

health club management

JUNE 2015

No 225

EDGARD CORONA

The CEO of Brazil's BioRitmo
and SmartFit on cannibalising
his own business

HUMANS vs TECHNOLOGY

Will wearables undermine the
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KIMBERLY WYATT

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Is fit now offensive?

Fitness industry take heed: some of today's consumers see images of fit, toned bodies not as aspirational and motivating, but rather as offensive and discriminatory. At least, that's what the recent furore over Protein World's 'Are you beach body ready?' ad campaign would have us believe.

It all kicked off in April with adverts for the company's diet shakes, which appeared in the London Underground. The poster – of a slim, toned model in a yellow bikini next to the words 'Are you beach body ready?' – was hardly the first to use this sort of imagery to sell a product. Yet this particular poster got the public's back up, and within days an outpouring on Twitter – #everybodysready – had led to defaced posters, tens of thousands of people signing an online petition demanding they be taken down, and a small protest in Hyde Park where people of all shapes and sizes braved the UK weather to strip down to their swimming costumes and show off their 'beach bodies'.

Protein World's response was defiant, launching its own #getagrip hashtag and, it claims, reaping the rewards of this viral phenomenon in the shape of £1m+ in direct sales revenue. Neither did the advertising authorities share protesters' concerns: Transport for London only took the posters down at the end of the three-week campaign as they didn't contravene its advertising standards, while the ASA has only now banned the ad over concerns of misleading health claims – although it is now investigating whether the poster breaks harm and offence rules.

The social media-fuelled outcry should therefore be taken with a pinch of salt. Yes, the objections are worth bearing in mind – especially by a sector that, as a whole, still relies far too heavily on 'beach body'-style images in its marketing. But really it's just about knowing your audience.

If you're a leisure centre with a brief to get inactive people moving, then follow the lead of This Girl Can,

Nuffield Health and I Will If You Will, whose recent ads show how 'normal' people can be both aspirational and realistic.

However, if you're a CrossFit box that caters for the already fit, the yellow bikini girl – slim but hardly a size zero – would be an appropriate image. Ditto for Protein World, as evidenced by its sales boom. You can't be all things to all people in your advertising; if you are, you're probably not making an impact with your target market.

But #everybodysready raises another consideration: the public's growing acceptance of overweight as the



What does it say about our society when we're offended by the sight of a fit, healthy body?

norm – and a norm we increasingly aren't challenge for fear of offence. But what does it say about our society when we're offended by the sight of a fit, healthy body?

Body image is certainly a topic to be addressed delicately, and of course there's a difference between a few extra pounds and obesity. But with new research showing that nearly 95 per cent of parents of overweight children believe their kids are exactly the right size – and many overweight people perceiving themselves to be slimmer than they are – the fitness industry has a role to play in educating people and helping re-set their sights before this new norm becomes embedded.

Kate Cracknell, editor

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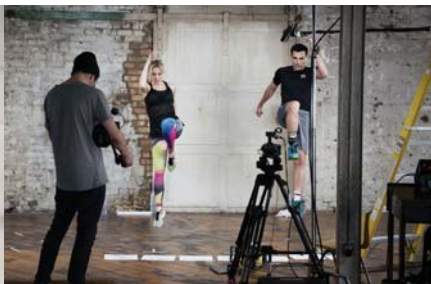
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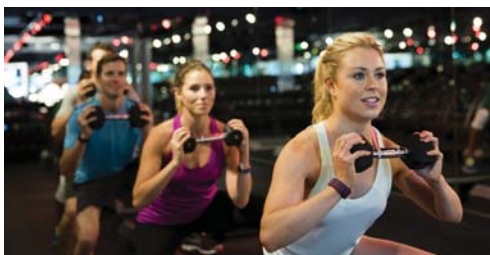
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Buyers' guide

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



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Write to reply

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



Trackers can offer regular, incremental praise and help the user to focus on goals

Activity trackers: Motivation, not accuracy, is key

I was interested to read last month's feature on activity tracker accuracy, and whether this is important (*HCM* May, p46).

This debate is a red herring for most fitness users. Much like scales to weigh yourself, their accuracy depends on many variables: the manufacturer, the time of day, what you ate, etc. If your goal is to win a top marathon or triathlon, accuracy is very relevant: these races are often won by a few seconds. But for general fitness users, at this stage in the development of most devices/apps, it's more about how they can improve motivation.

Weight loss and significant health improvements take time, and this is where the wearable market is of great value. Small incremental praise, given often and focusing on my immediate improvements, will lead me to do more. No change or a bunch of data I don't understand will demotivate me and ultimately stop me using the service.

All that said, we're entering the next stage of development of apps and wearables: many are becoming much more accurate in the data fields they present, almost to the gold standards used in the medical world. This will be important as the health and fitness world looks to gain more credibility from the medical and sports worlds.

As for the app versus wearable debate, they are really the same thing: the winner will be the one with the user experience that leads to increased motivation every time the app/device is used.

One thing is for sure: this market is moving fast and users are making their own decisions on what's best for them. Gyms need to help people understand the choices available to them rather than telling them what to do.

Andy Jackson
Owner, AJ SCOT LLC

More research needed into female inactivity

I was encouraged to read the article 'Active Women' in last month's *HCM*. However, while the stats show that women are less active than men, it would be helpful to see detailed segmentation of the data: you can't treat 'women' as one uniform group. I strongly suspect, for example, that levels of activity will vary widely by socio-economic group.

An understanding of the perceived barriers faced by different socio-economic segments is therefore vital if we're to develop effective intervention programmes for the more disadvantaged; I believe the barriers are far more complex than the generally touted lack of time or on-site childcare.

The budget gym sector is already democratising fitness: the ability to pay is less of an issue and its gender mix is not too unbalanced. In other settings such as Zumba and many boutique gyms, women predominate. So why do these offerings resonate with women, and what are the lessons for the wider industry?

Researchers have analysed the differences in the way girls and boys behave in school playgrounds and observed that girls favour small group activities whereas boys play more energetically. This prompted discussions around the availability of equipment and provision of playtime activities that would 'nudge' girls to take part in more vigorous playtime activities. Perhaps we also need to look more closely at behaviour, as well as programming, to ensure a varied and vibrant class schedule that's fun, social and emphasises health.

Rather than proposing operational solutions, I call for further research to understand how we can really help women be and remain active.

Jon Johnston
MD, Matrix Fitness

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UK news update

GLL grows ever larger as Tone Leisure is acquired

Operator Tone Leisure is to become a wholly-owned subsidiary of GLL, as the burgeoning enterprise continues to expand.

Under the agreement, which commenced on 1 June 2015, Tone will continue to directly operate its 13 leisure and sporting facilities across the south-west of England until 1 December 2016, when a full merger is planned with GLL. Having formed in 2004, Tone has quickly grown to comprise 600 staff, with a yearly turnover of £7.8m.

The deal follows a flurry of activity involving GLL – which recently acquired North Country Leisure and also announced a merger with Carlisle Leisure Limited – as the enterprise grows rapidly beyond its London heartland. GLL now operates more than 170 leisure centres across the UK.

GLL said the Tone tie-up is a natural fit as both are charitable social enterprises and leisure trusts with “similar values”.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=T3c5w>

Muscle supplements linked to testicular cancer



Supplements raise cancer risk by 65%

Men who take muscle-building pills and powders are more likely to develop testicular cancer, according to a study published in the *British Journal of Cancer*.

Researchers conducted detailed interviews with nearly 900 US men and found those who reported taking muscle-building supplements, such as pills and powders with creatine or androstenedione, had a 65 per cent greater likelihood of contracting testicular cancer than men who did not use such supplements.

Study senior author Tongzhang Zheng said the associated testicular germ cell cancer risk was especially high among men who started using supplements before the age of 25, those who used multiple supplements, and those who used them for a number of years. Study participants used 30 different types of supplement, although none of these have been named by the researchers.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=X6j3S>

Pure Gym partners Spartan



The tie-up sees Pure Gym offer its users discounted Spartan races and vice versa

Pure Gym has become the latest major gym chain to capitalise on the UK's insatiable demand for extreme fitness challenges by announcing a new tie-up with the 2015 Reebok Spartan Race series.

The growing popularity of extreme fitness challenges such as Obstacle Course Racing (OCR) and triathlons has led to a raft of new training tie-ups, as gyms scramble to offer their expertise and facilities to a booming market.

The latest tie-up between Pure Gym and Reebok Spartan Race sees Pure offer its users discounted entry to Spartan races and Spartan participants receiving discounted

gym memberships. In addition, Spartan will be hosting up to 300 workout boot camps across Pure Gym sites nationwide.

Reebok Spartan Race includes three options: a 5km 'sprint', a 13km 'super' and a 20km 'beast' course. To encourage competition Reebok Spartan Races feature chip timings and global rankings. Organisers have recently announced an extensive programme of events to run this summer, including Spartan's first UK stadium-based event at the Allianz Park stadium in London, with competitors racing over 15 obstacles at the home of the Saracens.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=w7E7q>

Big names win ukactive board seats



New ukactive board member Sesnan has been MD of GLL since it formed in 1993

Virgin Active European COO Matt Merrick and GLL managing director Mark Sesnan have won seats on the new-look ukactive board of directors following a high-profile election.

Merrick will fill the commercial fitness seat and Sesnan will represent local authority activity, having been favoured by ukactive members over a host of other well-known industry names. The third elected seat, representing 'broader physical activity', will be filled by Dr Ewan Hamnett, who ran unopposed for the position.

The new board will be chaired by Tanni Grey-Thompson and will feature an appointed treasurer – a role to which Places for People CEO Sandra Dodd has been appointed – and up to five appointed non-executive directors drawing experience from the sector and broader areas of specialism.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=m8N2h>

Grey-Thompson chairs ukactive



Grey-Thompson wants to ensure exercise is at the heart of government policy

Athletics legend and respected crossbench peer Tanni Grey-Thompson has become chair of ukactive, tasked with ensuring the new Conservative government turns rhetoric into action in tackling the physical inactivity crisis.

Grey-Thompson is one of the most successful British athletes ever – having won a total of 16 Paralympic medals – and in 2010 was made a crossbench member of the House of Lords. The peer replaces outgoing ukactive chair Fred Turok who, together with David Stalker, will launch a new trampolining concept. “For too long, physical activity has been – in the government’s eyes – the poor cousin

of sport and overshadowed by obesity,” said Grey-Thompson. “The work of ukactive has shown that inactivity is a killer, and inaction on this issue is no longer an option.”

The announcement came on the same day that ukactive stalwart Steven Ward was promoted to lead the team in the newly created post of executive director.

The appointment of Ward is designed to foster continuity at ukactive, with outgoing CEO David Stalker assuming a new part-time executive role. It’s expected to be some time before the organisation appoints a new CEO. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N6Z4W>

Fitness First: We’ve turned a corner

Fitness First CEO Andrew Cosslett believes the gym chain has put its darkest days behind it, pointing to improving financial figures as a three-year transformation programme makes headway.

Despite group earnings falling 0.3 per cent to £509.3m for the year ending 31 October 2014, revenue increased across the chain’s rebranded clubs (122 out of 377) and the UK arm returned to EBITDA growth for the first time in five years.

There was also reason for cheer in Asia, as Fitness First clubs there enjoyed a 10.5 per cent jump in like-for-like EBITDA.

“We’ve worked hard to stabilise the business and create a platform for growth



Fitness First CEO Cosslett is transforming the chain

going forward,” said Cosslett. “We reached the turning point during the latter part of 2014 as the impact of better results from a growing number of rebranded clubs started to be felt.” Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q4P3r>

ASA probes controversial Protein World poster



The poster has been widely criticised

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has confirmed it has launched a formal investigation into the ProteinWorld advertising campaign, which sparked an internet frenzy and a protest in Hyde Park.

The advert posters, which picture a bikini-wearing model next to the slogan “Are you beach body ready?” have been branded “sexist” and “offensive”. More than 67,000 people signed a petition registered on the website change.org calling for the posters to be banned.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q7T2Q>

National Fitness Day 2015 to include schools



Efforts will focus on getting kids active

This year’s National Fitness Day – the largest celebration of physical activity in the UK – will see schools included in the initiative for the first time as organiser ukactive targets its biggest event ever.

Having recently renewed its efforts to tackle childhood inactivity, ukactive will be working closely with the education sector to help it promote the benefits of being physically active in school. Primary schools across the UK will be asked to pledge to take part in the day by running activities designed to get their pupils more active.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K9/4t>



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UK news update

Fitness workforce 67% female

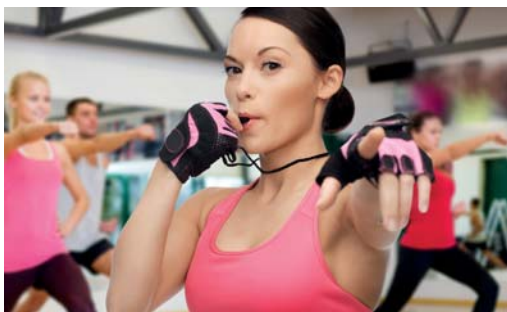


PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The survey highlighted that women make up the majority of the industry workforce

More than two-thirds of the UK fitness sector's workforce is female, according to the *Working in Fitness Survey 2015*.

The research – which saw SkillsActive and the Exercise, Movement and Dance Partnership (EMDP) survey 35,000 members of the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) – found 67 per cent of the workforce is female, with the industry's flexible hours cited as a prime factor in attracting more women.

"The fitness industry offers great benefits in terms of working flexible hours, which is probably why the sector attracts predominantly women," said Jade Moulden,

insight lead at EMDP. "Women comprise 67 per cent of the fitness workforce. It's an ideal career for those with families who can't afford to have a regimented 9–5 schedule and want the freedom of working for themselves. It offers excellent career opportunities."

The survey also revealed the average full-time salary in the sector is £22,700, with full-time females earning 97 per cent of a male salary. Though far from ideal, the industry's gender pay gap is far narrower than the overall UK average, which shows a difference of 9.4 per cent between male and female full-time earnings.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=m7X2v>

Over-65s the most frequent gym users

In the past you might have expected to see them on the bowling green, but today there's a good chance you'll find an active pensioner pumping iron in the gym.

That's according to new statistics from Nuffield Health, which reveal that over-65s are the chain's most active gym users. The not-for-profit wellness provider says that gym usage peaks at age 72, when members typically rack up eight visits per month on average.

The findings – taken from data across Nuffield Health's 75 UK health clubs – highlight a desire among Britain's ageing population to remain active well into their 80s. "The sheer number of older gym users in our gyms



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Nuffield Health says gym usage peaks at the age of 72

speaks volumes about the desire of those in the UK to remain fit and healthy," said Nuffield Health's Dr Aldric Ratajczak, who described the trend as 'highly encouraging'.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q5g4Z>

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Miskin Manor gets a makeover



Equipment upgrades have been brought in to bolster the gym's existing offering

Miskin Manor, a Grade II listed country hotel near Cardiff, has upgraded its health club with a significant equipment overhaul.

The independent hotel's Miskin Health Club has spent £120,000 installing Star Trac equipment across four rooms of functional training, Spinning, HumanSport machines and a cardio/strength area. As part of the equipment upgrade, the 22-acre estate now offers CV equipment with HD embedded television screens, Inspiration Strength resistance machines, HumanSport cables and a large number of benches and racks from the Star Trac range. In addition, the

new HIIT-focused functional area features the BoxMaster, prowler push/pull sleds, jump plyo-boxes and battle ropes.

"We're really pleased with the new equipment. We needed a partner that could offer us state-of-the-art technology paired with best in class customer service and that's exactly what we got," said Miskin Health Club fitness manager Chris Abraham.

The equipment upgrades are expected to bolster the gym's existing offering, which includes more than 40 studio classes each week and personal training sessions.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=f3v5E>

City Uni London unveils major new complex



The Sport England-standard sports hall

City University London has cut the ribbon on its CitySport leisure complex – one of the largest sports facilities to be developed in central London.

The new 3,289sq m (35,402sq ft) CitySport complex is 80 per cent larger than the Saddlers Sports Centre which previously occupied the Goswell Road site.

Practice tp bennett were the architects and interior designers on CitySport, which features a Sport England-standard sports hall – able to stage county-standard badminton, basketball, indoor football, hockey, volleyball and netball events – with high performance flooring and seating for over 400 spectators.

Also on-site is a 120-station gym equipped by Matrix, five studios, plus a designated indoor cycling studio for both virtual and instructor-led sessions, featuring the Myride system.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=m2a3d>

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Fitbit prepares to list on NY Stock Exchange

Wearable tracking device Fitbit has filed for an initial public offering worth up to US\$100m and intends to list its shares on the New York Stock Exchange.

The company, which features on pages 50-51 of this issue, has sold almost 21 million devices since 2011, with more than half of those sales achieved in 2014.

In 2014 the company generated US\$745.4m (€652m, £471.5m) in revenue – almost triple that of the previous year – and the same pace has continued into 2015.

These figures show that fitness tracking has moved out of the realms of the fitness buff and into the mainstream. However, despite Fitbit being a big player, it's facing growing competition, particularly from smartwatches like the Apple Watch.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=F6h6G>



Fitbit enjoyed strong sales in 2014

MyFitnessPal cashes in on app



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Paying users receive exclusive content — including recipes, meal plans and nutrition tips

MyFitnessPal, the health and fitness tracking app which boasts 85 million users, has launched a new upgrade aimed at helping fitness enthusiasts move beyond step-counting and take their wellness regimes to the next level.

The firm, which was bought by sportswear giant Under Armour for US\$475m (€419m, £309m) earlier this year, has introduced a premium tier to its service designed to help heavily-engaged users personalise their app experience to fit their own needs and dietary

concerns. Having attracted huge numbers of users through its free proposition, analysts say MyFitnessPal's latest offering shows the company starting to confront the challenge of converting its extensive reach into consistent revenue streams.

The paid version of the app costs US\$9.99 a month. It's mainly diet-focused and allows those with specific needs to work out exactly how much of each nutrient they are getting. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z9J8N>

Fitness-focused Microsoft Band goes on sale in the UK

Microsoft has made its long-awaited entrance into the UK wearable tech sector with the launch of the fitness-focused Microsoft Band.

The wearable device boasts 10 sensors that can track a number of exercise and health metrics, including sleep quality, heart rate, calories, stress and even a person's sun exposure.

Initial reaction has seen the Band – which received a limited release in the US on 30 October 2014 – hailed as a potential rival to the Apple Watch. Indeed, the Microsoft Band boasts more sensors and at £169.99 is considerably cheaper than the Apple offering (which starts from £231), while the Band is compatible Windows Phone, iOS and Android devices.

The wider accessibility of the Band – the Apple Watch will only be compatible with Apple mobile products – forms part of Microsoft's goal for the device to help people lead healthier lives and be more productive, regardless of what smartphone they have.

One drawback for the Band is that it falls more into the functional than fashionable category in terms of design. It can also currently only store 13 apps on the device at any one time, although these can be switched. Microsoft will no doubt be hoping it fares better with wearables than it has in the smartphone sector, where Windows devices account for just 2.7 per cent of the market (according to

the International Data Corporation) – well behind the dominant offerings from Samsung and Apple.

The new Band is now available both through the Microsoft Store online and from various high street retailers.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=h8Z2B>



The Band is hailed as a potential rival to the Apple Watch

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Supplier news

Chelsea FC chooses Technogym for gym gear



Chelsea stars will use Technogym kit

Technogym has secured a new partnership with English Premier League leaders Chelsea Football Club, becoming the official fitness equipment supplier to the Blues' first team, development squads and ladies teams.

Under the agreement, Chelsea's training ground in Cobham, Surrey, will be equipped with Technogym equipment including Artis cardiovascular and strength equipment – designed to offer the best in biomechanics, connectivity and sustainability. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=g8s8f>

Precor seals distribution deal with Nordome

Precor has signed a partnership with Nordome Fitness AS to distribute fitness equipment to the Norwegian market.

Nordome Fitness AS is a new company specialising in the health and fitness industry, already supplying staff training and equipment service and maintenance to SATS Elixia – Norway's largest health club operator. Having delivered fitness equipment to the Norwegian market for more than 20 years, Precor hopes the new partnership with Nordome will enable it to deliver a more focused and personalised service to its customers in the country. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y7Z9P>

Duo complete Alliance buyout



Paul Cluett was previously commercial director and Sarah Watts was managing director

Sarah Watts and Paul Cluett have taken principal ownership of Alliance Leisure Services, with Watts in place as CEO and Cluett to be managing director.

