

health club management

JANUARY 2016

No 231

The National Living Wage

Do the sums add up for your business?

A new role for fitness

Bridging the gap between illness and wellness



All in the genes

Using DNA to personalise fitness

Reaching new heights

Trampolining takes it up a gear

TRACY GEHLAN

Jatomi Fitness isn't mid-market, it's mass market, says its CEO

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Upgrading the industry



The National Living Wage is coming, and operators across the UK will be trying to work how they can afford it. It will certainly be a challenge in a sector that has long relied on fairly low-paid staff, but we believe it presents an interesting opportunity to upgrade the industry.

Although it's long been campaigned for by organisations such as the Living Wage Foundation – which has its own recommendations on rates of pay – until now nothing has been legally enforceable. But all that's changing in April, when a new Living Wage structure comes into play that's compulsory for over-25s: hourly rates will start at £7.20 (the current minimum wage is £6.50) and gradually rise to £9 an hour by 2020.

So how will UK operators respond? Will some try to avoid all this by quietly favouring under-25s, hoping to avoid age discrimination claims by hiding behind the fact that many gym instructors are already young? It's hardly an ethical approach, but it's easy to see how it might come about.

If so, and the Living Wage is embraced only by a minority of operators, it could lead to a two-tier structure within the sector, with businesses that are willing to pay the higher wage gaining a competitive advantage: securing the best staff, offering a different class of product based on high calibre support – and justifiably charging a premium for these services.

Alternatively, if all operators embrace the Living Wage, the entire industry could see a shift in standards. This in turn would create a real opportunity to meet the ambitious goals the sector has already set itself: co-operation with the medical profession, partnership with public health, staying relevant to an increasingly self-sufficient consumer. These ambitions require staff to be more highly qualified –

The Living Wage presents a perfect moment to upskill the workforce and improve sector credibility

not to mention richer in both people and life skills – than is typically the case today.

So let's use the Living Wage to our advantage, asking not *if* we embrace it, but rather *how* it can best work for us. Yes it's disruptive, but it presents a perfect moment to upskill the workforce and improve the sector's credibility.

For example, we could introduce a raft of compulsory CPD alongside the Living Wage, helping employees attain skills and standards that reflect their higher pay.

But however positive the opportunity, the question of how to afford the Living Wage remains – at least until a critical mass of members agree gyms' services are now worth paying more for.

Operators will be looking at their overheads and wondering how much further these can be pared down – but Jessica Higgins, head of employment for

Christopher Davidson Solicitors, says it isn't all bad news: "Some businesses already paying the Living Wage report reduced costs through lower levels of staff absenteeism and turnover. It's likely to improve productivity and morale too, and with it drive better customer service."

"Also, pay for many fitness employees includes bonuses, sales commission and/or performance-related pay, which already counts towards the Living Wage."

Meanwhile CIMSPA CEO Tara Dillon points to apprenticeships as another way to balance the books: operators who invest in these could, she says, see the new apprenticeship levy working in their favour, offsetting the cost of implementing the Living Wage (see p32).

It won't be easy, but the Living Wage represents a great opportunity to upskill our sector. Let's not be afraid of it.

Kate Cracknell

Editor

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ON THE COVER
Tracy Gehlan, Jatomi Fitness' new CEO, has joined from Burger King and believes there are lessons to be learned from fast food (p26).

Photograph by Paul McLaughlin

To share your thoughts on this topic, visit www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/blog or email healthclub@leisuremedia.com

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BORN DIGITAL

eGym was founded in 2010. Unencumbered by the past we've always had a digital mind-set. And the result is, as you would expect.



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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

Improving uptake of cardiac rehab

Most older adults who are hospitalised for a heart attack don't attend even one cardiac rehab session – this according to a recent study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, which found fewer than a quarter attended at least one session, and only 5 per cent completed 36 sessions.

As a provider of software solutions for exercise referral, including Phase 4 cardiac rehab, I read these statistics with interest, because two of our customer sites – in Redbridge and Southwark – show a take-up of 70.5 per cent and 63 per cent respectively. Ninety-six people completed the Redbridge programme and 357 at Southwark.

It begs the question: how do other programmes enroll, monitor and correspond with their patients?

Many of the trusts and local authorities we assist work in conjunction with other lifestyle services funded by Public Health to offer a broader provision, including cardiac rehab. The Public Health team prescribes the data required, and there's a



Instructors need access to patient data to show progress

long list; patients often feel they have to provide a lot of personal information. However, it's vital they understand that this is essential to evaluating the full impact of the programme, as well as for securing future funding.

The data must also be made available to fitness instructors, so they can highlight improvements with these patients, empowering them and improving retention.

Regular patient contact is crucial, but following a heart attack there's often a proliferation of appointments – it can be hard for patients to know who's contacting them. Exercise referral software systems allow GPs to give patients a receipt clearly showing which services will be in touch, and their contact details. Furthermore, the cardiac rehab team can see appointments with other services, so there's a complete view of patient care.

Stuart Stokes

Commercial director, Refer-all



Building a view of your customers' habits is a very powerful tool

Harness the power of beacons

I was very interested to read the article written by Bryan O'Rourke on beacon technology in the October issue of *Health Club Management*.

Operators are very aware of the extensive data their management systems can hold, and that this data can be interrogated to enhance the customer experience and increase revenue.

Knowing where your customers are, and being able to build a view of their habits and activity, is a very powerful tool.

While beacon technology may be considered by some to be an invasion of personal space, and there are barriers to downloading ever more apps and carrying smart devices everywhere, consumers' expectations are forever changing – our industry has to embrace new trends.

If operators want to drill into the data gathered by their

club management software, identifying a target audience and pushing out messages to leverage this extensive data, that's entirely possible – but key to personalising these communications is the ability to track which customers are where, and when.

To this end, we work with non-contact tracking platforms such as RFID and contactless smart chip solutions, and last year we partnered with bounts – a fitness app that uses beacon technology to reward people for being active. This has been very successful where people have engaged with the app.

The next step will be the emergence into the mainstream of biometric tracking technologies using fingerprint and facial recognition.

Claire Elkin

Partner manager, Gladstone Health and Leisure

International news

Altafit gets theatrical with premium brand

Spanish health club franchise Altafit, which to date has operated exclusively on a low-cost model, has opened its first premium club in Madrid.

Launched on 1 November, the Myst Gym Club is Altafit's 40th gym and is located in a former city centre theatre.

The new 1,800sq m club has strength, functional, TRX, cardio and free weight areas, supplied by Matrix, as well as a group exercise studio, a cycling studio and a chill-out lounge. Members can also access all their training information, classes to do at home and discounts with brands such as Amazon, Under Armour and Sanitas. Monthly fees are €49.90.

According to Maria Villalon, Altafit's media and communications manager, Myst Gym Clubs will only be opened in a few locations in major cities.

Details: http://llei.sr?a=3H3j5_H

Milan's first Full-Pix Mrs.Sporty launches

German women-only fitness chain Mrs.Sporty is gearing up to grow its presence in Italy through a partnership with businessman Massimo Puppo, who has launched the first Full-Pix Mrs. Sporty club in Italy.

The new club has the Pixformance web-based training solution, which combines functional training and smart software for effective workouts. Going forward Mrs.Sporty, which has 550 sites throughout Europe, will focus its growth exclusively on the Full-Pix model. Puppo says the Pixformance system is perfectly attuned to the training needs of women.

Details: http://llei.sr?a=56T7M_H

WWE hoping to make a slam in gym market

The **WWE wrestling empire** is preparing to enter the health club market with the launch of a new gym chain called Tapout Fitness.

According to reports, WWE is eager to expand its partnership with fitness lifestyle brand Tapout beyond fitness apparel and merchandise, to open up a chain of gyms across the US.

It's expected that WWE superstars will play an integral part in the marketing and there's speculation that wrestlers would work out at the gym when the company has live events in the area, enabling fans to pump iron with their wrestling heroes.

Details: http://llei.sr?a=h9c7u_H

Paris/Swiss gym estate up for sale

Health club operator Core Motion Group is up for sale according to sources close to *Health Club Management*.

The health club group – which owns and operates 44 clubs in Paris and Switzerland – is currently owned by private equity fund 21 Centrale Partners, which has been instrumental in its expansion over recent years. This has included the acquisition of the Swiss clubs and the growth of the Paris chain, including the launch of a new premium club in the Opéra Bastille area of the city.

However, the investment is coming towards the end of its expected seven-year term, and *Health Club Management*

understands that Core Motion Group is now in negotiations with a number of US, French and other European funds. UK health club groups – backed by investment funds – are reportedly among the interested parties.

Core Motion Group – which is led by president Franck Gueguen – encompasses 22 clubs in Paris under the CMG Sports Club brand (formerly Club Med Gym), and 22 clubs in Switzerland under the Silhouette brand. All 44 clubs are up for sale; Gueguen has yet to confirm if he will remain at the company after the sale or pursue other opportunities.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=E5c6g>



President Franck Gueguen has led the company through a strong period of growth

Prime Time launches its fifth site

Prime Time, the German health club operator founded by Henrik Gockel in 2010, has opened its fifth facility in Frankfurt.

The clubs – which are kitted out by Cybex, Freemotion and milon – offer cardio,

strength and functional training, but no classic group exercise. There are, however, small group training sessions on the gym floor and PT is also available.

The latest club, measuring 1,700sq m, is larger than the operator's usual model and includes a lap pool. As a result, membership fees are higher: from €70 (US\$74, £49) a month as opposed to the standard €60 (US\$64, £42) a month. However, Gockel says the site still maintains a Prime Time small club feel.

Open from 6.00am till midnight, the gyms are staffed the whole time, with all staff educated to BA or Masters level – Gockel is a university teacher as well as running Prime Time Fitness.

Details: http://llei.sr?a=V9u4u_H



Prime Time now operates five clubs in Frankfurt

Impuls becomes Baltics leader



Impuls CEO Vidmantas Stugzdinis says the company will continue to grow both its brands

Lithuania-based fitness chain Impuls LTU acquired Estonia's Arctic Sport Clubs, on 25 November, to become the first pan-Baltic fitness centre operator.

Arctic Sport owns two 2,500sq m fitness centres, in Tallinn and Tartu, offering gyms, group exercise, PT and 25m pools. The current management team will be retained to help Impuls expand in Estonia.

"We spent a long time planning and co-ordinating the acquisition of one of Estonia's strongest health industry players," says Impuls CEO Vidmantas Stugzdinis. "Arctic Sport Clubs are totally in line with

the premium concept of Impuls group – they are high quality centres with a complete range of fitness services."

