design, as we want our clubs to stand up to the high usage levels and still look good five years on. “We chose the Fit Interiors padlock locking system for maintenance-free locking, and a large number of lockers are full-length ‘L’ shape in design. There’s feature lighting and plenty of space to create a feeling of luxury and quality.”

PHOTOS: CHRIS HICKNEY



The brief was to create a high-end changing experience

## SEAMLESS TRANSITION

Mike Baden, CEO, Impulse Leisure

Site: Chanctonbury Leisure Centre,  
West Sussex  
Suppliers: Central, Cubicle Systems,  
Horne, Dalesauna



**T**he brief at our Chanctonbury centre was to create a high-end changing experience, with the feel of an exclusive private club, as part of a £740,000 redevelopment of the leisure centre. The whole project was completed in December 2014.

"We opted for premium finishes in order to meet the expectations of our local demographic and to ensure that the 63sq m (679sq ft) changing rooms were in keeping with the rest of the centre, which has been redeveloped to provide a first-class customer experience. This includes an adjacent

health suite, featuring a sauna and a steamroom, which also acts as an interchangeable salt room.

"Gone are the days when basic, functional changing rooms were enough to meet members' needs. Customer expectations have risen and members now expect – and deserve – much more for their money. We worked closely with design company Central to create a clean, open, spacious and welcoming changing environment – a seamless transition from reception to changing to health suite, and a place where our members would want to spend time."



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They will ensure you get the benefit of smooth and trouble-free, long-term operation.

### **We prefer to do the maintenance ourselves.**

Hinges and locks take a hammering and regular inspection and maintenance is the way to keep your lockers and cubicles at peak efficiency.

Prospec can offer you the perfect maintenance plan to keep your installation free of in-service wear and tear and deliver unbeatable long-term value-for-money.

### **Our reputation is your reputation.**

At Prospec, we understand that your customers expect everything to look good and to work properly each time, every time. So do we.

We're proud of our reputation as No.1 in leisure. We intend to make sure that we continue to deserve it and, while nobody's 100% perfect, we're always working on it.





## ▶ CHANGING ROOMS



## MODERN STYLE

Dominic Stow, CEO,  
Limehouse Marina Elite

Site: Limehouse Marina Elite  
Fitness Health Club, London  
Supplier: Safe Space Lockers

“Our luxury fitness centre, based in London’s tranquil Limehouse Marina with the iconic Canary Wharf as its backdrop, opened in December 2014 and has been designed with an urban chic feel.

“We’ve created a stunning environment from the fitness areas through to the changing rooms, where the white, high-gloss two-tier bespoke lockers from Safe Space Lockers have been fitted with the Ojmar OCS digital lock for ease and extra security.

“We wanted to create a fresh, modern and stylish look and this continues with the vanity units, used towel cabinet, cubicles and wardrobes, which are all finished in high-gloss white.

“The quality finish of every detail helps reinforce the club’s high-end status, from the Corian surfaces to the clever use of uplighting, giving a soft edge.”



## FAMILY FRIENDLY

Keith Nicholls, leisure operations  
manager, Rhondda Cynon Taf  
County Borough Council

Site: Llantrisant Leisure Centre  
Supplier: Createability



BEFORE



AFTER

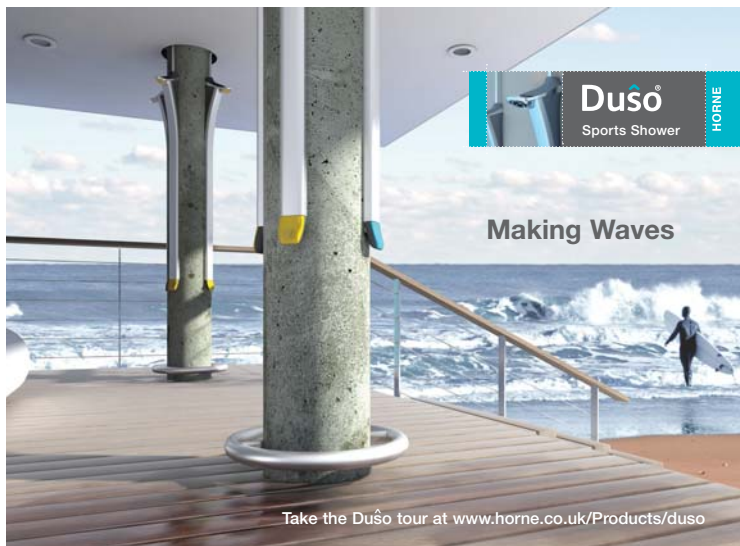
The changing facilities at the centre were outdated (left) while the new area is much more spacious and modern (right)

“The transformation of the changing rooms at Llantrisant Leisure Centre – from old and tired to modern and fresh – is astonishing, particularly when you factor in the tight budget. Createability won a Federation of Master Builders Award (FMB) for the recent £3m redevelopment.