Established in 1999 by Watts, Alliance Leisure has partnered numerous local authorities and leisure trusts to complete a wide range of projects. "It's been an incredible 16 years building the business and team we see today, but 2015 presents a new chapter in the company's ownership," said Watts, who was previously managing director of the business.

"We've worked hard to establish strong relationships with our clients and we look forward to developing new sites and the next generation of leisure facilities."

The team design and build sport and leisure facilities, working in partnership with local councils to replace ageing and costly leisure facilities with modern, revenue-generating sites.

Since 1999, the company has carried out more than 100 developments and invested more than £100m into the UK leisure market. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=a2a2F>

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International news

Orangetheory opens first club in Australia

US franchise Orangetheory Fitness is expanding its international presence, having just launched in Australia and with discussions underway in other countries.

This calorie burning, PT-led concept is based on heart rate training and offers a small group exercise workout, broken down into intervals of cardiovascular and strength training.

The company says it's on track to open 100-150 new locations this year, with plans to break into new markets including Hawaii. Spokesperson Andie Biederman says: "The Orangetheory model translates seamlessly from country to country."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=W3v7H>

Equinox to diversify into hotel business

Equinox Holdings, parent company of high-end US health club chain Equinox Fitness, has announced plans to launch an upscale hospitality brand.

Plans are afoot for 75 hotels worldwide, each with a fitness facility within the hotel or close by, open to guests and members.

The first site is slated for Manhattan in 2018, followed by Los Angeles one year later. Designed by Yabu Pushelberg, the New York site will have indoor and outdoor pools and a 60,000sq ft gym.

"We're appealing to the discriminating consumer who lives an active lifestyle and wants to have that as a hotel experience," says Equinox CEO Harvey Spevak.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=2F3t6>

New concept from Kranking creator

It has been confirmed that the first Johnny G In-Trinity Center will open in California before the end of the year, with more US and international locations coming on-stream next year.

Developed by Johnny G, creator of Spinning and Kranking, the In-Trinity training board is being manufactured and distributed by Matrix. By training on an incline and decline, it builds strength, flexibility, balance, co-ordination and agility, adding a new twist to yoga, pilates and martial arts postures. The negative space under the board is said to facilitate movements not possible before.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=7k3z8>

Fitness Hut adds to chain

Fitness Hut opened three clubs in Portugal this April: in Loures, 18km north of central Lisbon; Linda-A-Velha, 8km west of central Lisbon; and in Setúbal, a seaside town south of Lisbon.

All of the clubs are around 20,000sq ft and offer 80 live studio classes and 80 virtual studio classes per week, as well as a cycle studio, sprint track, cardio gym, resistance gym, free weights zone, functional training and PT.

The brand, which raised 12m last year to finance its expansion, is committed to providing world-class fitness at accessible prices, according to co-founder Nick Coutts. "We focus on fitness, innovation and

transparency," he says. "We will constantly seek out new exercise trends and train our teams to deliver them at no additional cost."

Targeting 16- to 35-year-olds, with a price point of 18-26 a month, the new clubs bring the total number of operating clubs to 11. Eight are in central and greater Lisbon, with the others being in Braga, Porto and Setúbal.

Two more will open during July and September and several contracts have been signed for more clubs to open this year, also in the greater Lisbon area. Fitness Hut aims to have 18 to 20 operational by the year end.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=g5a3F>



Fitness Hut has recently launched three new clubs, with more in the 2015 pipeline

DiR rolls out its à la carte concept

After a successful trial at one club, Barcelona-based health club chain DiR has now converted a total of 13 of its 17 gyms to "à la carte".

This flexible model allows clubs to offer both mid-range and low-cost memberships

at the same location. A membership option of 25 is offered – which covers use of the fitness area and virtual classes only – and extra services, such as access to the pool or changing room, can be added on demand.



DiR offers two memberships in one club at 13 locations

The system has been made possible by a 3m technology investment which uses fingerprint and face recognition, with touchscreens used to hire additional services which are paid for directly from the member's bank account.

DiR CEO and founder Ramon Canela says: "If catering or automotive industries' consumers can choose à la carte, why shouldn't we also apply it to fitness?"

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x3W6S>



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Fitness First by invitation only



Membership of the new Singapore club costs £300 a month, plus a £1,500 joining fee

Fitness First Group has revealed details for its exclusive new health club concept, Gravity.

With a joining fee in the region of £1,500 and membership costing £300 per month, the invitation-only proposition is targeted squarely at high-powered business executives. Its inception was influenced by Fitness First research which found 94 per cent of C-Suite executives would prefer a private, premium and personalised environment to help them achieve their health and wellness goals.

The development marks the latest chapter in Fitness First Group CEO Andrew Cosslett's quest to move the brand upmarket.

The first Gravity health club will launch in Singapore in July, with ambitions of bringing a marquee site to London at a later date.

The gym will have a strong focus on PT, with membership packages offering numerous 1:1 sessions and physiological analysis. In addition to top-of-the-range kit, there will be an outdoor deck for a variety of al fresco workouts. Also on site is an outdoor pool, a spa and a 6,500sq ft (604sq m) restaurant scheduled to open in October.

Gravity will champion holistic healthcare, with a range of visiting health practitioners. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q9g4H>

Asian brand launches flagship club

The Pure Group has opened a 25,000sq ft health club over six floors in the central district of Hong Kong, at the iconic California Tower, home to 27 floors of restaurants, bars and creative commerce.

Club highlights include the world's first 270-degree Immersive Fitness studio – taking cyclists down a glacier and through a space age city.

There's also a group fitness room with Asia's first Les Mills Sprint class, a dedicated boxing and kickboxing zone, a rotating climbing wall trainer, and a strongman and power area for strength training. It's the first gym in Hong Kong to offer Technogym's Artis range and Life Fitness' Insignia Series.

"We're raising the bar at Pure Fitness



The new Pure Fitness club is in central Hong Kong

California Tower," says Pure Group CEO Colin Grant. "We will continue to look for innovative ways to help our clients lead healthier and more active lives."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=6v8C4>



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Philpott: Extensive leisure experience

Philpott joins Stalker's trampolining venture

Former Places for People Leisure CEO Steve Philpott is the latest industry heavyweight to back David Stalker's new trampolining concept Oxygen Freejumping, joining as an investor and non-exec director.

Philpott, who has extensive experience across the leisure industry, completes an all-star Oxygen team founded by outgoing ukactive CEO Stalker and former ukactive chair and LA fitness co-founder Fred Turok.

Meanwhile, ex-ukactive public affairs director Stephen Wilson is also on board, operating as strategy director.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u4x3Q>



Bagnall: A former Keiser distributor

Andrew Bagnall takes reins at Keiser UK

Andrew Bagnall has been appointed commercial director for Keiser UK, tasked with driving significant sales expansion and taking the brand "beyond bikes".

Bagnall, who knows the company well from his time distributing Keiser products at Forza Fitness, will oversee the whole of the UK business. Aside from driving sales of core Keiser products – such as its series of bikes – Bagnall will aim to build momentum behind new functional training products, which are already proving popular with rehab clinics and sports clubs.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=p6j5e>

Glenn Earlam joins DLL as CEO

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has announced that Glenn Earlam is joining the company as chief executive officer on 30 June.

Previously the managing director of Midway Attractions – which is the largest operating business of attractions giant Merlin Entertainments – Earlam brings extensive operating experience to the table.

His appointment will allow Scott Lloyd to take up the position of non-executive deputy chair, where he will play an active role in defining the corporate and strategic development of the group.

"We believe that Glenn will be able to take us to the next level and ensure that we continue to attract new customers and reward the loyalty of our longstanding members," said Lloyd in a statement released by the gym chain.

Earlam says he is delighted to be joining one of the country's most recognised leisure brands, adding: "Scott and his team have built a great platform with TDR supporting significant investment across the estate. I'm looking forward to continuing the development and



Glenn Earlam, 49, arrives at DLL with an impressive CV

future expansion of the group, delivering world class facilities and an outstanding experience for our members."

DLL has 81 clubs in the UK and 10 in continental Europe. After being acquired by TDR Capital in November 2013, DLL has spent £25m upgrading its estate and plans to invest a further £90m up to the end of 2016.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=ESE7K>

Waggett to helm high-end portfolio

Former Fitness First chief Colin Waggett has been named CEO of the as-yet-unnamed portfolio of high-end London health clubs owned by private investment firm Encore Capital. *Health Club Management* can reveal.

Encore recently acquired the Third Space group – whose Soho and Marylebone clubs boast a range of celebrity members – as well as the Tower Bridge 37 Degrees health club for an undisclosed fee. These recent acquisitions, together with Encore's ownership of the Reebok Sports Club in Canary Wharf, underline its ambitious growth plans in the health and fitness sector.

Waggett, who made his name at Fitness First and then went on to launch Psyche, was unveiled to staff as CEO last month. He will now set about strategising and formulating the brand proposition. Further announcements are expected in the autumn with regards to the gym group's name and plans for growth.

"Our aspiration is to be the premium lifestyle club offering in London, serving the fitness-savvy, fashion-conscious Londoner



Waggett will formulate the proposition

who also appreciates the very best quality in service, and interesting and innovative experiences," Waggett told *Health Club Management*. "I firmly believe that there's a gap at the quality end of the market that we're perfectly set up to fill."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=h8g4b>

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GENERATION INACTIVE



ukactive's new kids membership category and report aim to get the country to sit

up and pay attention to childhood inactivity. Executive director Steven Ward reports

Sebastian Coe has described this generation as the least active in history: Generation Inactive.

This fact – that today's kids are significantly less active than their parents – runs deeper than the inevitable 50 more years of hurt for the England football team. It means that children growing up in 21st century Britain will be more likely to face numerous cardiovascular diseases, arthritis and cancer in their lifetimes.

So how do we turn this around? In my view, it's not as simple as saying they should get out in the sun and run around more often. We have to remember that this generation has access to more TV channels, Netflix accounts, social media platforms and games consoles than you can wag a disapproving finger at. Physical activity – whether that's a PE class, swim club or trip to an activity centre like GoApe – must now compete for the attention of children and their parents in a landscape crammed with digital alternatives.

What we can do is work with the physical activity sector, and the legislators, to make sure we're promoting the existing work of some fantastic providers and ensuring their impact is felt. We also need to take steps towards creating a future where the active option is the attractive option for both children and parents.

To achieve this, we'll need the alliance of key stakeholders – kids' activity providers, government bodies and executives alongside the spark and innovation of brand experts and technology providers – to ensure we're hitting the right notes.

Kids category

In April, we launched our ukactive kids membership category. Following on from the merger with the Compass Association,



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ONKEY BUSINESS PHAGE

Primary schools measure academic ability, but have no idea how fit their pupils are

finalised in March, this new strand of ukactive will be playing an increasingly important part in our future thinking.

The kids membership category will be the basis for our work with children's activity providers; it will provide a consultative forum, policy creation unit and go-to group of leaders in their field. It will also be working behind the scenes – and in front of them – to move the goalposts in the right direction when it comes to government collaboration with our sector.

It will become an increasingly integral part of what we do. For example, this year's National Fitness Day on 9 September will have a distinct strand of work focused on engaging with schools and embedding the fun of fitness for everyone within the education setting.

Physical illiteracy

We'll also be launching a report this month with brand new research into UK schools' responses to the inactivity pandemic. The report – which is based on a large number of Freedom of Information requests around current approaches to

monitoring and tracking students' progress in physical education – will make strong recommendations to government. Ofsted and the physical activity sector regarding the future direction of things like the primary school sport premium, and how this could be improved to incorporate a wider definition of physical activity.

I don't want to pre-empt the full details of that report, but the bottom line is that primary schools – where habits for life are formed – don't put the same level of rigour into ensuring that children leave school being able to throw, catch, walk and run as they do into monitoring a child's aptitude for reading, writing and adding up.

Indeed, early findings show that schools have a very limited understanding of how physically fit their pupils are.

Somewhere along the line this has to change. It's going to be a long process, but as we've already seen with regards to physical activity and its role in public health – with the doubling of budgets in just 12 months – we can make an impact when we really start to shout about the offer our sector can make. ●



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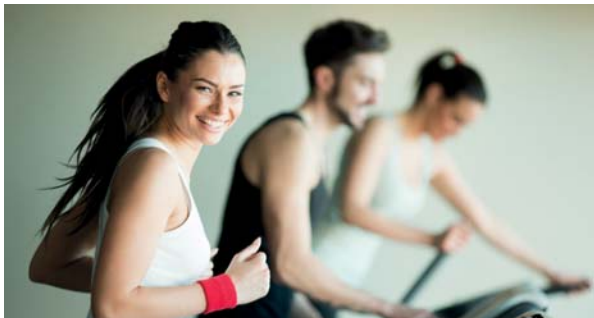


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THE WORLD IN OUR HANDS



Melissa Rodriguez outlines some of the key findings from the new *2015 IHRSA Global Report: The State of the Industry* – from continued growth in leading markets to the potential in emerging markets

The global health club industry generated US\$84bn in revenue in 2014, with more than 180,000 clubs attracting 144 million members worldwide.

Leading fitness markets in the Americas, Europe and Asia Pacific continued to show their strength, while emerging markets in Asia – as well as the global economic leaders India and China – showed potential further growth.

The Americas

In the US, the health club industry continued its strong performance. Revenue and total number of health club consumers increased significantly, while club count grew at a slower rate. Revenue grew

to US\$24.2bn from US\$22.4bn in 2013, and club count increased to 32,460 from 32,150. More than 54 million Americans belonged to a health club.

According to *The IHRSA Canadian Health Club Report*, club operators serve nearly 6 million members at roughly 6,000 facilities in Canada. IBISWorld, an independent industry research firm, projects that revenue from gyms and health clubs in Canada will increase each year to 2019. Consumer demand for health and fitness programmes for active ageing, proper nutrition and sports performance, and to help address obesity, will help drive growth for health and fitness clubs.

Leading markets continue to perform well in Latin America. Roughly 15 million members in 16 Latin American markets belong to one of 55,000 clubs and studios. Brazil, Mexico and Argentina combined serve more than 13 million members in the region. *The IHRSA Latin American Report* shows that opportunities for growth remain in Latin America, as member penetration rates are still low in comparison with developed health club markets worldwide.

Europe

The fitness industry in Europe serves nearly 48 million members. Roughly 51,000 health clubs generate US\$35bn in annual revenue.

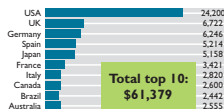
Europe represents the fitness industry's most profitable region: it has the greatest

revenue and is second only to North America in terms of total memberships. The United Kingdom and Germany lead all markets in Europe in terms of revenue.

Top 10 Global markets

INDUSTRY REVENUE (USD in millions)

The top 10 countries account for 73 per cent of total industry revenue

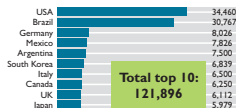


Sources: U.S. & Canada - IHRSA estimates; Asia-Pacific: The IHRSA Asia-Pacific Health Club Report (2015); Europe - The IHRSA European Health Club Report (2013), The Leisure Database, DSSV

Top 10 Global markets

NUMBER OF CLUBS

The top 10 countries account for 66 per cent of the world's health clubs



Sources: U.S. & Canada - IHRSA estimates; Asia-Pacific: The IHRSA Asia-Pacific Health Club Report (2015); Europe - The IHRSA European Health Club Report (2013), The Leisure Database, DSSV

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. Locate an IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com



Bright future: As leading economies improve, the health club industry is expected to thrive in the global marketplace

Germany attracts nine million members to 8,000 clubs and studios (source: DSSV). The health club landscape in Germany is shaped by a variety of club models: traditional full-service centres, women-only franchises, medical/wellness facilities, low-cost clubs, micro-gyms and more.

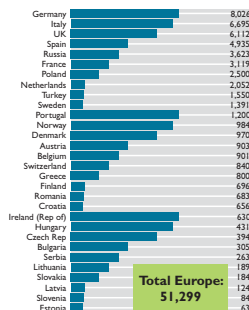
In the UK, according to research by The Leisure Database Company, roughly 8.3 million members belong to more than 6,000 health clubs and facilities. Private clubs – including full-service, low-cost and studio concepts – attract the majority of members; public health and fitness facilities in the UK cater for some 3.3 million members.

The health club industry in Norway and Poland is also robust. According to VIRKE, the Norwegian health club association, Norway generates roughly US\$730m in revenue from nearly 1,000 clubs, with one million members. The Polish health club market totals US\$491m in revenue from more than 2,000 health clubs and their one million members.

cities in Asia – including Beijing, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta – are home to maturing industries, while future growth is anticipated in growing cities as well as the overall Asia Pacific region.

Opportunities for the fitness industry abound in the global economic powerhouses of China and India, which currently have penetration rates of only 0.4 per cent and 0.12 per cent respectively. China is home to roughly 2,700 health clubs with a total of 3.9 million members. The health club industry in India has roughly 3,800 health club facilities and nearly one million members. ●

Europe NUMBER OF CLUBS



Sources: IHRSA European Health Club Report (2013); The Leisure Database; DSSV; VIRKE; Benefit Systems; IHRSA Industry Experts

Asia Pacific

The Asia Pacific region serves 17 million members at 29,000 health clubs across 14 markets (excluding the Middle East). Health club industry revenue totals US\$14.5bn in this region.

According to the recently released IHRSA Asia Pacific Health Club Report, there's room for growth in the Asia Pacific region, as the average member penetration rate for the region is just 3.8 per cent. Australia and New Zealand lead all Asia Pacific markets, with penetration rates at 14.8 per cent and 11.4 per cent respectively. Larger

Want more detail?

Melissa Rodriguez is IHRSA's senior research manager and can be reached via email at mr@ihrsa.org



Published in May, The 2015 IHRSA Global Report is the most up-to-date publication on the global fitness business. It is available at www.ihrsa.org/ihrsa-global-report in print or as a PDF.

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LES MILLS BODYPUMP

*Volume 4, Issue 1, April 2015 | JOURNAL OF FITNESS RESEARCH 21 Research shows participants use over 29% more energy when lifting a 5kg weight with fast reps compared to lifting a 20kg for less reps for the same length of time.

**'Strength and weight' is the most popular group exercise genre – it drives 20% of the total global group exercise attendance, Les Mills Global Scoreboard Survey 2014.

***Nilsen Global Consumer Fitness Survey 2013)



Diary

JUNE

22-25 | 14th Annual International Conference on Health Economics, Management and Policy

Venue Athens, Greece

Summary

This conference brings together scholars, researchers and students from all areas of health economics, management and policy.

Web www.atiner.gr/health.htm

24 | ukactive FLAME Conference

Venue Telford International Centre, Telford, UK

Summary

Offering a programme of high profile speakers, ukactive's annual conference is the leading educational and networking event for senior level professionals and decision-makers. The event will culminate in the FLAME Awards 2015.

Web www.ukactive.com

29-30 | Facilities Management (FM) Forum

Venue Whittlebury Hall Hotel & Spa, Northamptonshire, UK

Summary

This event is designed specifically for managers and directors who are directly responsible for the purchase of FM products and services.

Web www.forumevents.co.uk



FitPro Live targets personal trainers, instructors and fitness fanatics

JULY

9-10 | FitPro Live

Venue ExCeL, London, UK

Summary

Targeting personal trainers, instructors and fitness fanatics alike, this convention and trade show offers product demos and group workouts, as well as masterclasses and seminars from top presenters. The event will be preceded by a one-day Meeting of the Minds event on 8 July – an invite-only event for the top trainers from each health club group. A Zumba festival will take place on 10-11 July.

Web www.fitpro.com/live15

8 | Sports & Leisure Forum

Venue Hilton London Wembley, UK

Summary

One-day event which brings together senior sports and leisure professionals with solution providers, for a full day of face-to-face business meetings.

Web www.forumevents.co.uk

10-12 | GoFest

Venue Surrey Sports Park, UK

Summary

A family-focused sports event that fitness facilities can get involved in. Includes dance, fitness, sport and health-based activities.

Web www.gofest.co.uk

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All the right moves

With retention rates that are twice the industry average and an opportunity for fitness partners to double their profits with a league of new members, MoveGB's innovative membership model is a risk-free and lucrative proposition for operators, says MD Justin Mendleton



Managing director Justin Mendleton says MoveGB acts like a large corporate client for health clubs

Where did the idea for MoveGB come from and when did it launch?