When the first Lemon Gym opens in Riga in January, Impuls will be the first fitness operator with a presence in all three Baltic states – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – with more than 30,000 members. The company's projected sales for 2015 are €11m.

Stugzdinis says the company now has plans to grow both its premium brand, Impuls, and low-cost Lemon Gym chain, throughout the Baltics.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=8t6z3_H

Chicago: 10 boutiques in one club

Score Sports Center in Willow Springs – a suburb of Chicago, US – has re-opened following a 3.5-year renovation project.

With its innovative new concept – featuring 10 boutique clubs under one roof – this independent, membership-based club is targeting millennials, couples and families in the upper middle / upper demographic.

The 65,000sq ft facility now boasts a Premier Zone, which covers all areas of fitness; a yoga studio; a cycling studio; a reformer pilates and ballet barre studio; a Movement Zone, which focuses on agility and mobility training; a Stability Zone to engage the core; the End Zone – a turf field



The Aquatic Center features Hydroider aqua bikes

for outdoor exercise; a Kids Zone; a Power Zone, for strength training; and an Aquatic Center, which features Hydroider aqua bikes and an aqua treadmill.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=A8U8r_H

Equinox makes its debut in Houston

Premium US fitness operator Equinox has opened its first Houston club.

The Equinox River Oaks club is part of a new high-end complex, which includes retailers such as Cartier, as well as office space and 279 apartments. The club will provide a luxurious mix of health and wellness offerings.

Equinox chief development officer Jeff Weinhaus says: "Not only is Houston one of the fastest-growing cities in the US, but it also has a sophisticated population with a strong health and wellness orientation, which perfectly aligns with the Equinox lifestyle."

The company currently has 80 US clubs and one in the UK.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=p2Q3a_H

24 Hour Fitness and LA Fitness swap clubs

LA Fitness and 24 Hour Fitness have agreed to a club exchange, meaning that 24 Hour Fitness will leave the Arizona market and enter Oklahoma, while LA Fitness will exit the Oklahoma and Nebraska markets.

As part of the deal, LA Fitness will acquire 11 clubs in Arizona, while 24 Hour Fitness will acquire two clubs in Oklahoma and one in Nebraska.

Frank Napolitano, president of 24 Hour Fitness, says: "We believe the midwest offers interesting possibilities for us to make those cities core markets for 24 Hour Fitness."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=3K6W9_H

RealRyder teams up with Bodytech

Indoor cycling company RealRyder has made its Latin American debut in partnership with Bodytech Corporation, which operates more than 140 full-service health clubs in Colombia, Peru and Chile.

The club in Bogota, Colombia, was the first to adopt the bikes and programme, and this will be gradually rolled out at elite Bodytech locations.

Regional chief marketing officer of Bodytech, Pablo Jacobsen, says the bikes are already proving popular: "Bodytech has a reputation for providing the best modern-day training equipment and classes in Latin America. We're excited to be the first full-service club to bring members into this exciting era of cycling."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=t8Y4h_H

Private fitness sector now worth 'north of £15bn'

The successful IPO of The Gym Group is likely to prove the catalyst for renewed investor interest in the private gym sector, with the prospect of further listings.

That's the view of fitness industry analyst Gareth Jones, who says after looking at the financial aspects of the Gym Group listing, "there's an argument to suggest the private fitness sector is worth north of £15bn."

Jones – who is head of leisure at global audit, accounting and consulting group Mazars – said in a blog post for ukactive that the £250m valuation of the Gym Group will give "confidence to investors who see the low cost model as a worthwhile investment, and are prepared to pay a premium to be involved."

In his analysis of the deal, Jones wrote that the "successful float of one company does not signal an avalanche of similar floats," but noted that many of The Gym Group's rivals will be watching closely.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=G7h7C_H

Virgin Active relaunches prime Salford Quays site



The gym has added specialised kit

Virgin Active has continued its three-year, £100m investment in its UK portfolio with the unveiling of the refurbished Salford Quays site in Manchester.

The gym, which is a favourite haunt of BBC talent working at nearby Media City, has undergone a £4.5m refurb.

The upgrade has seen the club's gym floor, group exercise studios, changing rooms and swimming pool transformed, plus an additional 1,400sq ft of floor space.

The club features 'The Grid' – a functional training space where members can take one of four intense 30-minute classes, each on six core movements of push, pull, squat, lunge, twist and bend. In addition, the gym has been reinvented with the addition of several pieces of specialised kit, including Wattbikes, Woodway Curve treadmills, Water Rowers and InBody Trackers.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=h4A8q_H

Gym Group takes flight with IPO

The Gym Group has completed an historic IPO, which sees the business valued at £250m – a 17 times multiple on 2014 EBITDA.

The gym chain became the only listed health club operator in the UK when founder John Treharne rang the bell on the (LSE) as the shares began trading under the ticker GYM on 9 November.

Since then, the shares have risen steadily from their 195p starting price to hit highs of 209p. Speaking to *Health Club Management* on the day of the listing, Treharne said the IPO had proved attractive to a number of credible investors. "The calibre of our new

shareholders is fantastic, they're all investors who are in it for the long-term. It shows that health clubs don't have to be a low level investment," he said, adding that he will stay in the business as CEO to lead the next stage of growth. "This IPO secures our future," he added. "We'll continue to open between 15 and 20 gyms a year, with a focus on quality and quantity. We want to see the business continue to grow sensibly."

The company received £89.9m of gross proceeds from the initial public offer which will be used to fund future growth.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=x6E9M_H



John Treharne and his top team at the London Stock Exchange on the day of the IPO

Asda sales slump stalls gym plans

Asda's plans to add in-store gyms as part of a push into the growing fitness market have been held up as the supermarket battles to reverse the worst sales performance in its 50-year history.

HCM revealed in June that the company was planning to partner with gym operator Total Fitness for the venture, with concept drawings suggesting the proposition would be entirely class-based.

The first site was due to open in Swindon, while plans were also mooted for a nationwide rollout – in or near existing stores – depending on the concept's success. However, after recording its worst ever quarterly period of trading, the company has placed a number of

its non-core business plans on hold as part of 'Project Renewal' – which aims to claw back customers by increasing price cuts and concentrating on core aims.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=n3b5K_H



Asda has planning permission for a first gym in Swindon

Budget gyms leading UK growth



Xercise4Less CEO Jon Wright said success has come from starting small and evolving

Any suspicions that the boutique studio boom is stealing the thunder of fast-growing budget gyms has been dispelled by the latest *Sunday Times Virgin Fast Track 100* list, which names Pure Gym and Xercise4Less among the 20 fastest growing private firms in the UK.

Having dominated last year's list alongside The Gym Group, both Pure Gym and Xercise4Less made improvements on their rankings in the list of the 100 UK private companies with the fastest-growing sales over their latest three years. Pure Gym climbed nine places to rank ninth, while Xercise4Less edged up four places to 17th. The Gym Group is no longer eligible, having gone public at the beginning of last month.

The league table shows that Pure Gym sales for 2014 reached £68.6m, reflecting annual sales growth over the last three years of 121 per cent. 2015 has also been a busy year for the UK's largest gym chain, with new CEO Humphrey Cobbold taking the reins, followed by the high profile acquisition of LA fitness. Pure Gym is currently working to convert these new sites, with the ongoing project expected to be fully completed by May 2016.

Meanwhile Xercise4Less, which plans to have 100 sites in its portfolio by 2017, had annual sales of £21.8m to July 2015, with three-year annual sales growth of 99 per cent. Details: http://lei.sr?a=k8G9G_H

Ex-Bannatyne Group FD jailed for £8m fraud



Bannatyne was 'betrayed' by Watson

The former finance director of the Bannatyne Group, Christopher Watson, has been jailed after defrauding the company out of nearly £8m over a six-year period.

The 46-year-old took £7,974,221 from July 2008 to July 2014, which he used to pay off millions of pounds of gambling debts and buy several properties. Appearing at Teesside Court, Watson was sentenced to four years and eight months in prison. Company founder Duncan Bannatyne said he felt 'betrayed'. Details: http://lei.sr?a=S9W4p_H

£44m leisure and school complex shows innovation



Durham Council financed the project

A new £44m complex combining Consett Academy with a new leisure centre which will be shared by students and the public is now up and running.

As a shared building, the leisure centre and academy have their own distinct main entrances at either end of the building, while internally they are separated by secure lockdown doors. Facilities at the new centre include the largest pool provision in County Durham, plus a 600sq m (6,458sq ft) gym operated by Lifestyle Fitness on behalf of Leisureworks. Details: http://lei.sr?a=S4V6s_H

DW buys 7 former LA fitness sites

DW Fitness has bought seven former LA fitness sites from Pure Gym for an undisclosed fee.

Pure Gym acquired the 42-site LA fitness portfolio in May and has been working to convert the majority of LA fitness locations into low-cost health clubs. However, Pure Gym decided to offload seven health clubs that either overlapped with its existing sites or were better-suited to a mid-market model, and this has given the gym chain owned by Dave Whelan the opportunity to acquire a diverse set of locations. In addition to two health clubs in DW Fitness' northern heartland



DW has acquired the plush Waldorf Hilton Hotel gym

(Brooklands and Yeading), it has also taken control of Belfast Shaw'sbridge, Brentwood, Thorpe Bay, Essex, Ewell (Surrey) and the gym in Covent Garden's Waldorf Hilton. Details: http://lei.sr?a=N3m4s_H

Hollywood's Lagree Fitness concept hits UK studios

A high intensity workout heralded by stars such as Kim Kardashian and Jennifer Aniston has been brought to UK shores through the launch of a new boutique franchise.

Studio Lagree UK owner and director Robert Lepone has overseen the expansion of the Canadian brand, resulting in the first two studios in central London and Guildford. The studios are based around The Lagree Fitness Method, the favoured workout of a number of Hollywood's leading lights.

Lepone is investing in Studio Lagree UK – an extension of the Studio Lagree franchise started in Canada in February 2013 – and plans to open eight to 10 studios in the London area over the next two to three years.

As the sole provider of the Lagree Method in London, we have exclusive access to the continuous research and development of Sebastian Lagree and Lagree Fitness," said Lepone.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=R3j5Q_H

Sports Direct swoops on prime London gym site



The site includes a rooftop yoga space

Mike Ashley has added to his Sports Direct Fitness empire with the acquisition of the former 37° health club in West London.

Recently rebranded as The Printworks Health Club & Spa, the prime location at London Olympia has been sold by joint owners Albion Ventures and London Health & Fitness for an undisclosed sum.

The acquisition is a boon for Sports Direct Fitness, which is backed by a '£250m war chest' to help the chain gain a stronger foothold in the south east of England as it aims to reach an ultimate goal of 200 gyms nationwide.