“A new open, airy family changing village – with disabled, family, double and single cubicles – has replaced the outdated single-sex changing, with additional space created by removing the tired health suite as well as a series of corridors that weren’t needed.

“This enabled us to include a bank of private shower cubicles, unusual

for a leisure centre. Water-saving measures include taps that switch off automatically, showers that reduce water output by 50 per cent, and toilet cisterns that require less water. Underfloor heating keeps tiles drier and easier to clean. Finishes mirror the new dry-side changing and are robust enough to meet the rigours of public use.” ●



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# Supplier showcase

We profile recent projects by Cybex, EZ-Runner and Prospec



To reinforce the Snap Fitness brand, equipment frames and upholstery were customised to incorporate the branding and logo

As one of the fitness industry's largest gym franchises, Snap Fitness operates over 1,400 clubs worldwide. In November 2014, it opened its fifth UK franchise – the second to be equipped by Cybex – in Ebbsfleet, Kent.

The gym is the only 24/7 access facility in the area and offers members state-of-the-art fitness equipment and affordable membership fees with no contracts. It's home to 25 pieces of cardiovascular equipment from Cybex's 625 and 770 series, including lower body and total body Arc Trainers – Cybex's cross-trainer line that's scientifically proven to be gentler on users' joints, burn 16 per cent more calories than a standard elliptical and give a greater activation of large muscle groups.

Snap Fitness Ebbsfleet also offers its members an extensive range of strength training options. Selectorised equipment from Cybex's new Eagle NX range was installed at the facility, becoming one

## SNAP IT UP

Client: Snap Fitness

Ebbsfleet

Supplier: Cybex

International UK

of the first UK gyms to house the new premium line. Bravo Functional Trainers, plate-loaded equipment, power cage and multi-functional Jungle Gym were also installed, and in addition Cybex supplied dumbbells and benches for the gym's large free weights area. To reinforce the Snap Fitness brand, equipment frames and upholstery were customised to incorporate the branding and logo.

Alongside the gym, members benefit from luxury changing rooms, an onsite nutrition consultancy service and Fitness on Demand, a virtual group exercise system allowing users to participate in

a wide variety of classes and workout programmes at a time to suit them.

"We pride ourselves on delivering a state-of-the-art facility at a very affordable price. As the only 24/7 access club in the area, our members have maximum flexibility to train at their own convenience – without paying a premium to do so," says entrepreneur Dip Dhillon, who owns the Ebbsfleet club.

"We worked closely with the Cybex team to determine how best to maximise the space available.

"In doing so, I believe we've created a fitness facility that meets the needs of a wide demographic. Feedback from members and staff alike has been excellent and we're very proud to be a part of the growing network of Snap Fitness franchises in the UK."

Cybex has a longstanding relationship with the Snap Fitness franchise, which has seen the supplier already equip a number of sites in the US.

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

INTRODUCING

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The EZ-Runner system at Uplands manages member and non-member bookings, and membership is also processed online

**U**plands Sports Centre is a not-for-profit community sports centre in Wadhurst, East Sussex, offering the latest Unity package from Technogym and with Ez-Runner managing bookings and memberships within the centre.

Uplands has recently been reviewing how best to service its community with enhanced products and services – and one of the key things all its members wanted was online booking. As members and non-members alike are able to use its facilities, the online booking system needed to take care of member and non-member pricing, including getting guests to sign any pre-activity questionnaires prior to booking – thereby saving a huge amount of time when checking in at reception.

EZ-Runner delivered this system, also ensuring the booking journey was flexible and integrated into the online

## SEAMLESS SERVICE

**Client:** Uplands Sports Centre  
**Supplier:** Ez-Runner

## PROJECT PROFILE PROMOTION

brand of Uplands. Timetables are live, and users can also book personal trainers or bikes in group cycling classes.

“This is crucial,” says EZ-Runner’s Shez Namoooya. “All leisure solutions worth their weight can do online bookings. What we want to ensure is our clients’ online branding is not interfered with by our booking engine.”

PT bookings also ensure time is optimised, leaving no gaps and also providing the right resource at the right time – based on the centre’s operational rules. There’s also an option to bring the booking process to life with the power

of social media: videos can be added to allow PTs to talk to prospects, or show what classes are like before booking.

In addition, Uplands can link promo codes via Twitter or Facebook to offer special rates limited by time or volume.