MoveGB was founded by Alister Rollins following the sale of his company, The Retention People (TRP), the market leader for loyalty and customer experience solutions to the industry.

After seeing the success of new industry models like iTunes and more recently Uber, we were convinced there was a better model for our industry, one that could more closely align the behaviour of exercisers with the commercial models of fitness operators and generate life long relationships between consumer and provider. If customers are worth more, businesses can afford to spend more keeping them active, which further increases their loyalty and value. We are seeing this vision materialise with 100s of our health club partners as we roll out across the UK.

We launched in Bristol in January 2013 and now have over 10,000 users joining every month and are doubling the profits for most of our partners.

What does MoveGB offer consumers?

We offer a universal fitness membership, allowing our customers to 'move' anywhere under one simple monthly plan. Venues in our network include a diverse range of operators such as gyms, leisure centres, climbing centres, boot camps, yoga, golf, bike rental, paddle

boarding, sports massage, personal training etc. So it's a unique proposition for our members, most of whom want diversity in their exercise regime to keep them motivated. Our model also works well for commuters and travellers, as well internationally (MoveUSA is already live in NYC).

How does the scheme work?

We offer all new users a free trial to try out our partners. If they decide to continue, they can purchase one of our monthly Passport Plans based on how often they prefer to move each week.

What's the price point?

Our payment plans vary regionally but are always priced above our partner clubs, so it's just a bit more than the average gym membership in any city. We've also recently launched a Premium Passport, which includes high-end operators like The Park Club and several 5-star spas.

How many sites/activities are you affiliated with?

We are close to a thousand providers in the network and hundreds more join each month.

We are live in NYC, London, Bristol, Southampton, Plymouth, Bath and Lincoln. Our roll out plans will see a

further 20 UK cities live this year. We're working with major brands such as Fitness First, Total Fitness and Everyone Active, through to independent chains like Soho Gyms and many single sites.

Why should operators partner with MoveGB?

We are like a large corporate account to our partners, bringing them totally new and committed members at zero cost of acquisition. We're effectively a free marketing service for them. As well as paying our partners for our members to access their facilities, many of our trial users go on to convert to direct members of our partners.

What other benefits do you offer to clubs?

There's no fee for partners to join our network and there's no contractual tie-in, so partners can pull out with just 48 hours' notice.

It's a risk-free proposition for them. We believe strongly that all relationships should be based on mutual value not legal contracts.

What other services do you offer?

We resell partners' additional services including PT, massage services as well as activities or courses that some of our specialist activity partners may provide.

“

If customers are worth more, businesses can afford to spend more keeping them active, which further increases their loyalty and value

”



MoveGB is working with many of the major chains like Fitness First, as well as many independent operators



Can you tell us a little more about your coaching division?

We offer a proactive concierge service to our members to help keep them active. We also use a lot of smart technology like TRP to monitor our members and engage with them when motivation is needed.

One of the problems the industry suffers from is a bad reputation for service. We're determined to create a culture and model that places us as one of the best customer service companies in the world. So we've studied and visited companies like Amazon, and believe we have something pretty special to offer.

Our coaches are empowered to do what they can to delight our members and have a weekly budget to spend to make sure it happens. We recently ordered a pizza to be delivered to a

member who we charged on the wrong date. The charge caused them to go overdraw....and hungry! Needless to say an angry customer suddenly turned into one of our greatest fans!

Have you done research on exercise adherence and the MoveGB formula?

Yes, our model is based on the insight from over 15 million member records and 10 years at TRP. Our current business performance shows that the average length of stay is almost twice the fitness industry average, but we are still not satisfied and are obsessive about improving this.

How would you describe your company culture?

We're a young, purpose driven company. We only recruit people who are genuinely passionate about the health and fitness industry, and in turn we offer them great benefits like unlimited annual leave, flexible hours, and a work environment with bean bags, free fruit and stand-up desks!

We are currently on the look-out for offices as we are expanding so fast, the team has almost tripled since I joined the team five months ago.

Where do you see MoveGB's position in the future of fitness?

We face an inherent dilemma in the industry. We're all driven to get 'more people more active, more often' but if everyone exercised for the recommended 5 x 30 minutes every week, then most health and fitness clubs would need to be five times bigger. We need to fix this if the industry is going to do more than just survive.

By uniting traditional, low cost and boutique operators, MoveGB offers a way to spread members evenly, keeping the customers active and growing the size of the market for all.

But you can see why the market has anchored fitness to be worth such a low amount.... because they don't actually use the service!

As an industry we should be as powerful financially and politically as the pharmaceutical industry. We have a far better product for most of the same ill, we just have to get people using it. ●

For more information, visit MoveGB's operator website at: www.webuyanymembership.com
Phone: 0845 519 6626
Email: partners@movegb.com



PT vs technology

Technology is moving at a dizzying pace. With advanced robots coming to the UK this year and exercise apps increasingly widely used, is technology set to push personal trainers out of a job?

The membership base of cycling app Strava is growing so fast the company can't put a figure on it. Meanwhile a wide array of apps such as Motiontraxx, FitStar and Kiplan are motivating and educating people, empowering them to take their fitness into their own hands: download a programme and watch the stats to see how you're progressing.

So where does this leave personal trainers, who offer a less flexible service at a much higher price? Is there a danger that people will no longer wish to pay for the knowledge of a middle man when they can now use technology to secure the same knowledge for themselves at a fraction of the cost?

Or does personal training appeal to a different market – one that's less likely to be seduced by technology? People who find apps confusing, or who don't have the time or inclination to trawl about online but who prefer a dialogue with a real person and like the commitment a PT appointment gives them?

And is there in fact the chance of a backlash against tracking technology, because people find it too Big Brotherish that a company can hold information about them which they can then aggregate and sell on? According to Maneesh Juneja, data will become currency and there's already an emerging group of people wanting to retain and sell their own data. In the future they might even make their

fitness choices based on the data collection policy of fitness providers.

The flip side of the technology threat is the opportunity it presents to savvy PTs who are able to figure out how to use it. So what should PTs be doing to make the most of technology? How can they use it to grow their businesses and make their services even more effective? What skills do they need to emphasise to stay ahead of the tech? And is there a future for those who decide not to embrace it?

Will PTs be able to upskill even further to complement tech rather than compete – becoming specialists in particular sports, for example, or disciplines such as motivational interviewing, so they can take people to a place beyond technology?

Do you have experience of merging PT and technology? Email us healthclub@leisuremedia.com

MANEESH JUNEJA

Independent digital health futurist



“With austerity likely to continue until 2020, consumer choices will be influenced by economic circumstances. Apps and sensors are cheap and offer support 24/7, whereas PTs are relatively expensive and less accessible.

Even the older, affluent markets might start using personal robots instead of PTs. This year sees the emergence of household companion robots, powered by cloud-based artificial intelligence, which will be able to undertake many functions such as engaging in conversation or even ordering a takeaway. If these household robots are adopted by the masses, they could impact the niche PTs have. Also, the NHS has said it plans to roll out wearable technology to monitor health, so we could soon start seeing GPs prescribing apps.

However, the technology also offers an opportunity to redefine PT, so PTs need to be able to understand emerging technologies and piggyback on what's happening. For example, virtual reality headsets could allow PTs to connect with people over a wider geographical area. And wearable technology, including smart fabrics, will generate a huge amount of data that people will want analysed, which provides an opportunity for the fitness sector to respond to clients with new insights.”

SEAN MAGUIRE

COO • Legend



“Technology poses more of a threat for those PTs who don't move with the times, but even old-fashioned PTs won't become obsolete. People pay for a PT to have a personal motivator, expertise on-hand, a tailored programme and to be kept accountable, all of which are very human qualities.

However, PT hasn't changed much in 30 years and technology will allow it to evolve to benefit both the trainer and the consumer. PTs are constrained by the one-to-one model, whereas technology will allow them to work with more people at once – for example, by streaming classes online. They will also be able to offer, and charge for, a more holistic service, by taking data from tracking devices and applying it to the client's programme. Technology will allow them to find out what their clients are eating and their activity levels beyond their session – better data which should lead to better results.

There is a need for the traditional model and it's effective. But PTs could use technology to build bigger brands, reaching out to a broader audience with specialised online programmes and services. The end result will be greater benefits for the consumer, and the fitness industry, with more people getting better results.”



Nettleton: Technology can help PTs better connect to communities of athletes

ANDY JACKSON

Owner • AJ Scot LLC

“Nothing has changed. The threat of cutting out the middle man has always been there: it used to be by using programmes from magazines or copying other people. Garmin and heart rate monitors have been around for a long time.

The big advantages PTs have is that they can coach and connect with the person and motivate in a way that technology cannot. They can also ensure people avoid injury by not doing things before they're ready, or with bad technique. PTs have been criticised for just standing next to treadmills and talking to people, but 50 per cent of what they do is to support and motivate and simply be there.

Clever personal trainers are already using the technology to enhance what they're doing and are using it to their advantage – for example, by providing an online service and using online programming to create more specific, targeted training.

If I were a PT, I'd be using trackers to prove what I was doing with clients was having a positive impact, and I'd be advising them to make use of apps such as MotionTraxx. PTs shouldn't fear their clients using technology, or working out without them, because working out more is a good thing. Not keeping up with their education is more of a threat to PTs than technology.”



GARETH NETTLETON

Marketing director • Strava

“PTs should absolutely be seeing technology as one way in which they can validate the effectiveness of their services. When harnessed correctly, technology can be a huge enabler for PTs in various facets of their business, from helping athletes train smarter and more effectively, to facilitating the growth of a wider personal network for fitness professionals.

From a performance measurement and analysis point of view, technology makes fitness quantifiable. Whether that be through heart rate training or simply comparing times for similar run routes, technology allows for deeper analysis and therefore insight. Any training aid that allows athletes to recognise progress will only lead to improved motivation.

Additionally, there's the network potential that technology brings. At Strava we talk about connecting athletes, both to each other but also to forward-thinking trainers, coaches and businesses. It's a community with shared goals, motivations and athlete DNA at its core.

Personal trainers who can tap into such a community can find themselves not only directly connected to an array of athletes, but also granted access to their entire training history and performance data. That's a huge opportunity.”



EDGARD CORONA

The founder and CEO of BioRitmo and SmartFit talks to Kate Cracknell about cannibalising his own business, handing the reins to his staff and the challenges of operating in Brazil



Corona says the business faces the financial challenge of having to pay 2.5 times more than the US for fitness equipment

“If I’m going to lose members to low-cost clubs, I’d rather lose them to my own low-cost clubs than to my competitors,” says Edgard Corona, explaining how, in 2009, he launched low-cost SmartFit into the market alongside the premium operation, BioRitmo, that he’d established in Brazil in 1995.

With this self-cannibalisation strategy in mind, Corona’s philosophy is to offer the very best clubs in both the premium and the low-cost segments of the market, in a bid to ensure his facilities are people’s first and second choices. Whether they then opt for BioRitmo or SmartFit is up to them.

But it’s been a learning curve, as Corona freely admits. Rewind to 1995,

when he resigned from his job as a chemical engineer to invest in the first ever BioRitmo club.

“We did everything wrong,” he says. “The club lost money for seven or eight years until we made the space bigger and offered more parking.”

But come 1997, and the opening of the second BioRitmo in Paulista, the recipe had already changed. “I’d visited London and had been inspired by the design and the experience you got in the restaurants over there.

“I decided I didn’t want my clubs to feel like health clubs – I wanted them to feel like you were walking into one of those restaurants. Our Paulista club changed the whole market – it was very clean, with a great colour scheme and a strong focus on lighting.”

Confronting costs

He continues: “But even then, it was hard for us to grow because of costs. Interest and inflation rates in Brazil were very high – we had to change our prices every month – and the import tax on goods coming into Brazil meant we were paying around two and a half times more for gym equipment than US operators. A treadmill would cost us US\$25,000 – more expensive than a car – so we didn’t have much kit in our clubs.

“In fact, that premium on fitness equipment is still the case – it remains one of our big challenges.”

Corona realised more streamlining was needed and, attending his first IHRSA event in 2001, he hired one of the expert presenters to refine his sales process. The facility mix was also

BIORITMO

Established: First club opened 1995

Membership fee: US\$100 a month

Club size: Typically 1,600sq m

Offering: Gym and group exercise

Member profile: Diverse age range and fitness experience

Number of clubs: 28

Locations: Brazil, predominantly in São Paulo

SMARTFIT

Established: First club opened 2009

Membership fee: US\$20 a month

Club size: 1,000–1,500sq m

Offering: CV and resistance equipment

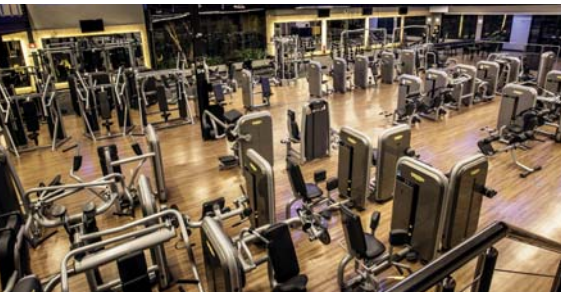
Member profile: Younger, exercise-savvy members

Number of clubs: 227

Locations: Brazil, Mexico and Chile



In 2014, 52 SmartFit clubs opened in Brazil, but this year growth will be more cautious



► reviewed, with the swimming pools removed to make way for two group exercise studios in every club. "It's hard to manage too many elements well," he explains. "I wanted a simpler model as the blueprint going forward."

Within this, however, Corona has continued to experiment. At the Higenopolis club in São Paulo for example, which opened in 2005, he installed theatre-style lighting to overcome the challenge of an interior location in a shopping centre: during the day, the lighting makes it look like daytime, switching to sunset and then night-time at the appropriate hour.

And in the last year there's been a significant rethink in the BioRitmo club

EMPOWERING STAFF

"In 2003, I was working crazy hours and I went on a training session that changed the way I saw the world and managed my company," says Edgard Corona. "I realised I was doing a lot wrong."

He adds: "I learnt that every human being needs

power and purpose and participation, so I inverted the pyramid at my company and empowered the staff – the people who are in front of the members every day – to run the company.

"We monitor member satisfaction through NPS every day, although we only

ask each member twice a year. They receive an email within five hours of leaving the club, and if they score us less than six out of 10, the manager must call them, apologise and look at how to address any problems.

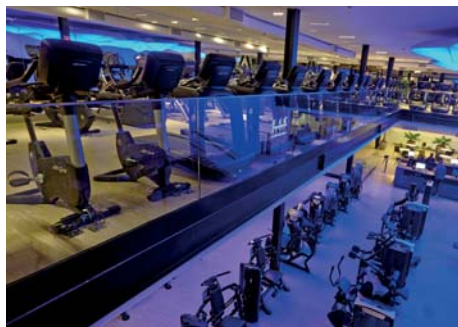
"We also have a Gallup process with questions

for customers and staff, to measure how well the manager is taking care of the team, and how satisfied the members are.

"The whole team then gets involved in finding and implementing solutions to the problems they have identified."



BioRitmo is Corona's premium health club brand, operating 28 clubs in Brazil – mainly São Paulo



layout to enhance the user experience, with gym floors split into three distinct zones to cater for different types of member. "We've created three clubs within a club: one area for those who just use machines to exercise, mainly beginners and middle-aged to older users; the central area targeting people in their 20s through to early 40s, with a more competitive feeling and a focus on functional and small group training; and the other end exclusively for heavier free weights and personal training.

"We also have different types and ages of instructor on the gym floor at different times of the day, depending on the profile of the members in the club."

A challenging market

But it's not all been plain sailing. In 2007, cashflow was "very tricky – I thought the business might fold". And operating in Brazil doesn't get any easier today. "There's a national water shortage, so we're having to drill 36 wells this year and buy trucks to move water from one site to another. If people can't shower at our clubs, then they'll have to close," explains Corona.

"The cost of water is likely to go up 35 per cent this year – assuming there is any – and the cost of power up 55 per cent. Meanwhile the Brazilian economy

“There's a national water shortage, so we're having to drill 36 wells this year and buy trucks to move water from one site to another”

will drop 2 per cent and inflation is sitting at about 8 per cent. People have less disposable income."

The company will therefore focus on growing its low-cost brand – although even then, given the challenging conditions, growth will be slower than in previous years.

"Last year we opened 52 SmartFit clubs in Brazil, but that won't be the case this year. We have to base all our plans on zero growth in Brazil," acknowledges Corona. "The value of the Brazilian Real is also decreasing against foreign currency, which is another big challenge as all our equipment and maintenance comes from the US or Europe. We're currently buying more

from Europe, because the Euro is also struggling. And of course a lot of our resources are going towards tackling the water shortage at the moment."

Cost versus salary

He continues: "Another reason we're focusing on SmartFit is that the premium end of the market is already saturated. In spite of the tough economic conditions in Brazil, and the fact that people in the US earn at least three times more than people in Brazil, there are more high-end clubs in São Paulo – where the majority of our BioRitmo clubs are – than in New York City. So we'll open more high-end clubs, but probably only one or two a year.

"Meanwhile, only about 4 per cent of the Brazilian population holds a gym membership at the moment, so there's scope for growth if we can educate people to look beyond aesthetics to the health benefits – although that in itself will be a challenge. However, I don't think we'll get much past 6 per cent, because the cost of building and operating clubs is such that US\$20 really is the lowest you can charge – that gives you just a small profit – and lots of people can't afford that.

"In the US, people's salaries are three times higher and they pay US\$10 a ▶

- month for a low-cost club. In Brazil they pay US\$20, meaning gym membership is the equivalent of six times more expensive. So even budget clubs won't hugely grow the market.

"We may even need to increase our price slightly – to around US\$23 a month – for the new clubs we're building, because equipment is now 60 per cent more expensive due to the exchange rate."

Growing SmartFit

Nevertheless, if growth does come, it's likely to be through low-cost expansion. So what is the SmartFit model? "It's an experience," says Corona. "The way we've approached the architecture, the lighting, the choice of software and equipment... it isn't like a normal low-cost club. The idea is that, if low-cost competition arrives, they won't actually be able to compete because ours feels like a high-end club – but charging only US\$20 a month."

"In fact, a lot of high-end gyms are losing members to SmartFit, including BioRitmo. That's OK though – I'm happy to have really great low-cost clubs so we don't lose our BioRitmo members to other low-cost operators."

"I actually don't want people to be able to see much difference between SmartFit and BioRitmo."

He continues: "There are instructors on-hand at SmartFit in case members have any questions, but the whole club has been set up to be self-explanatory. There are three rows of equipment – the front row is for weight loss, the second for endurance training and the back row for muscle building. Crossing these to effectively form a grid, lines of equipment run from the front to the back of the gym floor by body part: arms, back, legs, abs and so on."

"So if you want to build muscle in your arms, you immediately know exactly which piece of kit to go to. There's then a video when you get there to



SmartFit clubs are designed to look high-end even though they are budget

"I don't have any issue with challenging my own business models and cannibalising myself. I believe that, if my business is hurting, it's because I'm not giving members what they want"

show you the exercises you can do on that piece of equipment."

There are now 176 SmartFit clubs in Brazil, with another 20 planned by the end of the year, and it's proving to be an appealing model across other South American countries too.

"We've created 50/50 joint ventures with local partners to expand into Mexico and Chile – SportCity in Mexico in 2012, and O2 in Chile at the end of 2013, which are both high-end operators that wanted a low-cost brand. We have 47 clubs in Mexico with another 17 to come this year, and four clubs in Chile with another in the pipeline. I'd also like to go into Peru, where I think we could open around 30 clubs."

"Over time I think we can grow SmartFit to 130–140 clubs in Mexico and to 300 in Brazil – so maybe a total of 450–500 across all markets – but that's really just a guesstimate, because our competitive advantage is inevitably just temporary."

Competing with yourself

Corona concludes: "I'm now looking at the possibility of launching a microgym format. As Steve Jobs said, it's not about the next thing you do but what you'll do three steps down the line. I want to think about what formats I can create that will compete with my existing clubs."

"I don't have any issue with challenging my own business models and cannibalising myself. I genuinely believe that, if my business is hurting, it's simply because I'm not giving members what they want."