The health club, which was once a graphics workshop, features a spacious gym, rooftop yoga space, several studios, a 20m pool, sauna and a beauty spa. Sports Direct Fitness now has around 30 sites across the country with plans for an 'aggressive' expansion during 2016.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=5U9r_H

IRebel raises £3m in crowdfund

A £300,000 vote of confidence from Pure Gym co-founder James Jack has helped boutique fitness chain IRebel surge to £3m in its latest funding round – double the initial investment target of £1.5m.

Jack, who was a founding director of the UK's biggest gym chain, bought a £300,000 stake in IRebel during the funding round on Crowdfunder. This sparked a late flurry of interest from investors, leading IRebel management to double the funding round target in exchange for more equity.

Having initially offered a 13.04 per cent stake in the business for £1.5m in the

funding round, the revised offer saw 23.08 per cent equity on offer for £3m – a target the fitness chain reached with days to spare.

"Funding grew substantially after James Jack invested, giving us an extra stamp of approval," IRebel co-founder James Balfour told *Health Club Management*, adding that the chain is one of only four companies to have ever reached £3m on Crowdfunder. "Investors in this round get a smaller slice of a bigger pie due to the massive overfunding, but they also have shares in a business with firepower for growth."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=2D3p9_H



The second IRebel site recently opened in Broadgate Circle with a cylindrical studio

ukactive outlines activity Blueprint

Physical activity should be embedded into every aspect of society, says ukactive, which has published a new call-to-arms Blueprint urging the government to make overcoming inactivity a top-tier public health priority.

ukactive chair Tanni Grey-Thompson told delegates at the recent ukactive Summit in London that physical activity referrals and sessions should be available

in Britain's GP surgeries, workplaces, job centres and care homes if the UK is to turn the tide on its physical inactivity pandemic. Lack of exercise is estimated to cause 37,000 deaths annually and cost the economy £20bn per year. The Blueprint for an Active Britain



Tanni Grey-Thompson presented the Blueprint

continues ukactive's ongoing efforts to have physical activity recognised as a top-tier public health concern which is separate and equal in importance to obesity.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=H5k5Q_H

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Innovative programming designed to help improve member experience through a diverse series of gym floor training sessions.

Kelly Holmes - APEX Ambassador

"The programme includes excellent instruction from the trainers which is often missing in group training."

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Physical
COMPANY

New indie budget gym aims to be 'first of many'



The chain is 'welcoming and accessible'

A new budget gym has been launched by fitness industry veteran Mike Walker, who hopes to roll out his 'low cost, high quality' concept across a number of sites.

Backed by private investors, the first GymFit4Less club in High Wycombe spans 9,500sq ft (883sq m) over two floors. In addition to strength and CV kit supplied by Matrix Fitness, the gym comprises a free weights room and functional zone supplied by Physical Company, plus a ladies-only gym, studio and beauty rooms.

"Low cost shouldn't mean low quality and my aim with GymFit4Less was to create a spacious facility offering all the latest functional kit and cardio machines," said Walker, who plans to open a number of GymFit4Less sites, harnessing his experience from roles at GLL, Virgin Active, Esporta and Holmes Place. Details: http://lei.sr?a=Y4R7R_H

i-motion targets 2016 expansion



i-motion managing director Gareth Evans formerly played rugby union for Lazio RUFC

i-motion is set to open its second gym in January 2016, with plans to follow the Stafford site with up to six more openings this year.

The low-cost independent gym concept was founded by former professional rugby player Gareth Evans, who launched the first site in Rotherham in 2013. Evans plans to self-finance the next three to four sites, and says he is in talks with banks and private equity houses about funding beyond that.

"One of our main focuses in 2016 will be locations in London and the Midlands, which will tie in nicely with our Rotherham and Stafford gyms," Evans told HCM.

The forthcoming Stafford site will be a 21,000sq ft 1,950(sq m) gym spread across three floors in the Guildhall Shopping Centre. It will incorporate three studios,

two of which will be virtual and supplied by Wexer, which will also host the club's music.

The gym – which hopes to appeal to the large number of nearby students – will have equipment supplied by Matrix Fitness and will feature the latest IC7 bike. There will also be more than 130 free weekly classes.

"We've got a wide target market for Stafford – our average age in our Rotherham club is around 40-years-old, split evenly between sexes, but I expect Stafford be slightly younger on average due to the close proximity of the college and university," said Evans. "Having an on-site café and juice bar means that our members are able to train and relax just as they would do in a 'high end' concept." Details: http://lei.sr?a=v6M9Q_H

Hatton's £2m gym packs a punch

Former world champion boxer Ricky Hatton has overseen a major transformation of his £2m gym to ensure it still provides members with knockout facilities.

Hatton Health and Fitness, the two-storey boxing-themed gym in Hatton's hometown of Manchester, has undergone a radical transformation, including an interior rebrand courtesy of renowned graffiti artist 'Eject' and a complete overhaul of the fitness equipment.

The fitness arena has been equipped with more than 80 pieces of equipment from Matrix Fitness' 7xe range, including a large number of CV machines, in a custom matte black finish. Unsurprisingly for a gym helmed by a former boxer, the kit list also includes a host of strength equipment from the Matrix Ultra Series, as well as Magnum benches.

"Boxing is an explosive sport, requiring endurance and power, as well as the ability to land a great punch," said director of key accounts for Matrix Fitness, Jo Rich.

"Clearly Ricky is a master in his field, and is aware of exactly what it takes to be boxing fit, so we are delighted that he chose to equip his facility with Matrix Fitness equipment and hope that it inspires his legions of fans to follow in his footsteps."

In addition to the main gym floor area, the facility also houses two fitness studios which offer more than 30 classes per week – including Hatton's accredited boxing for fitness class 'Hatton ABC'. The facility also features a purpose-built boxing gym which is situated on the top floor of the building. Details: http://lei.sr?a=m2Y4r_H



Hatton has given his gym an overhaul

Technology news

'Ingestibles' will be the future of health tracking



Rahman: Trackers will be swallowed

The world has gone wearable tech crazy in recent years, but Jawbone CEO Hosain Rahman believes the future of health tracking will place gadgets inside the body.

The arrival of the Apple Watch was anticipated to send wearable tech sales into overdrive, but the amount of information that can be collected by a wearable pales into comparison with the amount that could be tracked by a device inside the body, added Rahman.

The technology pioneer envisions a future whereby health trackers are ingested. Some devices will "pass through you," he said at the recent Code/Mobile conference, while other hardware could stay in your bloodstream and monitor things like circulation, levels of nutrition and the functioning of individual organs, offering a complete picture of our health.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=Q9K6D_H

Roberts debuts 'Netflix for Fitness'



Matt Roberts has been a personal trainer for more than 20 years

Fitness entrepreneur Matt Roberts has launched a new on-demand digital workout channel which he hopes will grow to eventually become the 'Netflix for Fitness'.

The channel is the latest in a growing number of subscription-model fitness class services to have come to market in the last 12 months – the most notable of which being Les Mills' On Demand.

Roberts, who counts Prime Minister David Cameron and comedian Michael McIntyre among his clients, has brought the new BodyNetwork service to market with a number of collaborators. In addition to a range of classes led by Roberts, the channel will feature classes by trainers from global yoga brand Yogasphere and the Colin Waggett-helmed gym chain The Third Space.

Classes available include HIIT, pilates, yoga, post-natal classes, nutritional advice, running and mindfulness programmes, with plans to add more partners as the channel develops. Subscribers can access the channel via computer, smartphone or tablet, with subscriptions costing £15 a month, or pay-per-view available from £3 a session.

"The internet has transformed entertainment, retail and travel, but is yet to have any real impact on the fitness industry," said Roberts. "We're hoping that the launch of BodyNetwork will change that and deliver the biggest range of training and nutritional programmes to as many people as possible in the comfort of their living room at a fraction of the cost of a gym membership."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=u3SSG_H

Wearables are 'top fitness trend'

After years of hype and expectation, wearable technology will finally take its place in the mainstream of fitness in 2016.

That's according to the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) which has named wearable technology as the number one fitness trend for 2016 in its annual foresight report. Now in its tenth year, The *Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends* has recently tipped body weight training and HIIT among its top trends. For the latest report, the ACSM turned to wearable technology, which is set to triple in value over the next 10 years, according to a research forecast by IDTechEx.

"Wearable technology has overtaken activities like body weight training and high-intensity interval training to claim the number one spot in this year's survey,"

commented the lead author of the report Walter R Thompson, PhD. "Consumer interest in fitness technology may signal that the low-cost, DIY exercise trend we have seen recently is waning."

The survey was completed by more than 2,800 health and fitness professionals worldwide and was designed to reveal trends in various fitness environments. A total of 40 potential trends were given as choices, and the top 20 were ranked and published by ACSM, with past top trends body weight training and HIIT rounding out the top three – a reflection that neither movement is a fad.

"Tech devices are now central to our daily lives and have changed the way we plan and manage our workouts," added Thompson.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=Q6V5N_H



Wearables will go mainstream in 2016

Supplier & training news

Core Health & Fitness launches 'superior' bikes



The bikes launch in January 2016

Core Health & Fitness is aiming to crank its indoor cycling offering up a gear with the announcement of three new bikes which are coming to market.

Having recently concluded its partnership with Mad Dogg Athletics – creator of the Spinning indoor cycling programme – Core will market the new bikes under its StarTrac brand. The soon to be launched indoor bicycles – which the company says will have a “superior look and feel” – will be known as the Studio 7, Studio 5 and Studio 3.

“Our new bikes are a winning combination of features and price points that customers will love”, said Dustin Grosz, president of Core Health & Fitness. “The new bikes have a superior look, feel and are a more attractive price than StarTrac’s prior product offerings in this space.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=y8H5s_H

Lifetime scores awards hat-trick



Lifetime Training won three gongs at the 2015 Active Training Awards in Marlow

Lifetime Training scooped a trio of awards as the leading lights of physical activity sector training gathered in Marlow on 26 November to celebrate 2015's top achievers at the second annual Active Training Awards.

Lifetime landed three of the 10 awards on offer: Best use of Technology, Large Training Provider of the Year and Apprenticeship Provider of the Year. Other winners of this year's awards were GLL, Nuffield Health, Fusion Lifestyle, Jubilee Hall Trust, Gemma Quinnell, Schwinn Cycling and Richard Latham of Places for People Leisure.

“This year has been characterised by change at Lifetime and we have developed many new strands to our programmes,” said Lifetime Training client services director Nigel Wallace. “Winning three

awards was a huge endorsement of the direction we're heading. It is great to receive the recognition for the hard work and dedication of our team and the brilliant partnerships we have with our clients.”