And the online portal doesn’t end with bookings and signing up for membership. Uplands customers can also manage their account, looking at booking history and statements for example. They can change their details, renew or upgrade memberships, or pay off debts – the latter in particular being a win-win scenario. It reduces the time it takes for debts to be paid, by offering a convenient and discreet way to pay outstanding debts. Members are less embarrassed and can pay off any balance wherever they have internet access.

Memberships are also processed via the website – a process that takes care of any questionnaires, pro-rata, and validation of addresses and bank details within a few minutes. In just five minutes, you’re a member with validated information ready to be sent to the bank for Direct Debit. There has also been a reduction in the number of Direct Debit rejections that were processed due to human error.

Details: [www.ez-runner.com](http://www.ez-runner.com)



Timetables are live, and users can book specific bikes in group cycling classes



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## A CO-OPERATIVE VENTURE

**Client:** University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Council and sportscotland  
**Supplier:** Prospec

The brief for the new £22m Aquatics Centre in Aberdeen, Scotland – a joint venture between the University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Council and sportscotland – was extremely demanding. Sustainability was put at the forefront of the design, requiring soft strip demolition on-site; allowing up to 80 per cent of materials to be recycled; incorporating a sedum roof with 13 different species and rainwater harvesting; and using a bio fuel boiler for underfloor heating and an extensive BMS natural ventilation system.

Architects FaulknerBrowns were appointed to design this facility, which forms the cornerstone for swimming in the north-east of Scotland and completes a major wet/dry facility for the Aberdeen Sports Village. It offers a 50-metre, 10-lane Olympic standard pool with 3-metre, 5-metre, 7.5-metre and 10-metre diving platform, allowing for complete flexibility for events, training and community usage.

The facility – one of only 10 in the UK with full diving facilities and platforms up to 10 metres – was built by John Graham Construction, a firm that achieved a high 36 out of 40 on the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

FaulknerBrowns have a long-standing working relationship with changing room locker and cubicle provider Prospec, and Prospec was therefore involved from

Prospec's Marathon locker range and Cabrillant shower cubicles were specified



the very early concept stages to work closely with FaulknerBrowns on the design of the facilities.

The specification included the award-winning Cabrillant shower cubicles, plus the versatile, durable Marathon range of cubicles and lockers. The locker doors are manufactured from toughened and laminated glass, which allowed the architect to incorporate quality normally associated with high-end health clubs without compromising safety of use within this heavy traffic public facility.

The colour scheme is striking and modern thanks to the use of vibrant green and graphite grey laminates and glass. Quartz black Corian solid

surfacing, for the vanity and grooming shelves, provides the finishing touch.

Jeane Paul Colback, technical manager for FaulknerBrowns, comments: "To some, a locker is a locker and a cubicle is a cubicle. But even products that appear very similar can be constructed with components that will not meet robustness and security requirements over time. FaulknerBrowns have had a long working relationship with Prospec, and at times have assisted Prospec with the development of its products to meet the ever-changing demands of the sector. Collaborating with manufacturers is very important to us as designers."

Details: [www.prospec.co.uk](http://www.prospec.co.uk)

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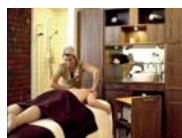
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# Twin talk

A new study has focused on the impact of exercise on 10 sets of twins – where one twin is physically active and the other leads a sedentary lifestyle

A small but significant study of identical twins\* who did the same levels of activity as kids, but developed different exercise habits later in life, has provided interesting insights into the effects that exercise has on people's health.

Twins are valuable for research as they share the same DNA – and it's our genes that determine our capacity and willingness to work out, as well as how our bodies react. In this case, the twins also had a similar upbringing.

## FitFatTwin study

The so-called 'FitFatTwin' study, by the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, was based on 10 pairs of identical twin men aged 32–36. One twin exercised two or more times a week, while his brother only exercised two times a month or less. But both still had similar diets.

Over the course of three years, extensive physical measurements were recorded in the twins, including fitness levels, body composition and glucose levels/insulin sensitivity.

Brain scans were also conducted – a novel aim of the study was to analyse the difference in grey matter.

## Active vs non-active

As expected, the study found the active twins had better cardiovascular fitness. Similar associations were not found for muscular strength, however, which was put down to the fact that participants mostly took part in aerobic sport.

Although the inactive twins weighed only slightly more, their percentage of body fat was "markedly higher".

So far so unsurprising, but the university researchers also found insulin and glucose biomarkers which suggested



Brain scans showed the physically active had a higher volume of grey matter

the inactive twins had a greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

When analysing the brain scans, the researchers also found an "extensive difference" in the volume of grey matter

in favour of the physically active. The parts of the brain associated with co-ordination, motor control and cognitive function were particularly affected, the study showed.

\*Kujala UM et al. Physical activity, fitness, glucose homeostasis, and brain morphology in twins. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. March 2015

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