"The future is uncertain, especially with all the technology that's coming our way, but it's full of opportunities. I want to prepare and empower the young people in my organisation to be creative and come up with new ideas. My role is to step back and try not to disturb them – simply to help them make the changes once they've come up with the ideas – because they understand technology far better than I do." ●

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

"It's hard finding good locations for clubs in the old cities of Brazil," says Corona. "The way the buildings have been designed, you often have to split clubs across several floors, or you have to knock two buildings together – there aren't many big spaces."

"You also have to take traffic into account when selecting club locations. Traffic is very bad in São Paulo – it

can take 20 minutes to drive 1km – which means your potential audience must live or work in a radius of just 1km from the potential new club."

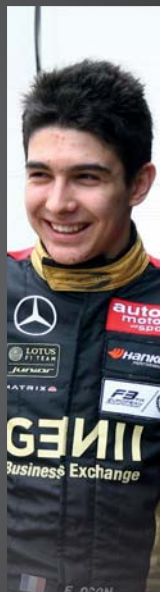
"In Rio it's different again. There, people walk to the club and go home again to shower, so we have smaller clubs dotted along the same street within a couple of blocks of each other – and no showers."

MATRIX

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www.matrixfitness.co.uk

Operations manager Leonie Wileman explains how the CORE by Premier software solution meets the growing needs of your health and fitness business



CORE can help build profitability and manage daily operations

Innovative to the CORE

When was Premier Software established?

Since 1994, Premier Software has been the centre of the spa and leisure industry, providing professional solutions to independent and group establishments across the globe.

What is the mission of the company?

Our mission statement is: To create software people want to use and respond positively to our clients' needs.

What are your key products?

Our flagship product, CORE by Premier gives a 360° view of your business, helping to build profitability and manage day-to-day operations. It covers all business areas from front desk to back office operations, including call centre and multi-location administration.

What are your most recent software innovations?

Premier is continuously striving to improve our products by listening to our clients changing needs.

Premier's quarterly software release saw some exciting development with new payment integration to Single Euro Payment Area (SEPA) for membership transactions outside the UK. Premier also enhanced its portfolio partnering with Gantner Technologies, to provide

proximity access control for members and day guests.

What do you offer health clubs?

CORE by Premier is remarkably flexible. It provides health and leisure clubs with all the functionality and flexibility needed to run multiple membership schemes, increase membership numbers and promote revenue growth.

Operators can validate and track usage of their members upon entry, taking into consideration date of expiry, membership types and payments.

Members can be issued with a card or their details can be entered manually. CORE integrates with access control enabling members to self swipe for fast track entry at reception, via a physical barrier or external locking device.

The members' database allows you to analyse the profile of an individual member and membership category. Retention and attrition ratings can also be monitored, along with memberships on hold and new member listings.

CORE provides the ability to capitalise on captured client data, all enquiries can be tracked and personal correspondence can be generated for each type of enquiry, such as a membership or package information.

Online membership and sign up also removes the need for paperwork and the signing of Direct Debits.

Why else should clients choose you?

CORE by Premier provides a complete solution for all leisure and spa requirements, from scheduling services and stock control to marketing. The flexible design and single database structure can be tailored to meet the requirements of a multi-site operator or stand alone site. CORE offers a comprehensive online suite including web booking, online membership and registration. Our fully integrated mobile suite allows trainers to deliver first class services, booking clients for their next appointment away from reception.


What support do you offer?

Our dedicated UK based support team are vital to the ongoing relationship with our clients. They provide help and advice with the day-to-day operation of the software. If a 'worst case scenario' arises, our team are there to assist.

The support service also includes regular updates of the software, ensuring your system always has the latest functionality available.

Tell us about your new premises. What will be on offer there?

We've recently moved to Cannock's prestigious Heritage Park, and have doubled the size of our office space, meaning we can now offer a dedicated



Mercure Hotels were looking for a solution that could be rolled out across multiple sites

“We’re aware that the key trends in the health, fitness and spa market are improving the customer experience and ensuring value for money”

training facility for all of our clients. The large modern training area will allow Premier’s customers to leave their busy health club or spa to be trained on how to effectively use Premier Software.

What do you see as the key trends in the health, fitness and spa market and how is Premier meeting those developing needs?

From speaking with our clients, we are aware that the key trends in the health, fitness and spa market are improving the customer experience and ensuring value for money.

Premier Software meets these developing needs by providing a flexible design and single database structure that can be tailored to meet the requirements of a multi-site group or stand alone location.

Our bespoke package allows our clients to have a suite of online products that help to build profitability and manage day-to-day operations, providing the best service for their members. ●

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CASE STUDY Spa Naturel Fitness

Spa Naturel Fitness, part of the Mercure Hotel group, offers a range of treatments from massages to manicures, leisure and gym memberships to suit all needs. Across their collection of health clubs and spas, they have created a space to escape the every day and find relaxation, helping their members to unwind, de-stress and feel totally refreshed.

Mercure Hotels chose CORE by Premier as it offered a single solution that could be rolled out across their multiple locations. This allows the staff to manage all of their memberships and day-to-day treatments in one place, as well as providing detailed reporting systems that allow for easy tracking of performance and finances. Being able to keep everything organised with specific policies allows the team at Spa Naturel Fitness to communicate and interact with customers clearly and efficiently throughout their stay. “CORE is able to highlight specific areas that need developing – from tracking traffic to prompting a staff member about a customer’s birthday!” says Anthony Betteridge.

When asked how CORE has helped with member retention, Betteridge

advocated that the system has allowed for an even greater personal connection with their use of the e-mail and SMS options direct from the software.

“Swift communication using multiple different areas of the software is extremely useful when identifying what a customer needs. We can create a letter en masse about events, recommended products for customers to use, and much more,” he says.

The system further enables Betteridge and his team to set targets and manage customers by providing reports that can be used repeatedly each day. From tracking new sales and cancellations, to treatments and revenue generated, Spa Naturel Fitness is able to analyse trends and set appropriate goals as a direct result of these reports. “We get everything we need from CORE,” he says.

Finally, when asked what aspect of the software they have found to work really well for their business, Betteridge explains that “CORE in itself is what works well for us – to identify any individual portion of CORE as better than the rest is a difficult task. It’s a well-rounded tool that allows for a great many improvements within a business”.

THINK OUT OF THE BOX

Gymbox Westfield Stratford has inherited all the colour and buzz of its Olympic next-door neighbour, says Kate Cracknell, as she pays a visit and chats to CEO Richard Hilton about creativity, classes and more new clubs

visit the new Gymbox in Westfield Stratford, east London, just two weeks after its opening, with the club still in the final stages of decoration and snagging – but it already has a real buzz to it, not to mention a much busier gym floor than I'd expect at 10.00am on a Monday. "We opened with 2,000 members and already have 800 people using the club each day," confirms Gymbox founder and CEO Richard Hilton when we sit down for a chat after a tour of the facilities.

Although he admits there's always an early days surge of people using the gym at a brand new club, nevertheless this sort of usage seems to be pretty standard across all Gymbox sites. "Eighty-seven per cent of members use Gymbox clubs once a week," Hilton tells me. "And each club is visited by around 1,000 members a day from a typical membership base of around 3,000. "We're also at a record number of members: all but one of our seven clubs are at their highest ever membership; the one that isn't is just 50 members short."

A big part of that is down to the company's ongoing investment in its sites. "We have a policy of 'no tired clubs'," says Hilton. "People are always very keen to throw the spotlight on their new sites, but for me you have to look at an operator's old clubs. That's how you see the strength of the brand.

"Similarly, although people have been calling this our flagship club, actually I'd just call it a well-executed club. I don't think you should create one flagship: all your clubs should be flagships. If we do something that works well in a new club, we'll put it into our old clubs too."

Establishing a heartbeat

All that said, I'm in Stratford to see the new club – and it's one I'd very happily be a member of, even though the pumping dance music reminds me I'm at the upper end of its target age range.

Created within a space built specifically for Gymbox by Westfield – "Westfield understands brands and wanted Gymbox as its gym brand," says Hilton – it's colourful and light and it



Hilton brought his advertising talents to the Gymbox brand

makes you want to work out. There are floor to ceiling windows in the three studios – although blackout blinds and a top-of-the-range lighting system allow the instructor to create whatever mood they require – and a glass-sided gym with fantastic views over the Olympic stadium and the ArcelorMittal Orbit (the curving red sculpture next to the stadium). The CV floor has even been tiered so, no matter which row you're in, you get a view of the stadium while you're working out.

The main gym floor also offers a large resistance area – there's a fairly equal split space-wise between CV and strength – and the whole room is brought to life with brightly striped metal girders as pillars, neon lighting and Bose speakers overhead, and live DJs.

Welcome to Gymbox Westfield Stratford

Opened: 9 March 2015
Build cost: £2.2m
Size: 20,000sq ft
Membership: From £62/month
Capacity: Approx 3,200 members
Suppliers: Life Fitness, Precor, Stairmaster, Schwinn, Ivanko, Hammer Strength, Concept2, Jacobs Ladder, Freemotion

The gym at Stratford is a colourful, light space, with brightly striped pillars





Classes are the heartbeat of Gymbox; at Stratford, up to 150 members take part in classes at any one time

On the same upper floor of the club is another gym area for heavier lifting, functional training and martial arts. There's a sledge track, ropes, plyoboxes, soft medicine balls, a whole row of squat racks – which have also been painted in bright colours – and a vast Octagon surrounded by punch bags and a few bits of cardio (bikes, Turbo Trainers and SkiErgs) for functional classes and PT.

"We do classes pretty much everywhere in the club," says Hilton. "At peak times, there'll be a class going on in each of the three studios, in the functional area and in the Octagon. That's a total of around 120–150 people all doing classes at once."

That's not surprising given it's really in the area of group exercise that Gymbox sets itself apart. "Classes are the heartbeat of our clubs," agrees Hilton. The design and location of the large studios reflect this: they're the first thing you see as you walk past reception, with a touchscreen board promoting the diverse timetable. One-way mirrors allow exercisers to see a full wall of mirror while those outside can get a taster of what's going on in the class, and the cycling studio features lasers and a leaderboard.

"We design all our own classes and change the timetable every quarter, introducing four or five new creative slots each time – so at the moment we have things like twerking, drumming-



One area of the new gym offers heavy lifting, functional training and martial arts

based Pound, rave and Nae Nae," says Hilton. "Those ideas might come from our team – they might have got an idea from a film, or maybe even a dance they saw someone doing at a wedding – or from our members."

"Everyone's allowed to be creative and you mustn't be embarrassed to make mistakes – some things will always work better than others, and our members never hold it against us. They just tell us and we change it."

"We have around 90 classes a week in each club, and every single class is always booked up. Over 60 per cent of our members do group exercise."

Growth potential

This class-focused approach was inspired by the time Hilton spent working in advertising in New York, between 1990 and 1997. "I used to go to Crunch and the classes were utterly unique," he says. "There was nothing like it in London, so ▶

Big box versus microgym

"For me, 20,000sq ft is our sweet spot," says Gymbox CEO Richard Hilton. "We have one smaller site in Old Street which is around 10,000sq ft. At that club, rather than try and squeeze everything in and not do it all properly, we dropped one discipline: combat."

"I would do that again, but I prefer to offer everything in each of our clubs, so really 20,000sq ft is ideal. The big box gym is still a very strong model, even in the days of the specialist microgyms. We strive to be best in class across every aspect of our offering, whether that's free weights or classes. And if you do everything really well, you won't be threatened by the microgyms. We had a boutique club open right near us in Holborn and we didn't lose any members to it. Neither have we lost members to other mainstream clubs."

"The key is to ensure that every element of your offering is able to compete with a specialist club that offers only that discipline."



The Gymbox clubs and branding are targeted at 18- to 40-year-olds

People are always very keen to throw the spotlight on their new sites, but for me you have to look at an operator's old clubs. That's how you see the strength of the brand

► when I came back I put together a business pitch for a new gym concept. I wanted to create a gym business with a distinctive look and feel that inspired and compelled you to exercise. It should be targeted at 18- to 40-year-olds, and – drawing on my advertising background – we would very much speak their language. That means Gymbox is a polarising brand – you either love it or hate it – but I believe you have to have confidence in what you're saying and be consistent with your brand at all times.

"I wanted to use interior designers and light designers and sound engineers, not gym designers. And I wanted the heartbeat to be the classes – to ensure these really differentiated us."

"I needed £2.5m, but at first I couldn't raise it. Then I approached Fitness First and they immediately loved it, putting in £2m. That was in 2001, and I opened the first club in Holborn in September 2003."

I ask Hilton about some of the quirkier PR stunts Gymbox has done in the past, and he says: "We had to get our brand on the map, but our approach

is more sophisticated now. It's more about word-of-mouth and social media.

"The challenge now is how to keep the creativity in the business as it grows. It feels like a start-up still – people still think we're the new kid on the block – so how can we maintain that, going from being a cool small business to a cool bigger business?"

Because the business is certainly growing. Having received a cash injection from Octopus Ventures in 2010, which helped it grow from three to five clubs, it then received £10m from the Business Growth Fund (BGF) in 2014 – the investor at Octopus had moved to BGF – as well as an additional £7m in fresh loans.

"The original idea was to open another three clubs, but the two we've already opened – Old Street and Westfield Stratford – are already doing so well that we're now going to open four," says Hilton. "We'll open our eighth club in Victoria in October or November 2015, and there's another central London site we're in the process of signing."

"After that, it's really a case of balancing how big the business can be versus where I can take it myself. I believe it has huge potential."

"London is core for the brand, but it could also work well in other big UK cities – Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Newcastle – and internationally. That's not on my radar though. I want to continue what we're doing, take small steps and do it well. If the business ever gets that big, it may or may not be while I'm in charge."

All of which sounds like he's getting ready to move on, I suggest. "The business is not for sale," clarifies Hilton. "But it's a business, not my personal pension fund or a lifestyle. If at some point I'm approached by someone with the right money, who I feel is a safe pair of hands – willing to keep the management team intact and maintain our brand and our culture – and who has a better skillset to take the business even further... There'll be a time when that might happen. But I don't think it's right now." ●

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THE LANGUAGE OF NUMBERS



PHOTOS: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Just as vinyl is being revived, mid-market gyms are coming back stronger

The mid-market is a good place to be – you just need to know how to pitch your pricing. Tim Baker of research consultancy Touchstone Partners explains

The squeezed middle. Everyone knows what it is. Challenged from above and particularly below, dire predictions were made about the death of the mid-market gym, which have happily proved untrue. The sector has survived, has adapted and – although some say there's more pain to come before the corner is finally turned – the general consensus is that, while low-cost gyms may be here to stay, this does not mean the mid-market gym is an endangered species.

This process is typical of so many markets. A new proposition is lauded as a market game changer, grows rapidly as it's adopted, and then hits a plateau and it becomes another player.

Consider TV: we're too young to remember when this new kid on the

block was going to kill off radio. Or more recently e-books: it was reported recently that electronic book sales declined slightly last year. And what about digital radio, which was predicted to wipe out analogue services? (This may still happen, but it will be driven by government demand rather than simple market forces.) Or vinyl records: I've lost count of the times I've been told recently that this medium, so much warmer and realistic than CD and electronic versions, is recovering. Sales of turntables, as well as vinyl, are growing.

Sure, there are also examples where products and services have died a death: cassette tapes, floppy disks, VHS tapes, video hire shops to name a few. These have generally been replaced because something came along that could do



Readers have come to value the physical book – unless it's one they don't want to be seen holding

exactly the same thing, only better and often cheaper. Television can't do everything that radio can. Readers have come to value the physical book, unless perhaps it's one they don't want to be seen holding on their commute. There's something special about holding a vinyl LP.

Benefits that ensure survival and growth can be emotional or functional. Unless it's a direct replacement, price is only one element of the marketing mix – and this is as true for the gym market as it is for every other one.

EFFECTIVE SEGMENTATION

In fact, the mid-market is a pretty good place to be – if you get it right. It's clear at the moment that low-cost offerings are popular, but these tend to thrive when times are hard and incumbents have taken their eye off the ball: while Aldi and Lidl are currently driving the grocery market, a key reason for this is that the mainstream mid-market operators were complacent. They failed to give their customers good reasons to keep using them, and they failed to spot significant changes in shopping behaviour.

There's almost certainly going to be consolidation before things turn around, but it would be a brave pundit who forecasts the death of the grocery mid-market. The leading players have woken up and are reviewing, re-configuring and re-presenting themselves so they have a distinct positioning in the new landscape. Sound familiar?

So how does a mid-market gym operator get it right? We're constantly told we need to differentiate, to create a clear space that's easily understood, and to stick to it. We can – and should – do this by understanding the neighbourhood where the gym sits, by listening to members (not forgetting leavers, to understand why they didn't want to stay), by understanding their emotional as well as their physical needs, and by investing in the right equipment, facilities and staff. And by charging the right price for that differentiated offer.

There's only point in differentiating if it's in ways that are meaningful to the customer. A large pub company I know which has 750 pubs does this successfully. It has six core brands,

-ranging from gastro pubs through traditional locals, city centre and sports pubs to family-orientated offers where provision is made for the kids to let off steam. Each pub is assigned to a brand according to the location, what the customers there want, and what they're most likely to buy.

Customers in all markets are driven by a range of factors which – depending on the individual member's characteristics – are 'dialled up or down'. We all know the person who's driven by value, or convenience, or personal service and so on. Price is obviously another of these factors, but with gyms, other factors are likely to include staff numbers, staff attentiveness and expertise, sophistication of equipment, amount and range of equipment, size of premises, facilities, classes, information, support, 'extra curricular' activities and changing facilities (size, style etc).

Some of these will be hygiene factors – what you have to offer just to get into the consideration set – and some will be real differentiators. An effective segmentation will let you determine

Some members may use the sauna but not the pool, so offer them a price bundle to reflect that

“Don’t necessarily drop an option just because nobody buys it – this could be the key package that trades members into higher value options”

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- which factors are more important to the different member types, and which are real deal-breakers for them.

PREDICTABLY IRRATIONAL

But while research can place relative values on each of these factors, we can't ask people directly what these factors are as none of us, from a rational point of view, actually think that way. People don't use rational criteria to buy goods, services or memberships.

Dan Ariely's excellent book *Predictably Irrational* gives countless examples of ways we can be manipulated to buy what the seller wants us to buy and how, in his words, we don't actually know what our preferences are. We're not rational beings who consider all the implications of the choices we make. This is why segmentation and differentiation is a tricky business: direct questions will yield direct answers which are over-rationalised and often bear no relation to reality.

One of Ariely's favourite examples concerns subscription charges for *The Economist*. Two scenarios were tested among different groups: the first offered an online subscription for US\$59 and a print + online subscription for US\$125, while the second offered these two plus a print-only subscription, also at US\$125. Table 1 shows the choices respondents made in the two scenarios.

When offered, the print-only subscription gets no buyers, so it's an apparently useless offer. Yet its presence has a significant effect on the choices buyers actually make. Offer this 'useless'

TABLE 1: ECONOMIST SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS

Subscription package	Scenario 1: % of those taking each offer	Scenario 2: % of those taking each offer
Online-only – US\$59	68%	16%
Print-only – US\$125	Not offered	0%
Both – US\$125	32%	84%

option and five in six will trade up and buy the bundle. Remove it as an individual option and the proportion of people who buy the bundle falls to two in six. That's a loss of US\$66 for every potential subscriber who chooses the online-only option. Put another way, for every 100 subscribers, the presence of an option that's never actually purchased means *The Economist* would take an additional US\$3,432. It's clear the seller can, to an extent, affect the choices we make by controlling the environment in which we make those choices.

USER-FRIENDLY PRICING

It's better to be as simple and clear as possible with price. Have a finite number of options and don't keep changing them. Create bundles that contain mixes of the important factors for your market, in ways that are easily understood. See if your mother could easily work out which rate she would like to be on, and whether you can – realistically – justify all elements.

Joining fees could come into this bracket: how do you justify them? Does it cover an induction? If so, all well and good, but if it's for pressing a few buttons on the keyboard it will be harder to keep in place.

One option might be higher value bundles that allow people to move across services and sites through their membership period – eg drop the pool as I'm not using it, add sauna as I benefit from that, take a multi-site membership for a month as I'm moving around (and let me do that from the place I've come to as well as from my regular gym).