More than 200 delegates from the industry's top training companies, employers, higher education providers and commercial vocational providers were at the event to hail exceptional performance and commitment to vocational training and development. The Active IQ-sponsored event is jointly-led by ukactive and CIMSPA.

“The Active Training Awards are a fantastic initiative celebrating excellence in the training and development of our workforce,” said ukactive's Steven Ward. Details: http://lei.sr?a=r4s9C_H

New Trailblazer standards unveiled

Work to improve physical activity sector apprenticeships through the Trailblazer initiative has moved forward, with the foundations now in place for three new sets of standards.

Unveiled at the Active Training Workshop and Awards 2015 by the Physical Activity Sector Trailblazer group, the new standards cover apprenticeships for the roles of fitness instructor, leisure assistant and children's activity practitioner. They follow the standards set out for personal trainer and leisure duty manager apprenticeships, which were approved by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in August.

The government-backed Trailblazer programme aims to place responsibility for defining apprenticeship standards in the hands of employers, enabling the industry to

streamline training pathways and proactively address skills shortages. Initial expressions of interest for the three new standards will be submitted to the relevant government agencies in the first quarter of 2016, with unique steering groups for each standard to be formed.

“The Trailblazer project has been a shining example of employer and sector collaboration on workforce development,” said chair of the Trailblazer Project Management Group Rich Millard. “By the end of January 2016 we'll have submitted the first two assessment plans for the leisure duty manager and personal trainer roles, the standards for both of which were successfully developed and approved this year, driven by two employer-led steering groups.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=3f5S_H



Millard is driving the Trailblazer initiative



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People news

YMCA Awards lands Craig Potter



Rob May (left) and Potter want to harness technology to reach learners in new ways

YMCA Awards has appointed Craig Potter head of commercial as the awarding organisation aims to continue its transformation under director Rob May.

YMCA Awards (formerly CYQ) has undergone a significant period of change in the year since May arrived from global education giants City & Guilds, with renewed focus placed on ensuring customers, digital content and products are at the heart of the fitness charity.

The recruitment of Potter from Cirrus e-Learning forms part of the ongoing process and he has been tasked with driving forward the charity's commercial plans.

"Craig has vast experience in managing complex customers and multi-channel marketing, but he is also passionate about

learning technology and will have a big input into our direction of travel," said May.

The awards industry faces significant upheaval from funding cuts, a new qualifications framework and ongoing challenges that technology presents, but both May and Potter see an opportunity for YMCA Awards to increase engagement by reaching learners in new ways.

Potter added: "One of the reasons I joined YMCA Awards was because of its focus on the future of learning and certification. Our investment in technology has already led to a prestigious industry award for innovation, and many customers I speak with are really excited about blending digital tools into their training delivery."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=d6x6B_H

Alawar joins Stroops to spearhead global growth



Alawar has 18 years' experience

Functional training equipment provider Stroops has appointed Nadiem Alawar as vice president of global sales and business development.

Alawar will be heading up and building Stroops' current global sales team to expand the company's worldwide reach in equipment, education/programming and business development.

With more than 18 years' fitness industry experience, Alawar has worked for a wide range of well known international companies. He has formerly held the positions of VP of international sales and business development at Mad Dogg Athletics, as well as international sales director at both TRX and Balanced Body.

Shon Harker, president of Stroops, said Alawar's experience will help "explode" awareness of the brand worldwide.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=N6b7Q_H

Leisure advisory role for Cosslett

Former Fitness First CEO and current chair Andrew Cosslett has joined global private equity firm Advent International as an operating partner, with a brief to advise on investment opportunities in the leisure sector.

Cosslett – who was moved upstairs at Fitness First last summer as owner Oaktree Capital Management sought to speed up its sale plans – will harness his extensive experience in the leisure industry, which includes a six-year stint as CEO of InterContinental Hotels Group.

The new part-time advisory role will see Cosslett work closely with Advent's Retail, Consumer and Leisure team to identify new global investment opportunities, with a particular focus on the leisure sector. He will also support activity in Advent's investment

portfolio – which has included leisure brands such as Parques Reunidos and Venero.com.

"I am delighted to be working with Advent. Its sector approach, global network and strong track record of creating value make it a compelling partner," commented Cosslett. "I am looking forward to working with the team and drawing on my experience and network in order to help find exciting new investment opportunities."

Cosslett will combine his new role at Advent with his ongoing duties as chair of Fitness First. *Health Club Management* understands that owner Oaktree hopes to complete a sale of the gym chain ideally in the next six months – a goal that Cosslett's new position could well help to realise.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=S7P2Z_H



Cosslett will advise on leisure investment

ELEVATE

4-5 MAY 2016 | OLYMPIA | LONDON

THE ARENA OF EXERCISE, HEALTH & PERFORMANCE



WHAT IS ELEVATE?

Elevate is the UK's first cross sector event bringing together physical activity providers, academia, healthcare, industry, government and those working in performance to focus on an increasingly important and complex societal challenge: turning the tide on inactivity.

Taking place at Olympia London between 4-5 May 2016 Elevate is a free-to-attend occasion where all stakeholders can contribute their perspectives and learn more about how the connections between exercise, health and performance are strengthening.

FREE TO ATTEND – REGISTER NOW

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WHAT'S ON?

4,000 ATTENDEES

represent the fitness industry, healthcare, sport clubs, local government, public health, leisure, education, performance, military, retail, press and policy influencers.

150 EXHIBITORS

demonstrate advances in technology, research, analysis, rehabilitation, psychology, biomechanics, training, sports medicine and service provision.

100 SPEAKERS

share knowledge and ideas on the strategies to increase participation, physical activity for health and wellbeing and the future of performance.

9 CURATIONS

present demonstrations, installations, innovative products, evidence-based talks delivered by thought leaders via 2 attractions and 7 feature areas.

WWW.ELEVATEARENA.COM

2016 EVENTS CALENDAR

JANUARY

20-21 | The London Health Show Olympia, London, UK

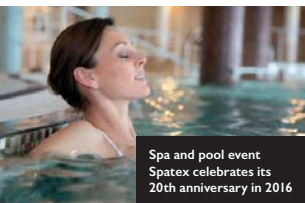
Encompasses the nutrition and supplements, beauty and anti-ageing, complementary health, sports and fitness, organic/natural products, and healthcare equipment and technology sectors of the wellness market.
www.londonhealthshow.com

28 January-11 February | FIBO Innovation Tour Istanbul, Moscow, Warsaw, Milan, Stockholm

With presentations on the market situation, new developments in the fitness, wellness and health industry, and the latest innovations from FIBO exhibitors.
www.europeactive.eu

31 January-2 February | Spatex 2016 Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK

A special 20th anniversary edition of the UK's largest pool, spa and wellness show.
www.spatex.co.uk



FEBRUARY

10-11 | Quest NBS and CIMSPA Conferences Loughborough University, UK

A two-day event featuring the Quest and NBS (National Benchmarking Scheme) conference and networking evening on 10th, and the CIMSPA conference on 11th.
www.questnbs.org

15-16 | SMME International Wembley Stadium, London, UK

To mark the show's 18th birthday, it has been extended to two days, offering



PHOTO: ISTOCK
IHRSA 2016 takes place in Orlando

buyers the chance to meet with premier suppliers in a relaxed environment.
www.smmexevent.com

18-20 | ForumClub-Forum Piscine Gallery Fiera di Bologna, Italy

ForumClub has a new formula this year: ForumClub-Forum Piscine Gallery will offer an exhibition of products and a lively gallery of solutions and applications in the fields of pool and spa, fitness and wellness.
www.forumclub.it

25-28 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute East Coast Alexandria, Virginia, US

A must-attend event for personal trainers, fitness professionals, owners and managers aiming to ramp up the success of their fitness business. A West Coast institute takes place in Seattle, Washington on 14-17 April 2016.
www.ideafit.com/ptrainer

28-29 | Professional Beauty London ExCeL, London, UK

Showcasing leading global companies in skin care, spa, nail, beauty equipment, medical beauty and tanning, Professional Beauty is the biggest event of its kind in the UK.
www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

MARCH

1 | Innovate 2016 Loughborough University, UK

A one-day event for organisations looking for innovative activities to enhance both participation and income streams.
www.leisure-net.org

18-20 | The 2016 International Fitness Showcase Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK

The ultimate fitness experience for fitness instructors and enthusiasts, offering three days of dance, aerobics, step, combat, mind-body, lectures and workshops.
www.chrysalispromotions.com

21-24 | IHRSA 2016 Orlando, Florida, US

The 35th Annual International Convention & Trade Show will offer a mix of seminars, keynote meetings and educational sessions together with a trade show.
www.ihsa.org/convention

22-23 | BASES Student Conference Bangor University, Bangor, UK

This conference will celebrate how research in sport and exercise sciences has evolved and excelled since London 2012.
www.bases.org.uk/student-conference

**29 March–1 April | ACSM
20th Health & Fitness
Summit & Expo
The Hilton Orlando Lake Buena
Vista, Orlando, Florida, US**

Gives students, fitness enthusiasts, PTs, certified professionals, and others the full spectrum of programming from scientific to practical application.
www.acsmsummit.org

APRIL

**2–3 | The OM Yoga Show
SECC, Glasgow, UK**

The total yoga experience under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, workshops, kids' yoga and an exhibition. The London event takes place in October.
www.omyogashow.co.uk

**6 | European Health & Fitness
Forum (EHFF)
Cologne, Germany**

Following the success of last year's sell-out event, EuropeActive and FIBO invite visitors to join them in Cologne for the 3rd EHFF – the opening event of FIBO 2016.
www.europeactive.eu

**7–10 | FIBO 2016
Cologne, Germany**

The world's leading trade show for health, fitness and wellness, offering an international platform for managers, distributors, suppliers and investors. This year's show will see brand new halls added, for a hands-on exploration of the future of the sector.
www.fibo.de



OM: All things yoga under one roof

**8–9 | FitPro LIVE 2016
Novotel London West, London, UK**

FitPro LIVE's new format will encompass the FitPro LIVE Workshop Series – a series of interactive single-theme workshops – and FitPro LIVE 2016, two two-day multi-theme events.
www.fitpro.com/live16

**13–14 | Millennial 20/20
Victoria House, Bloomsbury,
London, UK**

Millennial 20/20 will gather more than 2,000 brands, companies, founders and start-ups to examine and understand the Millennial consumer and marketplace.
www.millennial20-20.com

**15–18 | ECA World Fitness
Conference / OBOW Show
New York City, US**

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2016, ECA World Fitness' annual shows in New

York and Florida highlight new products, ideas and concepts.
www.ecaworldfitness.com

**27–28 | Active-net 2016
Loughborough University, UK**

A networking event with a focus on the public leisure sector. Educational seminars take place alongside keynote presentations, development seminars and one-to-one buyer/supplier meetings.
www.active-net.org

**29 April–1 May | Fitness & Health Expo
Melbourne Convention &
Exhibition Centre, Australia**

Three days of all things fitness at the southern hemisphere's largest fitness and health event.
www.fitnessexpo.com.au/melbourne

MAY

**4–5 | Elevate
Olympia, London, UK**

This cross-sector event brings together academia, healthcare, government, the physical activity sector and performance experts to focus on an increasingly important and complex societal challenge – turning the tide of inactivity.
www.elevatearena.com

**13–15 | BodyPower Expo 2016
NEC, Birmingham, UK**

With international stars and industry experts, an extensive exhibition, interactive feature areas and competitions.
www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk



FIBO: The world's leading fitness show

► 2016 EVENTS CALENDAR

19–20 | Retention Convention Austen Court, Birmingham, UK

This two-day event will cover a range of approaches to increase retention, reduce attrition and improve member loyalty across all sectors of the fitness market.
www.retentionguru.co.uk

25–26 | SIBEC UK 2016 The Belfry, West Midlands, UK

Brings together UK suppliers and buyers from the local authority, trust and education markets to participate in a series of one-to-one meetings.
www.sibec.co.uk

31 May–4 June | ACSM 63rd Annual Meeting Boston, Massachusetts, US

Takes place alongside the 7th World Congress on Exercise is Medicine, and World Congress on The Basic Science of Energy Balance. The programme includes clinical medicine, biomechanics, neural control of movement, epidemiology, metabolism, nutrition and more.
www.acsmannualmeeting.org

JUNE

8–11 | SPATEC Europe Grande Real Santa Eulalia, Algarve, Portugal

Brings operators of Europe's leading spas together with domestic and international suppliers for one-to-one meetings.
www.spateceu.com

29 | ukactive FLAME Conference Telford International Centre, Telford, UK

Attracts more than 850 delegates, with a range of motivational and educational speakers. It's followed by the Flame Awards dinner in the evening.
www.ukactive.com

JULY

13–17 | IDEA World Fitness Convention Los Angeles, California, US

Claimed to be the world's longest-running international fitness convention, with educational sessions from top presenters.
www.ideafit.com/world



Interbike Expo in Las Vegas features hundreds of exhibitors on one show floor

27–28 | active-net Australasia Melbourne, Australia

This new event comprises 16 one-to-one business meetings between suppliers and educators, a networking lunch and dinner, a keynote speaker and workshops.
www.active-net-australasia.org

SEPTEMBER

1–3 | Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show São Paulo, Brazil

Offers education in a variety of interactive formats: traditional seminars, how-to sessions, and best practice sharing.
www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil

7 | National Fitness Day UK-wide

Fitness providers across the UK open their doors for free to allow the public to try out a wide range of fitness activities.
www.nationalfitnessday.com

8–10 | FIBO China Shanghai, China

About 6,000 trade and private visitors attended FIBO China 2015, while 87 exhibitors showcased 100+ brands.
www.fibo-china.cn

20–21 | Leisure Industry Week NEC, Birmingham, UK

The UK's leading leisure industry event, with a new fitness-orientated focus.
www.liw.co.uk

21–23 | Interbike Expo Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, Nevada, US

With hundreds of exhibitors on one floor, the annual Interbike International Bicycle

Expo is where the bike industry gathers to celebrate, educate and conduct business.
www.interbike.com

OCTOBER

12–14 | Club Industry Show Hyatt Regency, Chicago, Illinois, US

A conference and trade show aimed at leading, connecting and inspiring the fitness community.
www.clubindustryshow.com

17–20 | 16th Annual IHRSA European Congress Seville, Spain

Seminars are designed to help the 500+ visitors improve and grow their business, and there's also plenty of networking.
www.ihrsa.org/congress

NOVEMBER

Date TBC | ukactive Summit Venue TBC

The largest political event in the activity sector's calendar, attracting senior influencers from physical activity, health, policy, brand, media, research, charity and local authority commissioning.
www.ukactive.com

16–19 | SIBEC Europe Ritz-Carlton Abama, Tenerife

The UK and Europe's major operators join leading suppliers for one-to-one meetings.
www.sibec.eu.com

Date TBC | BASES Conference Venue TBC

The annual conference of the BASES, the professional body for sport and exercise sciences in the UK.
www.bases.org.uk



SIBEC¹⁶
UK

25-26 May 2016

The Belfry, Wishaw,
West Midlands, UK

www.sibecuk.com



SIBEC¹⁶
Europe

16-19 November 2016

Ritz Carlton, Abama,
Tenerife, Spain

www.sibeceu.com



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- Unparalleled value for money
- High Quality Seminar Program



The planning, detail and work put in by the team at **SIBEC** to ensure a highly organised, efficient and effective event with a top range of suppliers (and buyers) makes this an invaluable event to attend; whereby I can be certain of quality meetings and networking opportunities with key people in our industry. An event you cannot afford to miss. ”

Stephen Waterman, Commercial Director, 1Life

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years of SIBEC**

For more information about
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Tracy Gehlan

The CEO of health club operator Jatomi Fitness talks to **Kate Cracknell** about building a business around the consumer, and the lessons we can take from the fast food sector

Tracy Gehlan has an interesting background for a fitness CEO, in that she's come over from what some in the sector might consider 'the enemy' – fast food outlet Burger King. "The move to Jatomi Fitness was almost by accident," she admits. "That said, I've been involved in sport all my life – I was an athlete when I was younger, and all my sons have done international judo. So when this job came along it seemed like a dream opportunity to combine what had been a hobby with the business knowledge I had.

"Because although the products – burgers and fitness – are millions of miles apart, actually the business models are extremely similar. They're both guest service industries focused on delivering a good product, on keeping your customers, on guest feedback. You can take the knowledge you have from one business and readily apply it to the other."

She continues: "There seems to be a view in the fitness sector that, if you haven't been in the industry before, you can't just come in and work in it. There's a reluctance to bring in anyone from outside – the same people just move around within the industry, and they've been sharing similar ideas for the last 10 years.

"I believe you have to look at what's going on in the outside world – from a technology standpoint, an innovations standpoint... So one of the things I'm trying to do at Jatomi Fitness is change the culture by balancing fitness people with external experts. I don't mind where our marketing people come from, for example, as long as they're amazing at marketing. The same goes for finance, IT, social media, apps, retail... They just need to be experts in their respective fields."

The fitness sector's introspective viewpoint is also hindering its growth, adds Gehlan: "Everyone's competing against each other head to head, battling over the small pool of people who've already decided to join a gym. That's the wrong time and place to compete.

"Rather than competing against other gyms, we should be out there competing with diets, weight loss tablets, recipes, meal plans – all the other easier options consumers will try before they even contemplate joining a gym. Because I don't want to be 15th on the list. I want to move my business into a position where it's able to compete as soon as people start doing their 'how to change my life' research."



Jatomi Fitness unveiled the first of its 'blueprint clubs' towards the end of 2015 – one in Poland and two in Bangkok, Thailand

DRIVING STANDARDS

Gehlan's most recent role at Burger King was as VP of brand standards and excellence, and the endorsements on her LinkedIn profile speak to expertise in areas such as customer service and customer satisfaction – areas in which the fitness sector all too often falls flat.

Coming in with a fresh pair of eyes as she is – Gehlan only joined Jatomi Fitness in April 2015 – what are her first impressions of the fitness sector in this respect?

"It's a very inspiring industry, but when you pull back the blankets there aren't really any standards or processes. And that's not just in our company: we had none when I arrived, but I can't find them anywhere. No best practice, no standards, no systems.

"When I joined Jatomi Fitness we had 18 different logos, but that was just a symptom of the root cause: a lack of standards. So we've gone back to the foundations, effectively building these under the existing company – putting standards and processes in place to create what I call our gym blueprint, which covers everything from the hiring process to building a new club.

"If you want to grow as a brand, you have to have these systems and processes – it's just not possible to do it without them. And we certainly have big growth plans at ▶



I don't want to define our offering as low-cost, high-end, mid-market. We're an experience, and no matter how much time or money you have, we'll fit that experience around you

Tracy Gehlan

Gehlan joined Jatomi Fitness from Burger King, where she was VP of brand standards and excellence



Off-peak gym access starts at approximately €16 a month in Poland

- Jatomi Fitness – we want to reach 250 clubs in five years. At the moment we have no plans to franchise, but this sort of structure means we could if we wanted to. We could simply say 'here's the blueprint – this is how it works.'

PERSONALISED PACKAGES

The Jatomi Fitness estate is now 64 clubs strong, including three of what Gehlan calls 'blueprint clubs' – the template for all new openings going forward – that opened in Q4 2015: one in Poland and two in Bangkok, Thailand.

The company's history (see 'The Jatomi Fitness story', below) means there's still work to do on brand consistency from a consumer perspective – residues of the old Pure brand still remain – but, says Gehlan: "Internally, everyone who works for us now understands who we are, what we're doing and what we stand for as a brand."

She explains: "First of all, I wanted to build a brand for everybody. The way I talk about it, Jatomi Fitness isn't mid-market, it's mass market.

"Pure Jatomi Fitness positioned itself as more high-end, and we have some amazing clubs with swimming pools, saunas, spas. But local salaries don't justify this: we can't only offer high-end clubs in Poland or Turkey, for example. You become niche, and I don't want to be a niche business. I want to be a business where it doesn't matter how much you earn, there's something for you.

"So we start with an entry price – about €16 a month in Poland for off-peak access – and if you want to add on the occasional class in peak hours, you can pay as you go for €2 a class. Meanwhile, in markets such as Turkey where the culture necessitates women-only areas, our female members get a slight discount because they can't use all of our facilities.

"At the other end of the scale, our 'extreme programme' includes one PT session a week and access to all our clubs. In some clubs we even have VIP sections – very exclusive areas with their own changing rooms and with a PT working with you at all times.

"Ultimately you can come for anything you want, and that's where I want to be. I don't want to define our offering as low-cost, high-end, mid-market. What I'm saying is: we're an experience, and no matter how much time or money you have at your disposal, we'll fit that experience around you and personalise it."

She continues: "With every new member, we discuss how much money they have to spend on their fitness, how much time they have to allocate to it, what they want from their club, and we structure a programme around that. And if further down the line they find they're not using the club as much as they hoped, or it's proving too expensive, we can adjust the package."