And don't necessarily drop an option just because nobody buys it – this could be the key package that trades members into higher value options. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Baker is chair of Touchstone Partners, a leading research consultancy in the leisure, consumer and shopper sectors. Touchstone Partners' core expertise is in market exploration (to identify opportunities), pricing, brand equity and proposition development.
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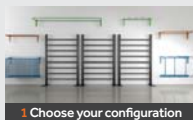
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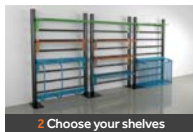
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Fit for the challenge



Gareth Jones, VP and general manager EMEA for Fitbit, talks to Kath Hudson about motivating users through challenges, cheering and rewards

What is Fitbit?

Fitbit designs products and experiences that track everyday health and fitness, empowering and inspiring people to lead healthier, more active lives. A pioneer in the fast-growing connected health and fitness space, the latest reports suggest that Fitbit currently has a 72 per cent market share in the US.

When and how was the Fitbit concept born?

CEO and co-founder James Park is a serial entrepreneur. Fitbit is his third company and was co-founded with Eric Friedman. Started in 2007, the inspiration for Fitbit came from the first

Wii gaming console and the use of accelerometer technology in the hand-held controller.

Park and Friedman realised that sensors and wireless technology had advanced to a point where they could bring amazing experiences to fitness and health. They embarked on a journey to create a wearable product that would change the way we move.

How many users does Fitbit have and how quickly did it grow?

The number of users can't be disclosed. However, in terms of growth, Fitbit was founded in 2007 and has since become the market leader and pioneer in the

fast-growing connected health and fitness space. As the connected health and fitness category continues its rapid growth, Fitbit products are carried in more than 30,000 North American retail stores, and 45,000 stores around the globe – they're sold in 54 countries.

Who is your target market?

We recognise there's no 'one size fits all', so Fitbit has designed a diverse family of products to suit different budgets, goals and lifestyles. We believe we offer something for everyone, whatever their goals, however they want to achieve them and wherever they are.

Three new fitness trackers have recently been announced for 'everyday', 'active' and 'performance' users: Charge, Charge HR and Surge. These offer features that include continuous, automatic heart rate tracking; GPS; smartwatch functionality; and all-day activity and automatic sleep tracking.

In addition to these new trackers, the line-up includes Flex wristbands, One and Zip clips, Aria Wi-Fi smart scale, and online and mobile tools.

Three new trackers are designed for 'everyday', 'active' and 'performance' users





Fitbit users can now connect with friends, so they can compare stats, share progress and cheer each other on

How do you keep customers engaged?

Our goal is to continue to introduce intuitive and motivational features to enrich the already powerful interactive experience of Fitbit, making fitness and activity tracking an effortless and fun experience for all.

We focus on delivering ongoing encouragement to our users – for example, through our new automated, motivational updates, which take the work out of tracking fitness so users can focus on reaching their goals.

We also offer rewards and friendly competition to help users successfully reach and surpass their goals. Challenges are one of the ways Fitbit engages with users. Driven by friendly competition and real-time rankings, in a few months our challenges have become a powerful motivator for the Fitbit community. On average, Fitbit users who compete in challenges increase their activity by more than one mile per challenge.

A new feature, Fitbit Public Challenges, offers users the opportunity to join and meet other community members who have similar activity levels.

Another recent introduction is Celebrity Challenges, incorporating the

On average, Fitbit users who compete in challenges increase their activity by more than one mile per challenge

likes of Major League Baseball all-star and San Francisco Giants outfielder Hunter Pence, models from Victoria's Secret, and tech CEOs.

To keep up with avid Fitbit users, new badges were recently introduced which include 100,000 daily steps (about 50 miles) and 700 daily floors climbed (four times the tallest building in the world). Fitbit badges such as these reward users for their achievements and help to provide constant encouragement; they will also soon be available within the Fitbit mobile app.

We've also recently added functionality for Fitbit users to connect with friends, as those with one or more

friends are 27 per cent more active than those without. Coming soon will be a feature to make it easier to find friends through email search features and Facebook friend finder.

Users can also increase their activity levels by adding to the 'cheering' section: by bringing friends and family in on the fun, they can compare stats, share progress and cheer each other on – or indeed taunt each other! The leaderboard refreshes throughout the day so you know exactly how many more steps you need to rise to the top. Fitbit also sends push notifications when you're nearing your goals and when you've achieved them.

How can the health club industry work with new technology such as Fitbit?

Fitbit is an ideal fit for the health club industry, as both parties have the shared goal of encouraging people to lead healthier, more active lives. Clubs offer the environment and facilities to help people make changes to their lifestyle, and Fitbit empowers users with the information and motivation they need to reach their fitness goals and make these lifestyle changes permanent ones. ●

AN EYE FOR DESIGN

In the start of a new series showcasing best practice in health club design and architecture, we take a look around the world and spotlight four of our top picks

ONE IN THE BANK

Goodlife Fitness – Stephen Avenue, Calgary, Canada

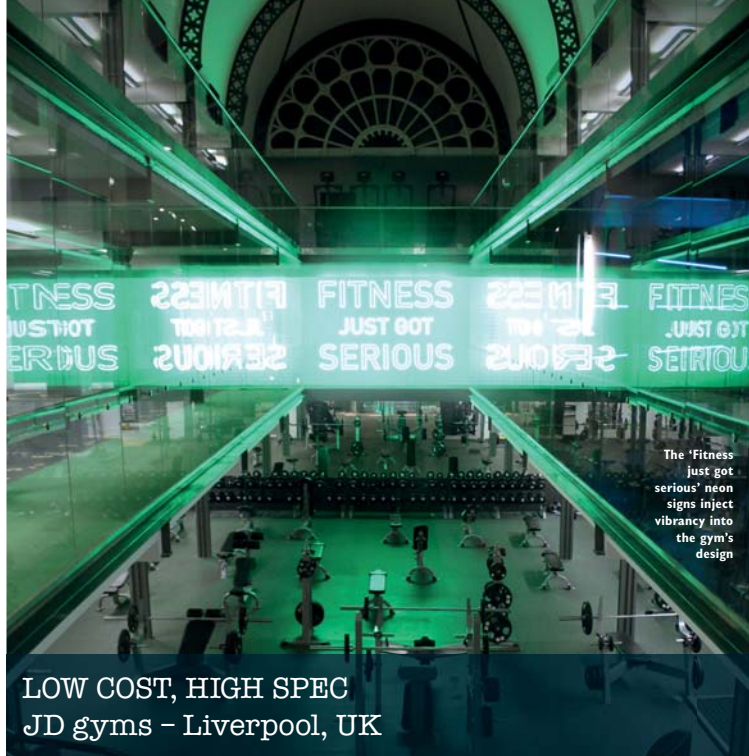


The gym interior retains the bank's Corinthian columns

Created within the former Bank of Montreal, this 20,000sq ft club is set amid the limestone and Corinthian columns of the historic building. GoodLife Fitness worked with Square Feet Design Group and Trigon Construction Management for over a year, restoring the historic building's mezzanine, main floor and basement. Great care was taken to protect the unique decorative features, including 35-foot ceilings embellished with rosettes and 917 ounces of gold leaf, marble floors, decorative mouldings and original chandeliers.

"We developed brand new approaches to meet infrastructure requirements and ensure the heritage elements of the building would be conserved," says Lori Ireland of Square Feet Design. "GoodLife took great care to rebuild many of the interior historic features and uncovered beautiful decorative elements in the process. One of the washrooms is actually built inside an old bank vault. It was well worth the extra effort."

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The 'Fitness just got serious' neon signs inject vibrancy into the gym's design

LOW COST, HIGH SPEC JD gyms – Liverpool, UK

Built within Liverpool's Grade II listed State Insurance Building – previously a dance hall and nightclub, but empty for the last eight years – JD Gyms worked with Design Business Interiors to bring the 26,000sq ft space to life as a low-cost (£19.99 a month) but hi-spec gym.

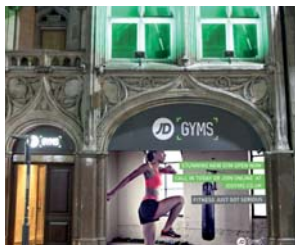
"The building was so architecturally spectacular that we wanted to ensure our design was sympathetic to this, while at the same time working within the DNA of the JD Gyms brand,"

says JD Gyms MD Alun Peacock. "We've highlighted original features such as sash windows, ironwork and columns, and we've used a lot of glass and stainless steel, but this has been complemented by an injection of JD Gyms' fun and colour."

"While this building has less of the urban materials we've used previously, in fact some of the design features – such as the neon 'fitness just got serious' signs – have worked so well we'll be incorporating these into future clubs."



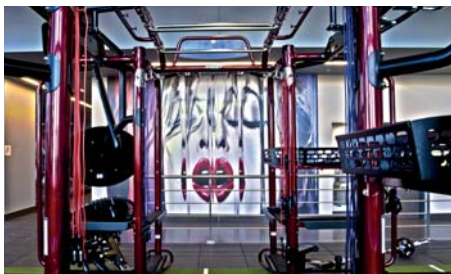
There's a lot of glass and steel, but historic features are also preserved



The gym has revived the Grade II listed building



The Toronto club is Hard Candy's largest site in North America and features the chain's familiar Warhol-esque interior decor



EN VOGUE

Hard Candy Fitness – Toronto, Canada



The gym features 19ft floor-to-ceiling windows

Part of the chain created by Madonna in partnership with New Evolution Ventures (NeV), this 42,000sq ft club is Hard Candy Fitness' largest in North America, featuring 19ft floor-to-ceiling windows around the entire club, a rooftop terrace, and what's said to be the largest cycling studio in Toronto.

Working with architects Tanaka Riley and Anderson Architects, Hard Candy Fitness Toronto picks up on the chain's Warhol-esque décor, using Madonna imagery and inspiration throughout to create a colourful, light space designed to motivate every type of member to be active.



The facility in Auckland's CBD targets 18- to 39-year-olds with its offering and vibrant interiors

TOP OF THE CLASS

Les Mills – Britomart Place, Auckland, New Zealand

Targeting 18- to 39-year-olds, this purpose-built 21,500sq ft club in Auckland's central business district (CBD) operates at the premium end of the market, with membership costing NZ\$21.50 a week.

Working with Warren and Mahoney architects, the design brief focused on the use of high-end, natural materials – such as timber and concrete – with clean lines and moments of intensity in colour and materials.

Practising what is so often preached by Les Mills CEO Phillip Mills, the group exercise studios are particularly good examples of these moments of intensity. Bright colours and graphics ensure the studios give off a sense of energy that's far removed from the sterile, mirrored boxes Mills decries. ●

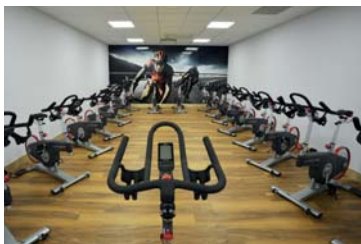


Bright colours convey a sense of energy in the studio

NOMINATE YOUR CLUB
Think your club is worthy of inclusion in our series? Drop us an email with a few photos: healthclub@leisuremedia.com

Design and build for the future

The design and build stages of a project can be, potentially, the most bumpy. Alliance Leisure business development managers James Foley and Julia Goddard share how they helped smooth the way for clients in Doncaster and Cwmbran



The Alliance project at Adwick Leisure Centre in Doncaster included a new ten pin bowling area and a 100-station gym

How is the process managed?

From the start, Alliance works to develop the scheme concepts affordably and innovatively with the client and our property consultants Savernake Property, and other contractors. This is very different to other approaches where design and build outcomes can't be delivered because only one contractor was involved at the start.

How does the design and build process begin?

Alliance has a unique approach and works with clients from the start and at every step until the project is delivered successfully. As Business Development Manager this involves establishing the project is viable before thinking about how that concept might look. We'll look to increase participation by adapting, reinvigorating or in cases such as Adwick Leisure Centre in Doncaster, totally transforming an underutilised space to create something different but relevant to users.

Follow the series

To view the whole series of articles on Alliance Leisure's offering, visit: www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/allianceleisure

1. Scoping/investigation
2. Conceptualisation
3. Viability assessment
4. Site investigation
5. Fixed price contracts
6. Overseeing the building work
7. Ordering phase
8. Client support (part 1)
9. Client support (part 2)
10. Design & Build

What was the brief a Adwick?

Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust (DCLT) wanted to explore options for increasing fitness provision at the site and improving the overall centre offering – looking at the facility catchment and competition – such as the introduction of new academy sports hall facilities. Our design team created a journey through the site with three distinct areas which all feel like they belong. Where the sports hall used to be, there is a new 'family adventure' area at ground level, with ten pin bowling, café, bar and play

facilities. Upstairs there is a newly formed mezzanine 'fitness' area, with a space for large scale fitness fitted out by DCLT, along with studio provision and changing rooms, and the modernised reception leads through to the pool.

What about changes at the design and build stages?

Alliance works with the client to create a vision and design the project. As the build commences the vision on paper or a 3D model can look different to the real thing. We can adapt the design and



Cwmbran Stadium's old sports hall has been converted into an 18-element VerTgo climbing centre



The stadium's former cafe area has been converted into a 75-station fitness suite, and the new design lets light flood into the space



► CASE STUDY

Cwmbran Stadium, Torfaen Leisure Trust

Alliance Leisure recently redesigned and converted Cwmbran Stadium's four-court sports hall into its newly branded 'Go Vertical' activity zone, including an 18 element VerTgo climbing area, large soft play and cafe. The main reception and atrium were also modernised and the old cafe was converted to a 75-station fitness suite. The outdoor grass pitch is also being converted to a 3G surface. Sally Church, chief executive officer of Torfaen Leisure Trust (TLT) says: "The project was designed with us to suit our requirements. We wanted a project that would generate income and increase participation, and would also look very different, not municipal."

Alliance Leisure worked with operators Torfaen Leisure Trust and the design team consisting of Createability for construction and Bicknell Shacklady Ewing for interior design. During designing, the design team had to solve the problem of a low ceiling in the former cafe area, which was

to be converted into a fitness suite. "Instead of making major structural changes, we designed and created the suite around the ceiling height and planned the space accordingly," says Julia Goddard, business development manager for Alliance Leisure. "It now has 75 stations with wide windows facing out on to the track, giving lots of natural light."

Goddard adds: "During the build, issues with the location of the Go Vertical climbing briefing area were found, so rather than spend additional money to sort this out we took a week as a team to solve the problem and ended up locating the briefing area into the main activity space, which has worked really positively and saved costs of around £20,000."

"Every issue or problem we have come across has been resolved," adds Church. "The whole process has worked because we all took a 'solutions not problems approach.' Now we are working with Alliance on sales and marketing for both the gym and the Go Vertical climbing area."

change the build while ensuring that the total project cost is still maintained.

How are challenges along the way overcome?

No build project ever runs perfectly smoothly, but commissioning surveys and expertise at the start helps us avoid risks where possible. With issues that would normally fall outside of our remit, we work with the client to see how we could cost effectively integrate these into the project. For instance at Adwick Leisure Centre, putting in new ten pin

bowling, 100 stations of gym equipment and new infrastructure will add power requirements to the site. Instead of paying for an expensive new supply, we gave Doncaster Leisure Trust the option to work creatively with our team to use energy saving techniques, avoiding unnecessary cost and keeping energy performance within existing limits.

What marks the end of the design and build process?

The end of the process for Alliance doesn't stop when the build is complete.

We then ensure a robust handover takes place and work with partners to train staff to operate elements, such as the bowling at Adwick. We work hard to resolve late snags, and are proud that our repeat project rate with clients is high – a testament to us having clients' interests as our number one priority.

Find out more:

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Graham says The Gym Group is constantly evolving to stay ahead of 'increasingly homogenous competition'

EVOLUTION not REVOLUTION

Jim Graham, chief operating officer of The Gym Group, speaks to Alison Bledge about how the low-cost pioneer is continuing its journey of innovation and success following a strategic review of its proposition

The Gym Group transformed the fitness sector when it opened the UK's first low-cost gym in Hounslow in 2008, providing affordable, high quality, 24/7 fitness facilities without fixed contracts. Within the first three years it experienced rapid growth, with 19 further gyms opening, and now has 59 sites in its portfolio – a figure that's set to rise to 80 by the end of 2015.

Seven years on, the industry has become crowded with operators keen to duplicate the model and emulate

its success. However, says Jim Graham, Gym Group COO: "We're constantly evolving to stay ahead of increasingly homogenous competition. Our strategy is based on an intrinsic understanding of members, their needs, usage and attitude to our product and service. We continually review our product, physical environment and marketing execution to ensure we're giving members the very best offering."

That review has, most recently, involved working with integrated communications agency Dinosaur to

develop a new brand proposition. The resulting concept – 'Find Your Fit' – has been developed to appeal to real people with achievable fitness goals, aiming to inspire them to make the commitment to making exercise a part of their lives.

Graham explains: "We launched the rebrand nationwide in January 2015 with a new creative campaign celebrating the pride of real people in overcoming the barriers to getting fit."

"It's a different creative direction for us: more human, personable and engaging. But it's also deliberately different from typical health club advertising that tends to be bland, samey and predictable."

Fresh interiors

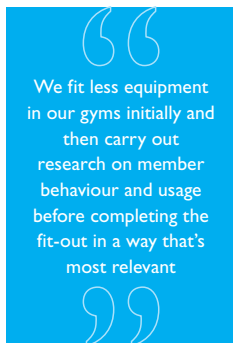
To ensure consistency across the business, The Gym is also redesigning



The fresh design at the new Charing Cross club includes subtle changes to layout and navigation



The new interiors aim to help the clubs become more convivial and engaging



the interior of its gyms to ensure they align with the new brand position. True to its low-cost heritage, the gyms will remain functional and cost-effective in execution, but there's a push towards making the space more convivial, more engaging at a human level and a more intuitive space to navigate and use.

Working with brand and interior design agency StartJG, the redesign introduces subtle adjustments to the environment, including a wider palette of colours, new materials and revisions to the layout and navigation.

"This is more an evolution than a revolution," explains Graham. "Having built up an enormous amount of brand equity with 1.5 million members who love what we do, we were keen to stay true to our product offering, but we felt the time was right to build more personality and warmth into our brand and environment. It's positive, confident with more than a hint of quirky humour."

However, acknowledging the prohibitively high costs associated with a comprehensive rebrand and refurbishment of a large estate, the

decision was taken to develop the new brand in such a way that it could happily co-exist with the old for a lengthy transition period.

Graham explains: "The Gym totally refurbishes its facilities on a five-year refresh cycle, and this provides the ideal mechanism to update and reconfigure the mature estate over time. Four gyms will be refreshed this year, including The Gym Brighton, with the programme gathering pace in 2016.

"Of course the 25 gyms being opened in 2015 will sport the new look, with



Founder of The Gym Group John Treharne (left) and COO Jim Graham (right) are focused on continuing their brand's growth

Moving with the market

Recognising the trends that have been gaining traction with mainstream consumers, The Gym now offers a variety of functional training and group exercise spaces, as well as extended free weights areas.

The Gym Manchester Portland Street, which reopened in a new location in August 2014, was the first gym to benefit from a dedicated functional training space; eight more gyms have since followed this new format.

Meanwhile – with industry research indicating that those who participate in group exercise are more likely to continue with their membership – The Gym is actively trialling a number of group exercise concepts in response to growing demand. The free classes take place in a separate studio or a clearly defined area on the main gym floor and include virtual classes – launched last year in partnership with Les Mills Virtual and already seen as an essential part of the 24/7 offering. Graham says: “In a choice between quantity and quality, it’s clear our members value quality service.”

► The Gym Bracknell being the first to showcase the new brand and signage when it opened in January 2015, and the brand new Charing Cross gym – 200 yards from Nelson’s Column in central London – being the first to feature aspects of the new interior design.”

Being customer-led

Graham continues: “We know that members in different locations have fundamentally contrasting profiles, with often quite radically diverse demands. The Gym is very much a customer-led business. We’re also hyper-local, using data and insight to define what equipment we fit and where we fit it.

“We’re fitting less equipment in our gyms initially and carrying out detailed research on member behaviour and usage before completing the extensive fit-out in a way that’s most relevant to the profile of members we’ve attracted.