She continues: "Creating an experience where members want to keep coming back is also paramount, and we're releasing our guest journey this month [January 2016]. This will include key points for each guest when we'll meet them, measure them, see if we're delivering against their goals. It will be for new joiners and also retrofitted for anyone who's been with us up to

THE JATOMI FITNESS STORY

The first club in the Jatomi Fitness estate opened in Poland in 2007, at that point operating under the Pure Health and Fitness brand. The operation expanded into Romania, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria – but it was when it began to eye an entry into Asia that a rebrand was required, as the Pure label was already taken in that part of the world.

"That's where Jatomi Fitness came from, in 2012," says the company's new CEO Tracy Gehlan. "But it became a bit of a mess – the branding went wrong. Some clubs started to call themselves Pure Jatomi Fitness, some were still Pure, some dropped the Pure and became Jatomi Fitness. The company ended up with 18 logos, a whole mishmash of what the brand was meant to look like, and confusion over who it even was as a company. That's something we're still unravelling."

In 2012 John Caudwell, the owner of Phones4U, acquired 51 per cent of Jatomi Fitness as an investment. He continued to buy more shares between 2012 and 2014 and now owns over 90 per cent of the business, is head of the board, and is

eyeing large-scale expansion. "His ambition isn't to have 50 or 60 clubs – it's to have a global company," explains Gehlan. "He therefore wanted someone with the experience to grow a brand and a company around the world, and that's where I came in as chief executive."

The estate now comprises 64 clubs – in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey, Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic – and has a five-year target of 250 clubs. Twenty new clubs will open in 2016, including 10 in Asia – of which eight in Bangkok, in partnership with Big C shopping malls and Tesco.

"Aside from consolidating Bangkok, where there's very high demand for our clubs – the waiting lists are huge – we'll also open more sites in the Czech Republic in 2016, and in Poland, where we want to maintain market leader status," says Gehlan.

"We're looking at Vietnam too – our partners Big C and Matrix both have a strong presence in that market. I don't think that will be 2016, although if unexpected opportunities arise we'll certainly look at them."



Jatomi Fitness has developed its own CrossFit-style offering

six months. We'll do something different for the longer-standing members, but they won't be forgotten.

"All our team members will be trained in this, and if we miss any of those steps, we'll have done something wrong.

"We also want to create a social aspect, so going to the gym is something members do with their friends – almost like going to Starbucks or the cinema. You have to be ready to compete with those other areas of leisure.

"It's a completely different model we're trying to build and it's not going to happen overnight, but interaction with team members will be key and is an area in which I'm keen to differentiate our clubs."

We want to create a social aspect, so going to the gym is something members do with their friends – almost like going to Starbucks or the cinema

BLUEPRINT CLUBS

She continues: "In terms of the actual facilities, our blueprint clubs are very open: the reception desk, even the sales area – there are no offices. All the team members should be out there welcoming you, talking to you, making you feel welcome. We've invested heavily in our changing rooms too, so it really is home from home.

"Meanwhile the gym floor is broken into three sections. The cardio and heavy weights areas have been designed in partnership with Matrix, and we're monitoring them to make sure we have the perfect layout.

"But it's our studio and functional zone that's really innovative: you can pull the glass wall of the studio back to make it part of the functional area, so in the 60 per cent of the day when the studio isn't being used, we can double the size of our functional space. We've taken out the wooden floor and put in a very, very special multi-purpose floor. Our three blueprint clubs are the first three of its kind. You can dance on it, use it for functional training, there's a running track...

"We're designing our own classes too, and these will all be highly interactive – we want people to have fun while they work out. We've launched a CrossFit-style programme called Escalate – you can have well over 30 people in that class and it's a great buzz – as well as FitGirls, which was already averaging 92 per cent occupancy just two months after launch. We'll be creating and launching another six programmes this year.

"We can really tailor to the individual markets in the functional zone too: offering Muay Thai in Bangkok, for example, as well as much more yoga.

"Our aim is to constantly innovate, and in fact we're going to be building an Innovation Centre – hopefully in March or April this year.

"The Innovation Centre will be a club with just 1,000 members, and we'll continually gather data and feedback from them: what works, what doesn't, what they like, what they don't like. Everything will be tried and tested there and, if something scores below a certain percentage, we won't roll it out to the rest of our estate.

"There'll be plenty of scope for member feedback at our other clubs too. We have member scorecards, for example, where people can tell us what their goals were, how they're doing against these, what's helping and what's not. And we're launching forum roadshows this month too, where my executive team and I will go ▶



The studio space in the new clubs opens out to become part of the functional floor

- into clubs to meet with members. We want these to be really open, honest sessions around what we're doing well, what we're not doing well, what they like, what they don't like. We'll take that feedback and go back to them to let them know about the changes we'll be making in the business as a result."

LEARNING FROM FAST FOOD

So is there anything else up Gehlan's sleeve in terms of forthcoming innovations?

"We have lots of ideas – streaming classes so we can stay connected to members who travel a lot or who can't always make it to the gym, for example. There are already apps to track activity, and we have to take all the pieces of this puzzle and connect them. That's why I want to build the Innovation Centre – because I want to be able to see how it all links together into packages that fit people's busy lives. If you can do that, you won't be selling a membership – you'll be selling a lifestyle."

"We also need to look at other ways of generating income through our brands. I can't give you any more detail now, but we're building a retail line of Jatomi Fitness products to buy in-club and online."

Every three-year-old in the world knows McDonalds – they've already been programmed as its customers. We wait until they're 18 or 19 before we start giving gym memberships

"We're evaluating our PT model too. I think it might currently be a bit overpriced, but it might also be about marketing it differently – encouraging people to see it not just as one-to-one but as a session they can share with two or three friends. At the moment, 7 per cent of our members do PT. I want to triple that in the next year."

"I also think the gym industry is almost too commercial, in that we don't do anything for children. We accept that our clubs are empty at weekends, and that's really because mum and dad can't come when they have the family at home. So maybe we need to do things differently – and I don't mean a crèche. I mean something that's happening at an introductory level."

"This is where fast food gets it right, because you can guarantee every three-year-old in the world knows what McDonalds is. They've already been programmed as its customers by the age of two or three, whereas we wait until they're 18 or 19 before we start giving gym memberships."

"There has to be some hook. I don't know what that is yet – all kids know how to use an iPad, so maybe fitness and technology need to combine to reach them – but we need to start earlier as an industry."

"The other thing fast food companies understand better than anybody is that people live on really tight schedules now. They have 30 minutes for lunch. They're always on the move. There's so much to do. So however you view fast food, we'd do well to learn from their understanding of time and convenience."

"Finally, crucially, is consistency. With the fast food brands, you know what you'll get anywhere in the world – and that's what fitness does terribly. Our customers don't even trust that they can come to the same club and get the same thing every time, at the time they want it. We just don't do convenience. We set our clubs up for us, not the guests, and the fast food companies do the opposite. Their brands are set up for the masses." ●

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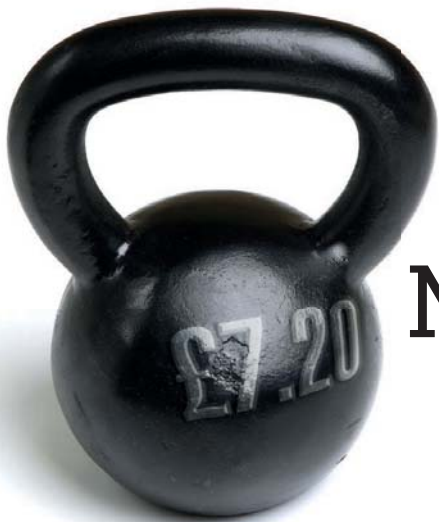
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The National Living Wage

Employers everywhere face a huge hike in costs as the implementation of the National Living Wage draws nearer. How will the fitness industry absorb these costs and ensure any strategies are a catalyst for positive change within their organisations? **Julie Cramer** reports

I

n just a few months' time, UK employers will see a significant rise in their wage bills as the National Living Wage – outlined by

Chancellor George Osborne in the Summer Budget of 2015 – takes effect.

From April 2016, the starting hourly rate for over-25s will be £7.20 (up from the current minimum wage of £6.50), gradually rising to £9 an hour by 2020. It signals a welcome pay rise for many of the 6 million (or 23 per cent) of UK workers currently earning below a living wage (source: KPMG).

However, as an industry where a large number of workers enter – and often stay – at the lower end of the pay scale, the impact on the health and fitness industry will be significant. As wage bills soar, operators will have to become increasingly resourceful in how they look to balance their books.

Will membership fees have to rise, or will this simply chase away customers who were hard to win in the first place? On the other hand, will better pay

attract more talent into the industry and raise skills and standards to a degree that retention increases and business naturally expands?

Other traditionally low-paid industries like food retail have been quicker to embrace the changes: supermarket chain Lidl, followed by Aldi and Morrisons, all raised pay packets over and above the Living Wage in the months after the Chancellor's announcement. They have pledged that prices for their customers will not rise, although some have made cuts in areas like paid breaks and weekend overtime rates for staff.

For a growing number of employers, paying over and above the National Living Wage is becoming an ethical business consideration.

The Living Wage Foundation, which campaigns for higher pay, has seen its numbers more than double since November 2014: the number of Living Wage employers is up from 1,000 companies to over 2,000 by November 2015 (including almost a third of the FTSE 100 companies). All companies accredited by the Foundation commit

to paying £9.40 an hour in London and a rate of £8.25 elsewhere.

According to Living Wage Foundation director Sarah Vero: "These employers aren't waiting for government to tell them what to do. Their actions are helping to end the injustice that is in-work poverty in the UK now."

In particular, the Foundation draws attention to research by Public Health England on the strong link between pay and wellbeing. The study shows that low income "is associated with worse outcomes across virtually all domains, including long-term health and life expectancy" and "with a greater risk of limiting illness and poor mental health".

As an industry whose main remit is to improve the nation's health, enabling the good health of fitness sector employees by paying them a living wage would seem like a good place to start.

But without the profit margins of sectors like banking, how will the fitness industry afford it? What measures can it implement to mitigate the imminent wage bill rise, and are there rocky times ahead? We ask the experts.



Better pay could attract talent, raising skills and standards to boost retention and expand business



Tim Baker
Chair, Touchstone
Partners

The fitness industry, along with others, sees itself on the wrong side of the new Living Wage legislation. While it hasn't been openly identified alongside the care, hospitality and retail industries, the issues are the same: how can the industry afford to implement the living wage within current business models?

However inept he is with achieving it, I must confess some sympathy with George Osborne's stated goal of paying people enough that they don't need to rely on welfare handouts to survive. Any business model that is predicated on the state supplementing pay packets has, on the face of it, got to be a pretty weak model. It leaves the major cost item – wages – at the whim of the state, and the rules have been changed. Business models must change too.