“For example, high demand for cardio equipment at The Gym Angel, in the north London borough of Islington, has resulted in more cross-trainers being added. In contrast, extensions are planned for The Gym Wood Green and The Gym Waterloo to support a growing demand for more functional training and free weights. A further six to seven gyms will also see their free weights areas extended this year.”

This customer-centric approach has also supported the new interior design, with greater consideration given to ease

of navigation. Graham says: “Examining our members’ experience of using our gyms, we recognised the need to improve navigation and clarity over what to do and where to do it. Forty per cent of our members have never been a gym member before, and we understand that large gyms like ours with a lot of technology can be disorienting.”

One key new feature is therefore a members’ hub that offers access to free wifi and provides a central area for communications and engagement – including accessing the class timetable, booking classes, engaging a PT and using vending machines. This is in addition to kiosks at which members can join and manage their memberships.

Rolling out the model

With the new brand proposition now in place, The Gym has a strong opening programme and development pipeline for its roll-out: in addition to acquiring new-build gym sites in the UK, it continues to actively pursue acquisition opportunities at home and abroad.

However, as Graham concludes: “We don’t want to participate in a trolley dash for new gym sites. The market has seen that happen before and it didn’t end well. The best multi-site businesses are not the ones with the most sites – they’re the ones with the best sites. So we remain highly selective in our new gym locations, consolidating our leading position in the UK market.” ●

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The advertisement features a large image of a modern, cylindrical shower unit on a wooden deck overlooking the ocean. A person is seen walking on the beach in the background. The text "Duso® Sports Shower" and "HORNE" are displayed in a box at the top right. Below this, the headline "Making Waves" is shown. At the bottom, a call to action invites visitors to take a tour at the provided website.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

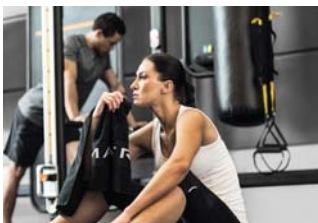
We round up some of the new product launches from this year's FIBO, which took place in Cologne, Germany, in April

TRAINING TRINITY

Among Matrix Fitness' launches at FIBO was the Connexus Series – a functional training system, available wall-mounted or free-standing, that accommodates a wide range of accessories and training modalities.

Maintaining the functional theme was the new In-Trinity incline training platform. This can be used independently for group training or integrated into existing yoga or martial arts programmes. Matrix also introduced In-Trinity programming, with imaginative movements and sequences intended to increase range of motion and breathe new life into traditional practices.

Matrix also debuted the T3xh treadmill, designed for therapeutic settings (active ageing and PT studios) based on research among users, facility owners, PTs and service providers. T3xh features a slow start-up speed, reverse operation, simplified touchscreen and low step-on height, with extended handrails for enhanced user security.



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

TAKING THE STAGE

A new line of indoor cycling bikes – the SC Series – has been unveiled by Stages Cycling. A brand new company and brand, Stages Indoor Cycling has launched two models: the flagship SC3, which features the 'Stages Power' power measurement system; and the SC2, which is the same in all respects but does not include this system.

The SC Series bikes feature SprintShift, a dual-action resistance

adjustment that pairs a traditional micro-adjust dial with a three-position macro-adjust lever. This allows for large, consistent jumps in resistance for intervals and rest. The SprintShift lever FitLoc replaces the standard twist-to-lock pop-pin height adjustments with a new cam-operated pop-pin, allowing fit adjustments for height to be made more rapidly.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Stages Cycling**



NORDIC WORKOUT

ThoraxTrainer is a new full-body workout machine that imitates cross-country skiing – described as the world's toughest sport.

The machine activates all the major muscle groups, simultaneously testing strength, core and endurance, with up to 1,500 calories burned per hour. It's ideal for high-intensity interval training, as heart rates can be rapidly elevated.

More than 50 exercises are possible on the ThoraxTrainer, so it can be used as the cornerstone of any training regime, no matter what sport the user is involved in.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **ThoraxTrainer**



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

REALISTIC ROWING EXPERIENCE

The Life Fitness Row GX Trainer is a rowing machine that gives exercisers the feeling of a smooth, natural rowing motion for a challenging full-body workout.

Designed with a patented fluid technology resistance system, the Row Trainer allows each user to feel, hear and see water churn in the tank, creating an engaging rowing experience. Its adjustable resistance design also allows the machine to adapt to an individual's fitness level.

The portable design makes it easy for the rower to be repositioned throughout the facility for individual workouts, or small group training sessions.



SMART EVOLUTION

VibroGym Evolution (VG Evo) comes with smart applications and an upper-body training device. Training software is embedded in the touchscreen display of the vibration training machine, which provides hundreds of videos and exercise choices for every fitness level. Meanwhile, newly developed VG Vibrating Handgrips offer an upper-body workout; these can also be detached and used independently as vibrating dumbbells, on or off the machine.

Integrated Cardio Colour Control software accurately monitors training intensity, and the information can be displayed in colour on-screen when using a Bluetooth heart belt.

VG Evo is built entirely from precision cast aluminium and is distributed in the UK by React Fitness.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Vibrogym**

STRENGTH WITH A SPARK

Cybox International's new 21-piece line of selectorised strength equipment is called Prestige Strength VRS. Durable and biomechanically correct, it's designed to offer a premium strength option for facilities seeking a versatile, user-friendly solution for 'walk up and work out' users.

In the cardio category, Cybox introduced the SPARC Trainer to meet the soaring popularity of HIIT. It's been created to deliver five benefits in four minutes: burn calories, strengthen and shape the lower body, increase stamina, boost strength, and enhance endurance.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Cybox**

ANCHORED RESISTANCE

A new line of training accessories has been launched by Pavigym, adding more options to its functional zone circuit.

The Pavigym Anchor is designed to work with elastic tubes and offers multiple possibilities to train all types of movements with additional resistance. Pavigym is also offering a range of different exercises with Anchor for its functional zone markings. These are classified by fitness level and physical ability, and can be found via the Functional Zone app, which is available in the Apple Store.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Pavigym

TOTAL TRACKING

PulseMove is a digital fitness tracker designed to simplify activity data capture for members and operators. It comprises an in-gym kiosk, website and mobile app, all of which allows member data to be collected both in and outside the gym and synced in real time across all devices.

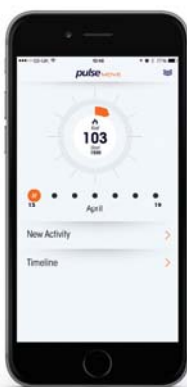
The in-gym kiosk gives members access to a virtual personal trainer who plans their workout and automatically sets up each machine upon insertion of a membership card. Detailed activity reports are offered.

The mobile app is available on Android and iOS and provides an easy method of recording activity on the go. The app includes real-time GPS tracking and mapping and allows the user to monitor fitness data, set personal goals, and share data on social media.

Finally, the PulseMove website offers an additional means of activity tracking, as well as access to detailed reports.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Pulse Fitness





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ACTIVITY REPORT

Precor's Preva Exerciser Activity Report provides a new way to gain visibility into member activity on cardio equipment.

Located on the Preva Business Suite dashboard, the report offers detailed information about members' equipment usage, patterns and preferences – data which health club operators can use

to deliver both personalised class and service recommendations.

Activity is displayed by exerciser, day, time and cardio use, and Exerciser Activity Report also identifies who has set a weekly workout goal. Data can also be used to support competitions that measure workout days, distance travelled or total calories burned.



IN THE ZONE

Myzone revealed a new Bluetooth-enabled version of its heart rate tracking belt, along with a new mobile app, designed to offer an improved interactive user experience.

The company's tracking systems transmit exercise intensity data in real time and online, and the new device – MZ-3 – allows users to upload exercise data to the cloud via a smartphone. The Myzone system can be used without being a member of a club: MZ-3 also integrates with most third-party apps such as Strava and MapMyFitness, and other ANT+ devices.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Myzone



TURBO POWER

Star Trac launched its Turbo Trainer Upper Body Ergometer at FIBO, which is built using the same resistance engine as the company's Turbo Trainer total body cycle. The fan-based resistance design generates low wattage resistance at low RPM and high wattage output at high RPM, making it ideal for all fitness levels ranging from rehab to fitness to sports performance.

Star Trac also collaborated with Spinning to launch a new belt-drive system. Fusion Drive is the company's first integrated system that uses advanced technologies to achieve a totally natural road-bike feel. The system features an ultra-durable poly-V



isoprene belt, a bespoke tensioning system, and the real-road feel of a perimeter-weighted flywheel.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Star Trac ►



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SUPER-SIZE SMARTPHONE

A striking, larger than life-size display in the shape of a smartphone, FunXtion Interactive has been designed to make fitness fun.

It can be set up in exercise rooms and offers a range of applications. Using a wristband, customers can automatically log in to the 'smartphone' – the FunXtion Experience Station – to track their fitness progress. It also offers a virtual trainer, plus programmes for workouts and virtual classes. Fun elements such as leaderboards enable users to compare their performance with others. A complementary app can be installed on customers' own smartphones.

Dutch company FunXtion, founded by Ernst de Neef and Mendel Witzenhausen, is now seeking to roll the device out globally, having launched it at FIBO.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **FunXtion**

BALANCED SOLUTION

Performance Health Systems showcased Aevum, the combined bioDensity and Power Plate offering, and Power Plate my7 with Care Assist software – designed as a complete strength and balance solution for the active ageing market. Aevum offers a non-pharmaceutical, non-invasive alternative for bone and joint health.

Drawing on the science behind a body's natural response to vibration, Power Plate enhances motor unit recruitment and synchronisation, resulting in increased force production and efficiency of movement. Power Plate creates 25–50 vibrations per second, rapidly triggering nerve and muscle communication, improving muscle memory and awakening the body to move dynamically.

The bioDensity system safely aids in increasing bone density and joint integrity by applying optimal biomechanics for the self-compression of bone mass to stimulate the body's natural bone generation process.



BOX CLEVER

Escape Fitness has expanded its Octagon range of products, with the latest addition being the Octagon BOX – a dedicated cross-training station aimed at those serious about lifting and CrossFit. It can be used for squats, bench presses, bodyweight exercises and wall balls.

Both a basic (Box) and advanced version (Wod Box) are available, and several Wod Boxes can be joined together to create an area for several people to work out at once. The Wod Box also features weight training and dipping stations, pull-up bars and the option to attach battle ropes and torso trainers.

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

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Performance Health

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The system uses EMS (Electro-Myo-Stimulation) throughout the workout

What's it all about?

More than ever, a well-shaped, healthy and athletic body is considered a symbol of success. If you want to keep up, you need to have plenty of capacity in reserve. But training in the different areas of strength and endurance often consumes a huge amount of time and energy. All these training goals can now be achieved with a highly effective, time-saving method: miha bodytec® whole body training.

What's the concept?

The miha bodytec® training system utilises the latest generation of EMS technology (Electro-Myo-Stimulation) throughout the workout to supercharge the physiological challenge and the corresponding benefits. It was developed by German engineers (miha bodytec GmbH) and has since become widespread, not only in professional sports and rehabilitation, but also within the fitness and active leisure industry.

How does it work?

Participants are connected to an exercise vest containing electrodes in the areas of the upper and lower back, buttocks, lats, stomach and chest. Additionally, the whole length of the arms and legs are trained as well. While the electrical impulses work on the

In just 20 minutes per week expect the unexpected: EMS-based hybrid training method has arrived in the UK to maximise your clients' results

muscles directly, clients are guided through a set of static or dynamic exercises with the help of an avatar, a virtual coach. In this way, muscular development can be stimulated far beyond the level that a standard training session is capable of doing.

The complete range of skeletal muscles can be targeted as a consequence of EMS, and muscles located deeper (eg. pelvic floor muscles), can be reached more efficiently. This particular form of training has also been known to increase metabolic and enzyme activity, thus providing additional physiological benefits such as improved circulation, reduced body fat, and increased collagen production.

The vest is attached to a control panel that enables adjustments to the tension on certain muscle groups to be made, allowing for intensity levels to

be carefully controlled and for training to be adapted for a variety of individual requirements. Designed as a modular system, it allows all muscle groups from head to toe to be stimulated individually.

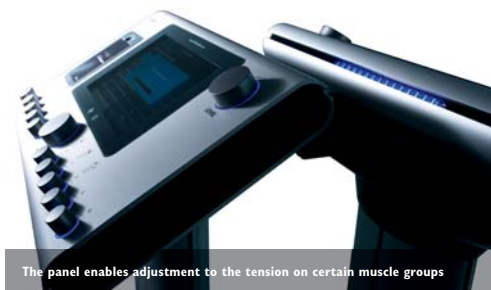
The portable nature of the miha bodytec laptop-sized controller allows it to be used anywhere, including in-house PT, to achieve a whole-body training effect. It comes with a Rimowa suitcase for mobile use, which guarantees the safe and stylish transport of control units, electrodes and accessories.

The science behind the workout

One of the studies (*Short- and long-term training effects of mechanical and electrical stimulation on strength diagnostic parameters* Speicher, U., Nowak, S., Schmithüsen, J., Kleinöder, H., Mester, J., German Sport University, Cologne) revealed that dynamic whole-body EMS training with miha bodytec compared to various training methods, offers a highly effective training method for enhancing strength and velocity. Only EMS training increased the sport relevant maximal power due to an increase of movement velocity. The great long-term effects of EMS training also offer new possibilities in training periodisation. Whole-body EMS and dynamic exercise movements offers a promising combination for strength and speed training.



Participants are connected to an exercise vest with electrodes



The panel enables adjustment to the tension on certain muscle groups

The target audience

The miha bodytec® training system is the future of strength and conditioning training, sports rehabilitation and body shaping. Users include Olympic gold medalist sprinter Usain Bolt, tennis hot-shot Rafael Nadal, Premiership soccer players in the UK, and the entire Bayern Munich FC squad.

This method is widely used among people who lead a fast-paced lifestyle, patients suffering from back and waist pain and those who want quick results.

As the fitness industry is trending towards more personalised and customised trainings, boutique fitness

chains are popping up all around the world, offering an alternative to conventional gyms. While in Germany, Austria and Switzerland there are nearly 3000 EMS training providers, in the UK this method is still unknown, thus there is great potential in the development of the 'no sport target group' of miha bodytec® services.

This efficient and time-saving training method is appealing to wide audiences, requires low investment while it yields rapid commercial return, and it offers an attractive business opportunity to gyms, personal trainers, physiotherapists or weight-loss consultants.

What the experts say

"The training method provided by miha bodytec® can be applied on both professional and recreational sports clients. We have been successful in treating patients with pain in the back and waist area, and in making rehabilitation after injuries quicker and more efficient. EMS training allows stronger and more intense muscle contractions, this way we can vastly enhance the performance of our top athletes in the areas of speed, endurance, maximum strength and explosive strength. miha bodytec® technology opens up a wide range of opportunities in therapeutic options and performance training, but the advantages of this method can also be recognised as an alternative or complement to a gym workout." – Ben Carraway, MChiro, DC | Chiropractor

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Tel: +44 74 70 380 280

Web: www.miha-bodytec.com

AT HOME WITH THE CELEBS



Sports star Louise Hazel runs regular Q&A sessions on twitter



Former Pussycat Doll Kimberly Wyatt is a #mumonaission

Streamed virtual fitness classes are the new celebrity trend – and one health clubs should monitor, as they reach new audiences who don't want to go to a gym. Amanda Ellison reports

The home fitness workout is no new phenomenon. In the 80s, self-improvement books and fitness videos were the new craze: Rosemary Conley had a strong hold on British women trying to lose weight and shape-up, while over in the United States *The Jane Fonda Workout* was the highest-selling home video of the decade, selling more than a million copies. Indeed, the video's release led many people to buy the then new VCR in order to watch and perform the workout at home. Fonda subsequently released 23 workout

videos, with the series selling a total of 17 million copies combined – more than any other exercise series.


The 90s saw the continued rise of the home fitness workout and introduction of regular TV fitness slots, with the likes of Mr Motivator becoming a household name. Still now, you'll find top-selling DVDs by the likes of Davina McCall and Gillian Michaels. But with the evolution of technology comes a new form of Fitso (that's 'fitness inspiration' for those not using twitter and Instagram): celebrity online streamed workouts.

Justin James, co-founder of InstructorLive – which has recently

teamed up with former Pussycat Doll Kimberly Wyatt – says: "We're living in a celeb-obsessed culture, and thanks to social media, people are able to get a real insight into how these aspirational people live, eat and train. Online workout platforms allow celebrities to share their workouts and they can be updated instantly, meaning varied content at a click of a button."

So should your health club operation be tapping into this trend and creating its own streamed class platform?

We took a look at three of the UK's top celebrity workout websites. Jane Fonda, eat your heart out...



Lucy Mecklenburgh
(front right) is a
reality TV star

BEST FOR TONING UP

Results with Lucy www.resultswithlucy.com

Results with Lucy is an online nutrition and fitness site founded by Lucy Mecklenburgh – made famous by TV show *The Only Way is Essex* (TOWIE) – and her personal trainer Cecilia Harris. When Mecklenburgh began training with Harris she noticed a surge in her social media following, with many asking how Mecklenburgh had transformed her body to become strong and toned. Results with Lucy (RWL) was born.

Mecklenburgh and Harris set out to educate everyday women about the importance of nutrition and share fitness workouts for results that last.

Subscribers pay a monthly membership fee from as little as £2.25 a week to access over 280 effective and fun workouts. The programme requires little or no equipment and Mecklenburgh is integral to it. It's designed so there's something for everyone, from HIIT to dance to yoga. The website is also packed with plenty of Eat Well recipes from Mecklenburgh's nutritionist Emma Whitnall, showing users how they can make some of Mecklenburgh's favourite meals as well as delicious snacks and treats.

Launched in the summer of June 2013, over 100,000 people have since walked

through RWL's virtual doors to join a community of women who have lost weight, toned up, learnt about nutrition and fitness, and most of all enhanced their lifestyles by doing so.

The online community of girls who follow Mecklenburgh is one of the key successes of this platform: they share their success stories but also motivate each other to keep it up and continue their journey. Subscribers are also able to request a call back from the nutritionists for extra support, with Mecklenburgh and Harris also

surprising subscribers with calls to congratulate them on their journey.

Before RWL was born, Mecklenburgh was not fond of crash diets or going to the gym, but once she started training with Harris she learnt how fun exercising could be – as well as how rewarding the results were. This, coupled with a new outlook on food and healthy eating thanks to Whitnall, meant Mecklenburgh had a fresh outlook on working out and she's never looked back: she genuinely does practise what she preaches. @lucy_meck ▶



Lucy's website
offers over 280
workouts



InstructorLive attracts many mums who, like Wyatt, struggle to find time to work out

BEST FOR WEIGHT LOSS

InstructorLive #MumonaMission

www.kimberlywyatt.com/mumonamission.php

InstructorLive, which was founded in 2012, claims to have been the first platform to live stream workouts direct to people in their homes. It had found that the majority of users wanted to pick and choose when they worked out, and so created a broad range of programmes and on-demand content that users can access as and when they like.

InstructorLive offers a wide variety of classes hosted by a diverse line-up of qualified personal trainers; this includes programmes designed to appeal to males. It now has close to 10,000 users and over 30,000 app downloads to date, and at just £5.99 a month it's both accessible and affordable.

InstructorLive found its most popular courses were Drop a Jeans Size, DanceFit and Body Blast, so it recently teamed up with professional dancer, DJ and former Pussycat Doll Kimberly Wyatt to create her #mumonamission programme – a dance-inspired HIIT workout with mums in mind.

Designed with her trainer Glen Ball, Wyatt's 247 programme (24 minutes, seven days a week) is an eight-week programme that aims to help mums increase their fitness, lose unwanted weight and improve their strength.

The site also contains free nutrition advice and meal plans, with Wyatt and Ball hosting regular twitter chats and sending out motivational e-shots and

advice. The InstructorLive online social community of mums and mummy bloggers is also very active, with the users themselves providing each other with useful tips, advice and encouragement to keep up the good work.

"Fitness and dance are true passions of mine. But like any mum, I found it hard to get back into it – the 'mummy juggle' is no joke," says Wyatt. "My trainer and I designed a workout that's just 24 minutes a day and can be done anywhere: all you need is wifi and one metre of space and you can do this."