This is an opportunity for the fitness industry. Overall, the sector can be seen as a force for good: it encourages healthy living, it employs young people and it offers meaningful apprenticeships for trainees. It invests in itself.

Hospitality and retail don't have the same positive potential for society, yet some retailers – which operate on classically low margins – have gained kudos by saying that they will absorb the additional costs. It's likely that more companies will have to follow.

The fitness industry will have to afford the Living Wage. It's no good saying it can't: it needs to deal with the new reality.

This may result in higher membership fees across the board, but any hike will likely result in lower numbers of members, particularly at the lower-cost end. Health clubs could choose to strip out much of the salary cost and work on more automated models where fitness equipment is available and any personal help beyond the minimum is charged out. Others may choose to enhance their personal service and presence in order to create compelling reasons to remain a member at the higher price.

Other operators may choose to become more creative, stepping outside of the usual price/value – service/high-end continuum and exploring other ways of generating additional revenue. One potential route could be to embrace the industry's 'force for good' positioning

The fitness industry will have to afford the Living Wage. It's no good saying it can't: it needs to deal with the new reality

Tim Baker

by joining up with local authorities and other service providers.

Could the gym extend its services to, say, care home visits, running regular sessions for residents? Could it extend to home visits, or regular provision at day centres or partnership with schools and colleges? All these avenues must now be explored. ▶



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

I don't believe the government has properly considered the implications of its new National Living Wage. Firstly there's no means testing, so a 25-year-old living at home with their parents with no financial responsibilities will automatically be better off than a married 23-year-old with a family, which can't be right.

Secondly, it's going to make it a lot harder for our sector to recruit staff when we need them. We employ a lot of young people working on the front line. Many of these young workers are on zero hours contracts – and for all the negative press these provoke, our experience is that a lot of people in our industry enjoy the flexibility these contracts offer.

The National Living Wage will narrow the gap between the casual hourly wage and that of the permanent

contract rate. As a result, I expect some of our permanent employees will move to the more flexible hourly wage. This will make it difficult for us to staff our centres during unsociable times, namely evenings and weekends. Some operators may struggle to keep their facilities open during these times.

Another concern is the apparent conflict between this legislation and age discrimination legislation. Many in our sector could conceivably have a frontline job paying £14,000 per annum as a catering assistant or lifeguard. At 40 hours a week, that calculates to an hourly rate lower than the minimum wage for a 25-year-old. How would they employ a 25-year-old into that role, to whom they would have to pay more, without having to be age discriminatory?

The cost of the National Living Wage will be significant and for us may well run into five figures, but it's something we'll absorb – I don't envisage raising prices to pay for it. Sadly, I do think the new wage will mean that older people in our sector

will find themselves less employable, simply because it will be cheaper to employ under-25s. While that's not something we at tmatrice will be doing, I can't speak for others in the sector.

Older people in our sector will find themselves less employable, because it will be cheaper to employ those under the age of 25

Martin Guyton



A lifeguard might currently earn £14k a year. Will clubs only employ under-25s to maintain this salary level?



Emma Kosmin
Programme
manager, Living
Wage Foundation

We offer a voluntary scheme through which organisations can sign up as Living Wage employers and be awarded our Employer Mark, and we're seeing more enquiries from employers from all sectors who are interested in understanding whether the Living Wage can work for them.

This is something that consumers are very interested in too. Customers already judge companies on whether they're eco-friendly and fair trade-focused, but increasingly they want to know that staff are receiving a sustainable wage too.

We offer an online interactive map where consumers can easily search for accredited Living Wage Employers around the country. Health and leisure

are popular search terms, and while there's a growing band of healthcare providers joining our scheme, the leisure sector is currently lagging behind. We need more leaders in this field.

When a consumer decides to join a gym, they're becoming part of a community – it's a business they will interact with week in, week out – and many want to be assured that the gym and reception staff they come to know so well are being fairly paid.

The benefits for a business to become a Living Wage Employer are immense. Absenteeism can drop by 25 per cent as staff become less stressed; staff retention also improves, so companies spend less on recruitment and new training.

Even in some of the traditionally low-paid sectors like social care and childcare, we've seen employers make the Living Wage work for them. Where there's leadership and a genuine will to do it, they can certainly succeed.

While there's a growing band of healthcare providers joining our scheme, the leisure sector is currently lagging behind

Emma Kosmin

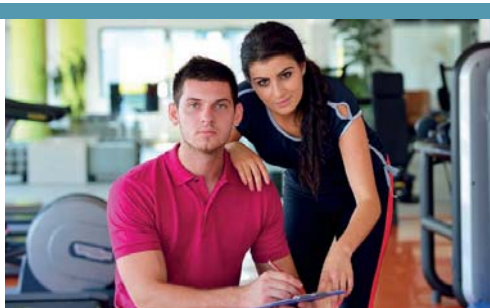


Tara Dillon
CEO, CIMSPA

Whether we like it or not, the National Living Wage is coming our way. Also looming on the horizon is the new apprenticeship levy, both of which represent very real challenges for operators unless they take steps now to prepare. We can't avoid these developments, so we need to manage them to our advantage.

Announced in the Summer Budget, the aim of the new apprenticeship levy is to encourage companies to employ more apprentices and take greater responsibility for skills training. The government is proposing to apply the levy to large companies in all sectors and use the money to support its plans for 3 million new apprenticeships across all industries. Employers who put more into apprenticeship training will be able to get more back from the levy than they put in.

Now this may sound a bit radical, but what if we as a sector really embraced apprenticeships? We're going to have to



The new living wage could help drive up the quality of staff in the fitness industry

pay the levy anyway, so why not take this opportunity to invest in more meaningful apprenticeships at the entry level of our industry as a means of offsetting some of the inevitable costs of the new National Living Wage? Not only would this help us secure the future success of our sector, but it would also mean we can draw down funding to do so.

At the same time, we need to think about improving the quality of our current workforce. We're going to be

paying more for them via the National Living Wage, so it makes sense to invest in their skills and development, to ensure our sector is better equipped to deal with the growing demands placed on it.

Some forward-thinking operators are already reviewing their staff structures, working with CIMSPA to better qualify their workforces to prepare for the introduction of the National Living Wage and apprenticeship levy. I would strongly urge other operators to do the same. ●



2016 Consumer trends

Vicki Loomes of trendwatching.com outlines five consumer trends your business should be embracing in 2016

In 2016, consumer expectations will accelerate faster than ever. The following five trends – presented in no particular order – represent some key expectations that should be on your radar in the coming months. From new frontiers for tech-fuelled health and wellness, to innovative pricing plays, to new ways to seek and display status, opportunities abound for health and fitness clubs to discover new customers, build stronger relationships, and profit. Ready? Good. The race is on.

INSIDE OUT

By now, even the most backward-looking brands have realised they must at least pretend to be interested in more than just making money. Today, a brand must have a 'mission'. It must combine profit and purpose.

One way to do that? By rethinking what a good brand is and making meaningful, positive changes to a company's internal culture. After all, the love that brands

extend to their staff will be reflected right back at them – by the employees and consumers alike.

Plenty of big brands have embraced 'Inside Out' initiatives to address issues within their own culture. In the wake of loud criticism over the way the tech industry excludes women and ethnic minorities, Intel committed US\$300m to developing a more diverse workforce. Similarly, Starbucks – a brand often criticised for its treatment of low-paid staff – unveiled Home Sweet Loan, an initiative giving UK employees access to an interest-free loan to help pay deposits for rented accommodation.

Health and fitness brands should think about how they treat their own staff, but also how they can partner with other brands to improve their corporate wellness programmes. For example, Delta Airlines partnered with Xpress Spa on a series of employee-exclusive spa facilities located at various airport hubs across the US. So think, what can you give back?

CONTEXTUAL OMNIPRESENCE

Omnichannel has been the marketing buzzword for the past few years. Brands have laboured to make their presence – and offering – felt on every channel, at every moment. The problem? That's an expensive strategy, and overwhelmed consumers are tuning out the noise. It's time for a smarter strategy – one focused on serving the right consumer needs at exactly the right time.

But how? Connected objects provide ever-richer data on consumers' preferences and habits, along with the infrastructure needed to reach them with personalised services. Don't limit your product, service or experience distribution to traditional channels. Instead, think about

Don't limit your product or service to traditional channels. Think about where your consumer might need you



Delta Airlines: Employee-exclusive spas at US airports boost its corporate wellness scheme



Music broadcast on the W.B.B.R radio app can only be heard by runners crossing the Brooklyn Bridge

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

where your consumer might need you – and make sure you get there before your competitors do.

Unorthodox brands are already exploring the possibilities of 'Contextual Omnipresence'. Amazon's Dash buttons let consumers re-order household products – from washing powder to toothpaste, dog food and more – with a single click.

Durex's #LoveBot sends introductory tweets to broken-hearted Twitter users when they publish updates featuring the broken heart emoticon.

For health and fitness brands, there's an opportunity to reach unmotivated gym-goers when they're contemplating a night on the sofa, or lapsed dieters about to purchase a mid-afternoon treat. The reward for brands? Consumers will appreciate a helping hand that comes at the right time. And they'll look for it again.

STATUS TESTS

It goes without saying that health and status are intrinsically linked. But the pursuit of status is a complex affair and, in 2016, consumers will embrace a new type of exclusivity – an exclusivity that demands they prove their worth to the brands they desire.

Driven by consumers' continued desire for brands that empower them to be the best version of themselves, this is a trend that goes far beyond high price tags. By demanding new forms of loyalty or higher levels of commitment, brands can actually foster a stronger emotional connection with consumers.

Consider: New York-based record label UNO NYC launched W.B.B.R. (Williamsburg Bridge Radio), an app broadcasting music only accessible when runners are crossing the Brooklyn Bridge. Trading on an individual's self-motivation, one track 'pushes' runners across the bridge, while another winds them down on their return.

Consumers will embrace a new type of exclusivity – one that demands they prove their worth to the brands they desire

It's worth remembering that exclusivity (and the status boost that brings) is even better when it's converted to tangible rewards. In China, Lee Jeans promoted a range of heat-retaining denim by encouraging consumers to explore their city. Movements were tracked using a GPS-enabled app, and accumulated points could be exchanged for products.

Think about how you can ask consumers to prove their worth. Just remember to reward them for their efforts!

PERSPECTIVE SHIFTS

As crowdfunding platforms bump up against an unending stream of (often digital) innovations that disrupt old business models, consumer attitudes to price remain malleable and unpredictable.