"I'm looking forward to creating more workouts and adding new programmes – being an online platform means I get to keep it fresh." @KimberlyKWyatt



Olympic athlete turned
celebrity personal trainer
Louise Hazel offers a
range of 60-day plans

BEST FOR FITNESS

The Podium Effect by Louise Hazel

www.thepodiumeffect.com

The Podium Effect is the brainchild of Olympian Louise Hazel and is an online home workout offering fitness and dietary guidance for beginners. The site was launched in September 2013, and has celebrity followers such as JB and Chloe Gill, and Fleur East.

Users can subscribe to one of the six online challenges to undergo a 60-day physical transformation, where they will be provided with daily workouts to stream direct to their laptops or portable device for £39.99 per stage.

It comes with downloadable diet guidelines and meal ideas to support weight loss, build muscle or maintain muscle mass. New to the plan from January 2015 is the Detox Plan – a 60-day plan with a juice cleanse.

Stages one and two require no equipment; stages three and four use resistance band exercises to help add definition to your physique; and stages five and six introduce dumbbells for those wanting to tone and strengthen.

Its founder Louise Hazel is a fully certified PT and holds regular #AskLouise sessions on twitter for those who need extra motivation, encouragement and recipe ideas. She also tweets success stories via twitter and Instagram #ThePodiumEffect.

"As the founder of The Podium Effect, celebrity personal trainer and spokesperson for exercise professionals across the UK, I'm 100 per cent committed to motivating a new generation to get active," she says.

"I created The Podium Effect for all those who make excuses for not going to the gym. Now there are no excuses! You can #GoHardAtHome – I'm bringing exercise to you. If you're not a fan of the gym, this is for you. If you're intimidated by the gym, this is for you. This is my way of making exercise and weight loss fun, without having to share your sweat patches with the world. This is my way of giving back after years at the top of my sport – let me take you where you've never been before." @louisehazel ●

A FEW MORE FITNESS- FOCUSED CELEBS

www.getfitwithDavina.com

Fitness mogul Davina McCall has created a five-week programme with an easy to follow nutrition programme, daily personalised workouts and delicious recipes. It's effectively a warm-up to, or extension of, her successful DVD workouts and aims to cater for everyone, no matter what their fitness experience or confidence level.

www.celebritytraining.co.uk

Sam Faiers (TOWIE), whose mantra, 'if it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you', has created a programme that includes streamed workouts and healthy eating plans. It also comes with a calendar – so you can plan your workouts and receive reminders of what you should be doing, when – and a personalised dashboard where you can track and measure your progress.

AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON

CoverMyClass can help clubs find replacement instructors at the last minute

Software companies are creating solutions to manage an endless range of bookings, from spa treatments and badminton courts to group exercise classes and even the instructors themselves. Abigail Harris investigates the latest products



Tom Withers

Sales & marketing director,
Gladstone Health & Leisure

Multi-channel sales platforms are a must in today's retail sector. Leisure customers expect to interact with operators using whatever method suits them best – that's just a given. Our software enables customer choice and the response is operators experiencing anything up to 95 per cent of all bookings through self-service methods, such as our new responsive online booking, self-service kiosks and our native Android and iOS app.

With sales platforms covered, our key driver is to help clients increase

spend and participation and optimise customer satisfaction through Business Process Manager (BPM). This is free to our software customers and can run automated tasks to maximise class and activity capacity.

For instance, BPM can be set up to automatically look for free class spaces and then find members who have previously attended but are not currently booked. The software then sends the customer a 'one click to book' link, making the sales process easy.

One Leisure has seen a significant increase in bookings that correlate directly to the times BPM emails are sent.



A 'one click to book' link makes the sales process easy



Naomi Di Fabio

MD, CoverMyClass & FABIO

CoverMyClass is a new service enabling operators to find instructors at the click of a button, whether it's last minute – covering for someone who's called in sick – or on a permanent basis.

Operators can post jobs available and search qualifications, licences, read reviews and even watch videos of instructors near to their facility. CoverMyClass automatically notifies instructors that meet the criteria and operators can 'favourite' instructors, as well as notifying their favourites of any 'private' jobs.

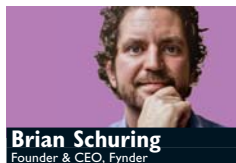
We've also launched FABIO – Find and Book Instructors Online – which is an online and mobile service for freelance instructors, boutique studios, independent gyms, dojos and dance schools, where facilities and instructors can advertise their classes, take bookings and even process payments. Facilities purchase a subscription to list their classes, events and courses.



Fynder claims to be able to bring businesses online in minutes

“Businesses that take bookings online fill 35–50+ per cent more spaces than businesses that don’t”

Brian Schuring, founder & CEO, Fynder



Fynder came from years of running a thriving fitness business – I’m also co-founder of boutique studio operation Heartcore. We felt a simpler, faster, more effective way of selling spaces and managing client relationships

was needed. Nearly a decade of learning, gained from processing almost a million bookings, has gone into creating Fynder to help drive footfall and enhance retention, while creating more time for facility owners and managers.

Bringing schedules online can be time consuming and costly. However, businesses that take bookings online fill 35–50+ per cent more spaces than businesses that don’t.

By creating simple, easy-to-use interfaces, Fynder reduces onboarding time by over 90 per cent to bring businesses online in minutes, then puts full control of the system in the hands of the business owner or manager.



We know how important the ability to book online is. For us, the fundamental, immovable objective is full brand integration: ensuring online branding is not interfered with by our booking

engine. The second consideration is maintaining a familiarity in the process. We have calendar views similar to those found when booking flights, and these can access classes, bookings and events.

Our third consideration is flexibility in the booking journey. We offer options like ‘parameterised URL booking’, meaning members can click on banners or promotional links to skip a few steps in the process. Fewer clicks means less chance of a drop-off.

Clients are also offered the ability to embed YouTube videos as part of their booking process. Imagine watching a video on how a class would benefit you and clicking ‘book’ at the end.

“Our new promotional module allows health clubs to easily approach their preferred guests”

Gernot Tobisch,
Operations director, TAC



Nothing is more valuable than the consistent return of guests. Our new promotional module allows health clubs and spas to easily approach their preferred guests and, through various marketing channels, encourage them to revisit. Using promotional codes and ‘hot deals’, the tool allows targeted marketing to the desired clientele – for example, offering VIP guests a discount off their next service, or a free product to those who book a follow-up appointment – which can be clicked on and booked online.

The module also enables easy marketing of discounted services to members and potential customers through the web shop and digital signage boards within a facility – which can help eliminate last-minute gaps within a class – or in a personal trainer or massage therapist’s schedule. Additional discounts can be offered at this stage.



The tool enables targeted marketing to the desired clientele

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SOFTWARE



Sean Maguire

MD, Legend Club
Management Systems

The combination of technology and social media has fundamentally changed the way members engage, particularly with bookings, where our customers' customers use online applications, kiosks, tablets and smartphone apps to make over a million online bookings, plus 870,000 kiosk bookings, every month.

Bookings using our smartphone app can reach 80 per cent due to Legend's platform-agnostic approach to producing apps, and app tools that help accelerate

adoption rates. These include a front of house 'one touch' registration feature, which pops up when a booking is made through any channel other than online.

The software can detect the smartphone browser when a customer visits the website and automatically switches to the app to encourage registration. QR codes, positioned within the club and on marketing material, also take the user to the smartphone app and registration.

Successful adoption of new technologies starts with staff buy-in, so our KPI dashboard software shows what percentage of bookings are made online and via smartphone to create competition between centres to encourage customer sign-up.

Smartphone bookings, combined with social media integration, lead not only to more bookings and improved customer service, but also better data, updated customer details and more website hits.



David Ross

CEO, ESP Leisure

With almost 35 million smartphone users in the UK, and millions more using tablets, these devices are intrinsic to our daily lives – so ESP has created an easy-to-use leisure booking platform specifically to take online and mobile bookings. The fully customisable online portal hosts a range of features including registration, member profile creation, bookings, competitions and promotional codes, all displayed in the members' profiles which users can access anywhere, anytime. The portal also enables operators to monitor every booking made and the revenues accrued – in real time.

Our smartphone app automatically sends class bookings to the member's calendar and they receive a pop-up reminder on the day, reducing the likelihood of customer no-shows.

A growing number of consumers prefer to access services through their Facebook account, which dramatically boosts visibility to prospective members, and increases website exposure through improved SEO.



Frank Pitsikalis

Founder & CEO, ResortSuite

Recognising that today's members are always on the go, ResortSuite's Web, Social and Mobile booking apps make it simple for them to take advantage of their membership benefits from any modern platform. Whether it's the club's website or Facebook page, members can see a real-time overview of available classes, trainers and facilities and can book without ever picking up the phone.

Our Mobile app lets operators place that same convenience in the palm of their members' hands, where they can continue to book programmes, view personalised statements to monitor aspects such as membership fees, dining and retail purchases, as well as itineraries and other services.

ResortSuite also provides yield management tools to help managers optimise facility use and maximise revenue. These include dynamic pricing, where tiers can be created based on peak periods when you may charge a premium; and dynamic availability, which allows changes to the availability of services or classes in any time period.



When members arrive, the mobile app recognises this and signs them in



Stephanie Jennings

Senior vice president of sales,
MINDBODY

Mobile booking is becoming more pervasive each day. Customers expect to find your business online, read reviews on social media and

review sites, and book a class or buy a membership – all from their smartphone.

MINDBODY Engage was launched this year enabling operators to offer a customised, branded app, allowing their customers to view, book and pay for services from anywhere at any time. When customers approach the front door, the mobile app recognises that, signing them in for their class or session, and automatically notifies front desk that they're arriving. To help with retention, the app sends customers a 'We miss you' push notification if they haven't opened the app or booked within a chosen time frame.



Core by Premier suggests best appointment slots to ensure diary optimisation



Leonie Wileman

Operations manager, Premier Software

Our intelligent booking solution, Core by Premier, ensures the diary is optimised at all times by suggesting best appointment slots. These are based on criteria such as

back-to-back appointments to improve productivity, availability of staff, rooms, equipment and staff qualifications – thereby booking by skill set.

The system can be set up to advise on contra-indications when booking, so the receptionist would be prompted not to allow the client to have a spray tan after a leg wax, for instance. When booking on the phone or online, Core flags up when a new health check is required or if a medical issue means a booking is unsuitable. Also, appointment reminders and bespoke confirmation emails enhance client contact. ●

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Intelligent reporting

There is more to data than just gathering information. An operator also needs to be able to access and analyse its findings

Often described as the oil of the 21st century, data is a hugely valuable asset in any industry, with the power to deliver greater business insights, more targeted product offerings, better customer service and retention rates, and ultimately increased profitability. Just like oil, however, data needs to be skilfully extracted and refined for this power to be released. Within the leisure sector, products such as Gladstone's eyeQ – a powerful query builder and business intelligence tool launched last year – is already helping operators to get the most out of their data, both in terms of accessing and analysing customer information and monitoring and improving financial processes.

After just two days of training on eyeQ, leisure operators can build detailed queries and run highly customised reports using the standard query builder, while the Custom SQL feature enables the creation of even more complicated queries and reports. And for those challenges where operators need a helping hand, Gladstone can now provide that too – in the form of a bespoke data consultancy service offered exclusively to eyeQ customers by its in-house team of business intelligence consultants.

"eyeQ greatly enhances the ability of operators to write their own queries and do their own ad hoc reporting,"



Shetland Recreational Trust is one of the first to use the data consultancy service

says Guy Bickerton, head of Gladstone's data consultancy team. "However, there are always going to be instances where the issue is so complex that expert input is needed.

"As well as making the Custom SQL feature work for you, we can access data beyond the standard eyeQ reporting data layer (RDL), further unlocking the power of your data. In short, if it's stored in your system, we will be able to extract it, and in the format you require.

"Whether you want help to create KPI reports or need us to create an interface between Plus2 and your finance system, our consultants will guide you through the process, and support you afterwards. Ultimately, our goal is to deliver a solution that not only makes life easier for the person using it but also adds real value to your business."

What can data consultancy do for you?

- KPI reports: sales and usage, membership, attrition, booking and resource utilisation, and member demographics
- Marketing and pricing reports
- Finance extracts for interfaces between your member management software and systems such as SAGE, TechnologyOne and OpenAccounts
- Data cleansing
- Point of sale reconciliation



The new service can help you get even more out of your customer data



Data consultancy has helped Shetland Recreational Trust dramatically improve its invoicing procedures

“It has made a great difference to our workload, with a saving of one full day a month, while ensuring a much greater level of accuracy”

Norma Johnson, clerical assistant, Shetland Recreational Trust

In September 2014, Shetland Recreational Trust decided to invest in eyeQ, Gladstone's new query builder and business intelligence tool. The trust has worked with Gladstone since 2001 and, in addition to the company's signature Plus2 member management software, is currently using the Connect online booking system across its eight sport and leisure sites, as well as a Kiosk self-service unit at its largest site. eyeQ appealed to us as it offered us an opportunity to improve our reporting capabilities as well as our invoicing procedures.

We had been aware for some time that our invoicing procedures required updating. Plus2 did not link in to our financial software, so we had to create and print our sales invoices from Plus2, and then manually re-enter the details into our accounting system. With 100 invoices to process a month, each with around 10-15 invoice lines, we

found this to be very time consuming, taking up to a full day of staff time and inevitably leading to some errors.

We believed eyeQ could help us solve this problem, but while it is possible to create simple reports after the two days' basic training offered with the product, we knew that for something this complex we required extra support. Gladstone offers all eyeQ customers access to a data consultancy service – provided by a member of its in-house data services team – to assist with this kind of issue.

The service, which was charged per day, involved a consultant visiting us in Shetland for three days in December 2014, to better understand our processes and work with us to find a solution. By looking closely at the mapping of sales products within Plus2 and consulting with the suppliers of our finance package, he created an extract file using the custom SQL feature within eyeQ. This was able to

pull the relevant data out of Plus2 and organise it for compatibility, before exporting it into Microsoft Excel ready for automatic upload into the accounting system.

After leaving Shetland, Gladstone continued to work with the supplier of our finance package to develop the extract file, and after some final testing we successfully completed our first upload in February of this year.

In terms of benefits, the sales invoice interface has made a great difference to our workload, with an immediate staff saving of one full-time day per month – time that can now be spent on more valuable tasks – while the automation of the process ensures a much greater level of accuracy.

In addition to these long-term benefits, the project has given us the confidence to work with Gladstone on other, higher-volume interfaces using eyeQ, which we anticipate will result in an even higher financial return.

Start them young

A growing number of initiatives are springing up in response to the challenge of childhood inactivity, from staff training to new classes. Alison Bledge reports, in the second part of our series



Classes harness the magic of the popular Peppa Pig TV show



Fun tasks focus on developing movement

Glen Staite-Loveridge

Group junior activity manager, Places for People Leisure

“Our recently launched ‘Move with Peppa’ programme at Places for People Leisure has proved a tremendous success in its first three months, with 85 per cent of sessions at full capacity across the six initial launch sites. The sessions, designed by movement specialists TUMUV, have now been rolled out to a further 24 sites, ensuring every Places for People Leisure council contract now has access to Move with Peppa sessions. “Harnessing the magic of the Peppa Pig TV show, the sessions across the six weeks are linked with memorable episodes of the



programme, creating excitement and inspiring activity for the two- to four-year-old target audience. One of the sessions, designed to develop agility, is based on the first episode of the series – ‘Muddy Puddles’. In this 45-minute class, the children perform a series of movements including jumping, hopping and dance using custom-made muddy puddle floor markers.

“We’ve been delighted with the success of the programme at our initial launch sites. It’s captured the imaginations of our younger audience and it’s been fantastic to see parents and siblings coming together. The design of the programme complements our ethos as a social enterprise.”

Richard Merrick

Fitness & wellbeing manager,
Freedom Leisure

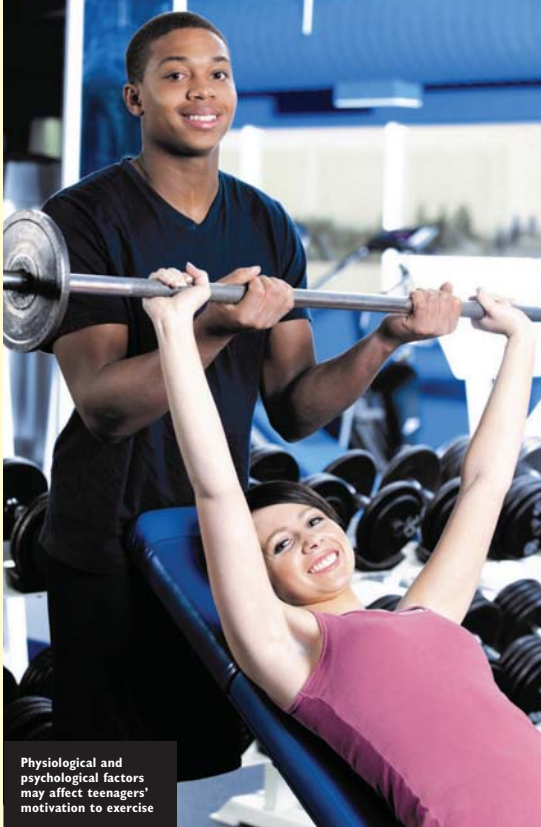
“Overweight and inactive teenagers

remain a cause for concern in our society, with around 15 per cent of school leavers classified as obese. There are several reasons for this, but 'non-sporty' kids disengaging from team games and physical activity as they progress through senior school is a major factor, especially among teenage girls.

"Having run three two-day courses during December 2014, we rolled out teen fitness staff training across the Freedom Leisure portfolio at the start of this year. The qualification, Adapting Fitness Instruction for Adolescents, was developed and accredited by Active IQ, with the course designed to equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to adapt fitness instruction to teens. Specifically, it addresses how physiological and psychological issues faced by teenagers affect their ability and motivation to exercise.

"All new members of staff are now trained in the qualification to ensure we have ample coverage at all our sites and can meet the demand for teen fitness supervision.

"I believe it's a real opportunity – indeed an obligation – for community leisure centres to provide classes and supervised gym sessions that are both appealing and suitable for teenagers. We have ample space in our gyms and studios and can tap into the natural lull in our timetables between 4.00pm and 6.00pm."



Physiological and psychological factors may affect teenagers' motivation to exercise



The chosen school will gain a 'wellbeing head'

PILOT PROJECT: HEAD OF WELLBEING

In a bid to help combat rising levels of poor physical and mental health among pupils and teachers, Nuffield Health called for UK secondary schools to put themselves forward as potential candidates for a ground-breaking pilot, which will see a 'head of wellbeing' seconded to the school. Nuffield Health has committed to lead, fund and evaluate the initiative – the first of its kind – which includes the development and implementation of a two-year health and wellbeing programme.

The competition closed in April having received hundreds of entries. The winning school will be notified this month, with the two-year pilot beginning in September. Nuffield Health will invest significantly into the school, providing state of the art fitness facilities and developing a wellbeing strategy in collaboration with the school. As part of its services, a 12-point Health MOT will be offered to all teachers and a unique health check to pupils, with a particular focus on nutrition, exercise and emotional wellbeing. ▶

David Parker

Founder, IMOVE Training & Education

"I MOVE Training has worked with children as young as six years old and up to the age of 18 for almost 10 years, but it's only in the last three years that the main business focus has been children and adolescent fitness. We help young people develop strong and healthy bodies, and aim to nurture a good perspective on maintaining activity into adulthood.



"We offer a variety of fitness sessions designed to develop fundamental movement skills and athletic motor skill competencies, while improving physical fitness such as mobility, strength, muscular strength and endurance, power and aerobic fitness. Every session includes elements of lifting, jumping, landing and skipping.

"We offer a full children's fitness timetable at Next Generation Club in Swindon and now have nearly 100 participants attending IMOVE sessions throughout the week. The exposure and success has meant our programmes are also expanding into local schools. Sessions are booked per half term, with pay as you go during school holidays.

"Our most popular sessions are Junior Strength and Junior Running. In my experience, children of all ages and from different backgrounds – whether



regularly playing sport or sedentary – really enjoy weight training. For the sporty child it can build strength and power for further success; for the sedentary child, the gym offers a safe environment, free from the pressures of competition, to develop confidence and personal success.

"The big question: if a structured and supervised fitness training session is good for children, at what age can a child start? The consensus is generally based on levels of maturity rather than their actual age: children must be responsible, able to listen and take

instruction. That generally means children aged 10 and over, although we've found girls as young as eight can take instruction. As a coach, you may have to approach the session slightly differently if you're working with young boys whose learning style is not necessarily geared towards listening.

"Certainly fitness training can be started at school age – definitely secondary school age – but not every school has a gym. Unfortunately most fitness clubs don't allow children under the age of 14 to participate, which is a missed opportunity."

Alan Pearson

MD, SAQ International

"S AQ International has worked with thousands of schools and organisations over the last 20 years to deliver consultancy services, functional activity programmes and equipment. The three main programmes for SAQ – which stands for speed, agility and quickness – are Fundamental Movement, Jab and Move (JaM) and Early Essential Movement.

"The Fundamental Movement programme ensures children are taught to move efficiently and correctly in all directions, as well as controlling and manipulating objects – for example, catch and strike. This builds confidence and has a positive impact on their behaviour and their ability to read, write and concentrate. JaM is a functional boxing programme that brings

together self-defence, physical training, hand-eye co-ordination, power and speed. Lastly, Early Essential Movement is based on key research regarding a child's early development, focusing on developing neuro pathways of the brain to ensure optimal child development.

"We get an incredible response to our programmes from teachers, especially after showing them research and results from our work with failing schools in London. Physical activity has a far greater impact on the children's ability to learn, improve confidence, self-esteem and behaviour than it does on obesity.

"SAQ International has worked with Virgin Active on a global basis for over 16 years and we've partnered with the operator in the UK for the last three years. Fundamental Movement has been introduced in over 65 Virgin Active Academy sites."



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A comprehensive array of pool and spa products, design concepts, with advice from industry experts on how you can benefit. Enjoy a spa treatment from one of the expert therapists

LEISURE FACILITIES CONFERENCE

Targeted at Gym and Leisure Centre Owners & Managers, talks will deliver key collateral on industry trends and essential business systems such as pay systems, signage, financing and much more

GROUP FITNESS

An interactive area providing varied faster sessions in everything from HIIT, contemporary Personal Training, Olympic lifting, step & tone, Pilates and much more

YOUNG FITNESS & PLAY CONFERENCE

Dedicated to the education of children from primary school upwards with seminars and demonstrations on physical literacy, tackling childhood obesity, health, nutrition and soft play

1000 CLUB

Take top line partners and customers into a professional meeting space to close deals, network and discuss opportunities

SECONDARY SPEND

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The new classes set movement to specially created music

NEW CLASSES: BORN TO MOVE

The Les Mills Born to Move programmes have been scientifically proven to engage, enthuse and encourage a love of movement and physical activity among children between the ages of two and 16 years.

There are five separate movement-based programmes for the five different age groups, starting with two- to three-year-olds through to teenagers. Classes for the younger children build foundation fitness skills through imagination, exploration and movement set to specially created music. Classes for older children use current chart hits and focus on building dance, yoga, martial arts and athletic skills.

Les Mills Born to Move is a result of five years' research, development and testing and is supported by a comprehensive teacher training system. Each class is carefully crafted to meet the unique developmental needs of the specific age group.

STUDY: PEER POWER

The University of Bristol launched a study in April to assess whether peer-led intervention could address the steep reduction in teenage girls doing physical activity.

Funded by the National Institute of Health Research, PLAN-A involves Year Eight girls from six schools in South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Students nominate peer supporters to receive training on communication skills, how to be active, and how to overcome barriers to activity. The girls then informally diffuse positive messages about physical activity to their peer group.

The results of the study, which is being led by Dr Simon Sebire, will be available in spring 2017.

Jenny Patrickson

Commercial director, Active IQ



The issue of physical inactivity in the younger generation is a growing concern and we believe education is key in tackling this. By learning how to engage, deliver and manage activity and behaviours among young children and their families, we can impact on the health and wellbeing of future generations. If we can educate young children and their relatives, together they can take this knowledge and experience into the rest of their lives.

"To meet this need, Active IQ launched a new qualification in January 2015 to provide learners with the knowledge and skills to deliver safe, effective and stimulating physical activity sessions for children under the age of five. The Level 2 Certificate in Delivering Behaviour Management and Physical Activities to Children Under Five addresses the common core set of skills and knowledge developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council. We have 49 centres approved to deliver it.

"The qualification, which gives learners the skills needed to promote healthy living to families and children, is open to everyone – no previous experience or qualifications are required. It's ideally suited for fitness instructors or PTs looking to expand their skills, or as an entry point for those wanting to specialise in this area."

Steven Ward

Executive director, ukactive

The modern day child is surrounded by a glut of technology and entertainment platforms that can engage them for hours without moving from their seat. Such inactive lifestyle choices are lending themselves to what Lord Sebastian Coe has dubbed 'the least active generation in history'.

"March 2015 saw the formal integration of Compass – the nation's leading representative body for children's physical activity providers – into ukactive. The merger was prompted by our increasingly overlapping membership, and our fundamental belief that we must focus our efforts on correcting physical inactivity among children in all settings, including schools.

"This has culminated in the birth of 'ukactive kids', a new wing of the organisation that specifically focuses on championing children's physical activity in the UK (see also p24).

"The first ukactive kids report to be published this year highlights the lack of awareness and emphasis on children's activity and fitness throughout primary education, and will recommend how we can help the next generation be more active. Primary data for this report was sourced by sending out over 200 Freedom of Information requests to English primary schools and academies. The arrival of ukactive kids marks a seminal moment in the history of ukactive. We'll do our utmost to halt the growth of this inactive generation, so our young people can have a brighter and healthier future." ●





See What Our Customers Have To Say About Us

"From start to finish the service from Physique Sports was fantastic, This company really does care about its customers and their success"

Adele Purton – Owner, City Gym, Stoke

"We've been dealing with Physique Sports for many years. We've always been delighted with the quality of remanufactured products and high level of customer service"

Andy Tee – Director, Simply Gym

"The service and advice Physique Sports gave us from the onset was excellent and gave us great confidence to take our business forwards"

Nick Hindle – Director, NR Gym Ltd

"Physique Sports standards of remanufactured products are the best in the industry and the support division provides premier level service back-up and always communicate well with our staff"

Phil Storey – CEO, Pendle Leisure Trust



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OLD FOR NEW

Is your gym equipment looking tired or getting unreliable, but a refit beyond your budget? Perhaps you're a PT hoping to open your own studio, but you're held back by the cost? Talking to specialists that remanufacture gym equipment could be the answer. We report



Servicesport has seen its manufacturing business double in the past 12 months

HONEST ADVICE Physique Sports



Physique MD Graham Bertrand



Equipment can be re-painted and branded to the club

"This isn't just second-hand kit that's been given a wipe-over"

Graham Bertrand

Business is booming for Burnley-based Physique Sports. The rise of budget gyms, combined with local authorities and leisure trusts being squeezed in times of austerity, has led to a greater appreciation of remanufactured equipment.

"This isn't just second-hand kit that's been given a wipe-over," says Physique Sports MD Graham Bertrand. "All the equipment is shotblasted and painted in-house, comes with a two-year parts and labour warranty and can be branded to match the club. To the end user, it offers an experience that's as good as any branded product, but the operator can save up to £150,000."

Bertrand says clubs have become less snobbish about remanufactured kit and are now more educated about the quality. For some operators this could be the difference between starting a business or giving up on a dream. Physique also offers an equipment rental service – a useful resource for cost-conscious clubs or start-ups with a limited pot of cash.

Bertrand has also noticed a growing trend for a new type of

club interested in his product: independent, elite training clubs that focus on expertise, knowledge and support to help members meet their goals. Although a similar concept to boutique clubs, these facilities aren't upmarket so come with a much cheaper price tag for members. It isn't a fluffy experience: members are expected to work hard and play by the rules. "If they don't put dumbbells back in the rack they'll be chucked out," says Bertrand.

Physique's approach involves consultation with the health club to establish the USP and define the customer journey.

"Lots of the clubs we speak to have a passion for fitness, but haven't worked out their USP. We help them define their product and get the right equipment," says Bertrand. "If they want 10 treadmills but I think five is enough, I'll tell them," he says.

This approach has led to excellent repeat business and many long-term clients: Physique has been supplying the country's prisons for 17 years and One Life for 10 years.

MAKE THE MOST OF IT

Servicesport

“Many operators don’t have as much capital now, but are more savvy about getting a better deal,” explains Susie Marriott, commercial director at Servicesport. “They are trying to make the best of what they already have and are getting a better deal by shopping around.”

Over the last year, Servicesport has seen its manufacturing business double, with the vast majority – around 75 per cent of its clients – being public sector trusts and large private sector clubs.

Licensed to sell remanufactured Life Fitness equipment, most Servicesport pieces have 85 per cent new parts, and are rigorously tested in order to meet the CE certification. All equipment is sold with a warranty.

For an even more purse-friendly option, a grade B remanufacture with a reduced warranty is offered, where around 50 per cent of the equipment parts are replaced.

According to Marriott, over recent times the company has witnessed a growing demand for remanufacturing operators’ existing equipment.

Servicesport has also combined its estate management service with the remanufacturing business. This service monitors health and fitness clubs’ assets to identify which equipment is breaking down the most in order to inform decisions about where to spend capital.

“Servicesport is all about making the most of what you’ve got,” says Marriott. “Increasingly clubs are



Servicesport's Susie Marriott

realising that they don't compromise the member experience by investing in remanufactured equipment.”

EXPANDING THE PORTFOLIO

Pulse Resale



Pulse Resale equipment is designed and built for longevity

Pulse Resale offers a range of quality pre-owned, reasonably priced commercial fitness equipment, including group cycles, free weights, strength and cardiovascular kit.

But with the resale market growing, Pulse has responded to demand by adding more remanufactured products to its portfolio – including air conditioning units, entertainment systems and lockers – alongside its gym equipment.

Designed and built for longevity, all Pulse Resale equipment is assessed for performance and reliability.



Richard Sheen, Pulse national sales manager

“Fitness kit has a natural lifecycle, but as we’re British-based with our own employed in-house service team, we can offer comprehensive service and warranty packages,” says Pulse’s national sales manager Richard Sheen. “We’re able to ensure the equipment is well maintained: many of our resale products even have a full service history.”

Sheen adds that Pulse is seeing a growing interest in pre-owned kit from personal trainers looking to open their own studios, as well as individuals equipping home gyms. ●

Supplier showcase

We take a look at recent projects by Dalesauna, Xn Leisure and Gladstone



The high specification spa features a hydrotherapy pool with massage jets and a large sauna with luxury benches

The luxury thermal spa at the £14m Abbey Leisure Centre in east London is a new public sector spa created by sauna and steamroom expert Dalesauna, as yet another local authority recognises the valuable contribution wellness facilities can make to people's health – in addition to a facility's bottom line.

Designed by AFLS+P Architects for the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, the new leisure centre in Barking town centre replaces the existing Abbey Sports Centre.

Known as The Abbey, the facility is Barking & Dagenham's first luxury spa. Available to those over the age of 16, it has been designed to promote wellbeing and to provide a welcome retreat from the pressures of everyday life.

Dalesauna partnered again with architects AFLS+P and contractors Willmott Dixon on the project following successful collaborations on the likes of the £1m Verulamium Spa, the first public spa offering from St Albans City and District Council.

Dalesauna designed a range of heat experiences for the 100sq m thermal

A HEALTHY RETURN

Client: London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, UK
Supplier: Dalesauna

spa area situated at The Abbey. These include a large sauna with luxury benches, LED lighting and two hidden heaters; an aromatherapy steamroom; crystal steamroom; and salt inhalation room. Other facilities on offer in the new spa include a tiled deck level hydrotherapy pool with massage jets, an ice feature, a tiled heated bench and two feature showers, which were also supplied by Dalesauna.

The project is the latest in a string of luxury spa facilities with sophisticated thermal offerings developed by Dalesauna for the public sector, which include Wimbledon Leisure Centre, Ramsgate Sports Centre and Poulton Leisure Centre in Poulton-le-Fylde.

"We're delighted to have worked on this project with AFLS+P. Both companies are highly experienced in this sector and having such an enlightened client as Barking & Dagenham Council has allowed us to create a thermal suite which boasts the same quality of design, facilities and finishes that you would expect to find in five-star hotel or destination spa," says Dean Edwards, sales manager at Dalesauna.

"The council has been very innovative in its choice of facilities, ensuring that the new spa will act as a great additional revenue stream and also attract people who may not have considered using a local authority centre previously. It's a great facility for local residents."

The new £14m centre also includes a 25m x 12.5m main swimming pool as well as a separate teaching pool, a 140-station gym, three large exercise studios, and a soft play facility designed by Turner Prize-nominated artist Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, which received a £100,000 investment from the Arts Council England.

Details: www.dalesauna.co.uk



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PROJECT
PROFILE
PROMOTION

School swim instructors can now enter progress data at the poolside using an iPad

Shrewsbury School – an independent school in Shropshire for boys aged 13-18 years – is home to an impressive array of sports facilities, which include a boating club, swimming pool, health and fitness centre, racquet club, squash courts, national indoor cricket centre and indoor rowing. And now these extensive facilities have been enhanced with new management software.

The site required a more comprehensive system to improve the management of the facilities: storing and monitoring records, reservations and reporting, and catering for the extensive range of facilities and growing number of members – the facilities cater not only for pupils but also for the public. Prior to this, reservations, records and reporting were paper-based.

Following a detailed tender drawn up by sports facilities manager Ed Moore, Xn Leisure was selected as the software supplier. Xn Leisure worked closely with the client, installing a tailor-made system to improve communications via text and email alerts, save time with the introduction of online booking, and reduce staff costs with automated access control.

Xn Leisure's Dimension solution was installed – an intelligent piece of software that enables staff to manage new and existing customers, and identify off-peak periods to assist with future staff planning and marketing strategies. "All members of staff

INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

Client: Shrewsbury School, UK
Supplier: Xn Leisure



The private school also welcomes public leisure users

working within the sports facility were informed of the software improvements and Xn Leisure provided comprehensive training for members of staff on the new system," says Moore.

"The enhanced features and functionality of the new system has improved relations between staff and customers, with the addition of a user-friendly interface for online bookings and access to the home portal, where members of staff and customers can leave comments and feedback."

He continues: "An example of where the Xn Leisure system has been particularly successful has been in keeping records for the new learn to

swim programme. We now have over 1,000 children taking part each week. All participants receive a membership card with which parents can track progress via the home portal.

"The system is very straightforward. Paper trails have been reduced significantly, as all swimming instructors enter information at the poolside via iPads. Information is up to date and time-consuming end-of-term paperwork a thing of the past.

"Benefits can be seen throughout the club, and the system has benefited me directly as a manager, giving me easy access to financial performance and staffing rotas. I wouldn't have been able to make the differences I've made to customer service and operational efficiency without the Xn system."

Details: www.xnleisure.com



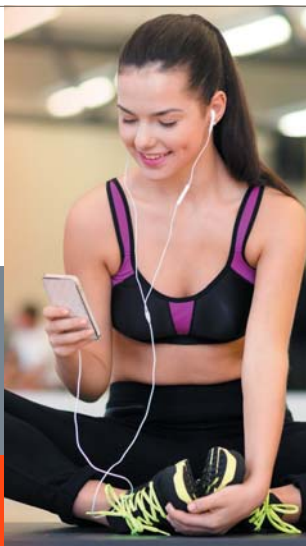
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Gladstone's Learn2 product was brought in as part of a complete overhaul of the centre's swim development programme

SEAMLESS SYSTEM

Client: Active Northumberland, UK
Supplier: Gladstone

Active Northumberland uses a wide range of Gladstone products across its 18 sites, from dual-use leisure facilities to a disabled riding centre. "We first moved to the Plus2 membership management system in 2004, and since then we've added the Gladstone Management Console (GMC), self-service kiosks, Connect online booking and Learn2 for course management," says Colin Winfield, Active Northumberland's area manager for south-east Northumberland. "Most recently we've introduced Join@Home, Gladstone's online joining system, and its new query builder and business intelligence tool, eyeQ."

He continues: "In November/December 2013, we also worked with Gladstone to rebuild our database. The aim was to amalgamate two databases and simultaneously do some housekeeping – to remove out-of-date products, subscriptions and members, and harmonise current ones. Gladstone appointed a project manager to lead the process, in addition to a trainer/builder, and the same team first guided us through the rebuild then helped solve the teething problems after going live. The end result was a much more efficient and flexible system."

"We also launched a new version of Connect, which offered more options and a greater degree of flexibility. Aside from relieving pressure on our reception team, the main benefit is convenience for customers, which is so important with today's busy lifestyles. What's more, the update has had a significant impact on the number of bookings: from 2013 to 2014, we've seen an increase of nearly 40 per cent, from 41,000 to 57,000. "Another product we've been impressed with is Learn2."

We brought this in last September as part of a complete overhaul of our swim development programme, including the introduction of 46 weeks of lessons, continuous assessment



**PROJECT
PROFILE
PROMOTION**

The main benefit has been greater convenience for users

and direct debit payments, and it's already helped make the process much more efficient. The fact that Learn2 is linked to Plus2 has made it much easier to migrate people onto direct debit, and the system has been specifically designed to support continuous assessment.

"It's also resulted in significant time- and cost-savings. Thanks to features such as the active waiting list and the automated movement alerts, it's now much simpler to move participants around. This means we no longer need to hold re-enrolment days at reception, which included putting an extra receptionist on shift and the swim co-ordinator working extra hours."

He concludes: "We decided to invest in eyeQ after we had some issues with third-party reporting tools. We aim to create centralised corporate reports to be distributed to managers to ensure greater consistency. Hopefully this will help us avoid a situation where one person creates a report on usage, for example, which is not comparable with someone else's report on the same thing."

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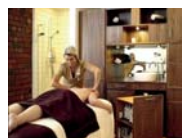
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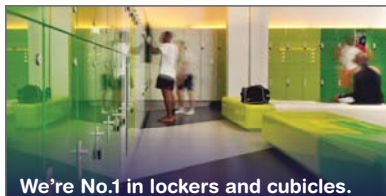
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Girls tend to gain weight as a result of family disruption – but this is not the case among boys

Family matters

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US research shows that stressful family situations lead to obesity in children

School-based obesity prevention programmes focusing only on diet and physical activity may need to take into account children's home lives if they're to be effective, according to a new study from the US. Researchers in Texas have revealed that there's a relationship between long-term exposure to three specific types of family stressors and children becoming obese by the time they turn 18.

Stress factors studied

Daphne Hernandez, an assistant professor at the University of Houston – in collaboration with the Texas Obesity Research Centre – looked at data on 4,700 adolescents recorded in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth.

She focused on the children's exposure to three family stressors from when they were born up to their 15th birthday and then took into account their BMI/weight when they reached 18.

The three factors analysed were: family disruption and conflict, including divorce, bereavement and abuse; financial strain; and poor maternal health, where the mother had high risk habits such as drinking/drug problems or serious depression.

Gender disparities

The results of the study, which were published in the journal *Preventive Medicine*[®] show that the factors that trigger weight problems are different among girls compared to boys.

Hernandez says: "Experiencing family stress repeatedly through childhood – specifically family disruption and financial stress – was associated with being overweight or obese by the time adolescent girls reached 18."

In comparison, only one stressor – poor maternal health – was related to boys becoming overweight or obese by the time they turned 18.

Underlying mechanisms

The reason why stressful family situations led to weight gain in adolescents is not entirely clear and could be an area for further research. But Hernandez believes it could be

linked to the stress hormone cortisol, which has been proven to cause the body to store fat, lose muscle, slow metabolic rate and increase appetite.

In an article in *Time* magazine she says: "Behaviourally, you then gravitate to more palatable foods – the high calorie, high fat foods – so you're not reaching for that apple or celery stick."

Broader approach needed

Hernandez says: "By knowing the types of stressors that influence female and male adolescent weight gain, we can tailor specific social services to be included in obesity programmes."

The findings are particularly pertinent to school-based obesity programmes that currently focus just on dietary intake and physical activity – an approach Hernandez believes yield only short-term benefits. "The programmes need to take a broader approach to combatting obesity by helping families experiencing these kinds of stressors find access to mental health programmes, financial assistance or family counselling," she says. "Developing strategies to help with family stressors during childhood may help children maintain healthy weight into adulthood."

¹Hernandez D & Pressler E. Gender disparities among the association between cumulative family-level stress & adolescent weight status. *Preventive Medicine*. Apr 2015



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