In 2016, smart health and fitness brands will consider ways to reposition products or services and shock consumers into a radically new perspective on the value a product service or experience offers.

Think about the pricing conflicts that exist within the consumer mindset. Those who access free fitness videos on YouTube (instead of shelling out for a PT) often have a wardrobe filled with expensive performance wear. Price, and the meaning of value, has shifted.

Challenge these new viewpoints by reframing an offering as an entirely different product: Dutch budget airline Transavia sold flight tickets as branded packets ▶



Icaros pairs with a virtual reality headset, with users engaging their muscles to 'steer' the experience

- of crisps and chocolate bars in vending machines, and in the process equated the purchase decision with casual grocery store spends.

Stockpile produces gift cards that reframe thinking around the buying of shares. The US-based start-up's gift cards cost between US\$1 and US\$1,000 and can be redeemed for shares (or a fraction of a share) in NYSE-traded companies. What pricing conventions might you be challenging in 2016?

VIRTUAL ACTUALISATION

2016 is poised to be the year that virtual reality (VR) shifts from niche to mainstream, assisted in part by the official release of the long-anticipated Oculus Rift. But – as ever – new technologies have little value for consumers unless they serve their needs in useful ways. For the health and fitness industry, that means supercharged self-improvement and more efficient ways to track, meet and beat fitness goals.

The Quantified Self movement offered consumers a new, tech-powered route to self-improvement. But now, many fitness fans want to explore new dimensions of personal growth that can't be tracked by a wristband. Now, they seek health tech that's holistic and wholly immersive. Just one example: Icaros, which debuted in October 2015. The workout station pairs with a VR headset to allow users to experience 'flight' through a range of virtual reality environments. Muscles in the shoulders, back, abdominals and legs are activated as the user 'steers' the experience.

And as health continues to be as much about maintaining a healthy mind as a healthy body, there's room for virtual reality meditation experiences that expand and challenge cognitive processes. Guided Meditation VR is a customisable meditation



Challenging conventional pricing: Airline Transavia sold tickets as branded snack packets

experience that immerses users in a series of relaxing locations, from tropical beaches to beautiful sunsets; similarly Cerevrum, whose brain training games improve memory, attention and speed of perception.

TO SUM UP...

This is just a snapshot of some of the trends that will impact the consumer arena in 2016. The challenge for your business is to absorb these game-changing innovations, and then adapt and apply them to meaningful ideas and concepts that you can own and run with. We're not saying it will be easy – but we do promise it will be fun and, most importantly, profitable! ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vicki Loomes is a trend analyst for trendwatching.com, one of the world's leading trend firms. To help keep your finger on the pulse, trendwatching.com sends out its free, monthly *Trend Briefings* in nine languages to more than 160,000 subscribers. Sign up at www.trendwatching.com



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SPEEDFLEX

1Life: How to build a brand

Neil King, managing director of 1Life, explains the leisure operator's root and branch transformation since 2013 and how the business has been repositioned to ensure future growth in a fast-changing market

How would you describe the 1Life journey over the last two and a half years?

We've seen a complete 360 degree turnaround which has realigned the company with its clients and built strong foundations to achieve future success. For many years, Leisure Connection faced financial and managerial challenges. We resolved our financial issues with a £11m refinancing of the business in 2013. We then needed a new brand, management team and vision to drive the company forward, and so, 1Life was born. 1Life is an aspirational brand that puts people – staff, customers and clients – at the heart of the business and encourages everyone to pursue their passions through health & wellbeing, sport and physical activity, as well as learning & the arts. A diverse offering of activities is key for 1Life, as in addition to leisure centres, we manage three theatres, a community public hall, a country park and The National Centre for Craft & Design. After a difficult period when the company experienced contracts coming to an end, we've won six extensions since we became 1Life and are now landing new contracts as well.

What have been the biggest challenges in the business transformation and how have you overcome them?

The biggest challenges in overhauling the company were those of 'belief' and 'reputational change'. At the start of the process, we had a blank sheet of paper on which to re-define the organisation and our new management team knew exactly what features we needed to succeed. The old goals of maximising fitness memberships and children's swimming lessons had become basic



Neil King, a ukactive Council Member with 25 years' leisure experience, has led the turnaround

components of health & wellbeing, sport & physical activity, learning & the arts.

We then needed to communicate this new vision to colleagues, customers and clients – something that could only be achieved by consistent behaviour and messaging. To measure how our reputation was changing, 1Life partnered with Leisure-net Solutions to run regular NPS business audits looking at client satisfaction and belief in the 1Life brand. The result was a staggering NPS improvement of 61 points over an 18-month period.

Can you give us an example of how the new philosophy is working on the frontline?

The recent contract win in Milton Keynes is a good example of this. If we had taken the traditional approach of "boost fitness membership and swimming lessons" we wouldn't have had a chance – after all, Milton Keynes is one of the most competitive fitness markets in the



1Life is an aspirational brand that puts people – staff, customers and clients – at its heart



expectations and we knew that a new leisure management company had to embrace the 'now' and aim higher. We analysed the demands of a modern operator and put in place a management structure – with appropriate processes, procedures and partners – to exceed them. This meant clearly defining our vision, mission, beliefs and behaviours in a way that is consistent with launching a new brand into the marketplace and rebuilding the company around the core

country. However, by looking at the opportunity from the local authority's perspective, with its ambitions of becoming an International Sporting City, we were able to offer a compelling vision. We started by asking ourselves the question 'what do we have to do to get this whole community active?' and by thinking big, we were able to achieve a totally different outcome. As a result, 1Life is planning the creation of a UK Centre of Excellence for Group



Grantham Meres Leisure Centre received a £600,000 refurb and was rated 'excellent' by Quest



Exercise, the launch of an Advanced Training Centre and is diversifying the product range of an existing golf club to include a Milon health & wellbeing studio. But the key will be linking all this activity across the city, to the two community centres we'll also be managing and beyond to local sports clubs, community engagement programmes, sporting events and the local health & wellbeing agenda. We will employ a dedicated Sport & Physical Activity Manager whose job will be to connect the pieces of the jigsaw and deliver a collaborative approach to health & wellbeing and sport & physical activity in the city.

How can operators meet growing expectations from local authorities for the delivery of 'more for less'?

It's no longer enough to simply open the door and deliver a clean, safe environment. Services must now match the ever-increasing expectations of leisure management partners and this requires more collaboration.

The current market is characterised by fierce competition, a desire for zero subsidies, asset transfers and capital investment, while at the same time you are required to expand the scope of services. The old leisure management model simply could not handle this, so we need to do things differently and embrace innovation, collaboration and put consumers and their needs at the centre of the business.

Key to this is understanding consumer segmentation, as even in a local authority marketplace, one size does not fit all. Like any successful business, we have to know who our customers are (and critically who aren't), how frequently they visit and how much they pay. This can be achieved by a variety of means – such as direct communication, social media, voucher codes, plus offering online booking and payment. Using the intelligence to develop programmes which our consumers want will turn our consumers into our biggest advocates.

As such, we've recently invested in a new IT infrastructure, introduced access control, distributed more than 250,000 1Life cards, rolled out swimming lesson management system 'learn2', created a new website and social media platform and are working with digital delivery partners to improve the 1Life brand experience.

Local authorities also want operators to help lighten the load on health services. Which strategies have you found most effective for turning the tide of inactivity?

This year we launched four new strategies across the business including health walks and a revised GP referral scheme. These are all still in the early days of implementation, so evidence is currently anecdotal, however, we have recently won a public health tender – 'All active Brent' – which aims to get 250 disabled people active more regularly. So far,

the introduction of 20 different eight week sessions covering activities such as table cricket, football, bocce, Zumba and group exercise has resulted in 139 unique individuals adopting more active lifestyles and has been a real success.

Meanwhile, in rural Lincolnshire we've partnered North Kesteven District Council to develop two successful programmes: Vitality and Play Outreach



North Kesteven Sports Centre is a hub for many outreach initiatives

Development. The latter delivers year-round after-school and weekend sessions and has so far engaged 6,000 children across 65 parish locations – almost a quarter of the 0-19 year old population in North Kesteven. Conversely, Vitality plays a key role in keeping Lincolnshire's older population active, healthy and living more independent lives, which is essential in a county where the number of pensioners will increase by 50 per cent between 2012 and 2030.

I believe that one of the most important ways of increasing activity is to harness the opportunities around



Services must now match the ever-increasing expectations of leisure management partners



A 1LIFE PROMOTION



Judy Murray (centre) and Neil King (back left) joined local children to relaunch Batchwood Sports Centre

- ▶ boutiques and outdoor exercise – whose popularity is often seen as a threat by operators. For example, the sale of home exercise bikes direct to consumers in the mid 90s was seen as a threat to the industry, but all it did was encourage people to be more active whether they were using a fitness facility or not. Today, it is the rise of budget and boutique clubs which is doing the same and there's now some real



It's clear the delivery of sports and leisure needs to fit within a more rounded approach



New ways of working can only be delivered by improving the quality of people. The industry qualifications framework has been removed and this is a concern for us, as is the forthcoming National Living Wage and Apprenticeship Levy. Despite this, the opportunity is there to engage with apprenticeships, support CIMSPA and build a team of people who are properly trained to take the industry forward into the next 25 years. If we are to deliver on ukraine's Blueprint for an Active Britain, then the sector will need specialists in diabetes, falls prevention, activity professionals and all-round wellbeing experts. We, like many employers, will be moving away from REPs and putting our investment with CIMSPA, which has created a skills package to meet the demands of the sector.

business planning perspective, all our sites already have connections to the local health and wellbeing strategies, and the link-up between fitness, health and sport will only become greater as time goes by.

1Life particularly supports Royal Society of Public Health CEO Shirley Cramer's call for government to expand targeted social marketing campaigns, such as This Girl Can & Change for Life, and provide national frameworks with which the sector can align their own marketing budgets and resources to expand the reach of these campaigns.

Embracing government support, a different way of thinking, a commitment to the skills agenda and the acceptance of wider delivery values are among the characteristics which make the new 1Life brand and proposition a resurgent frontrunner in the local authority leisure marketplace. ●

Jordanne Whitley, Wimbledon Wheelchair Ladies Doubles Champion, at Batchwood Centre

product innovation in the market. All of this is very exciting and gives leisure providers such as 1Life the opportunity to do more, deliver a wider consumer offering and make ourselves appealing to new sections of the community.

What needs to be done to ensure leisure professionals are fit-for-purpose in this fast-changing landscape?

You mentioned ukraine's Blueprint, what role do you see 1Life playing in this?

We're working on a number of projects with NGBs at the moment, and we're anticipating the new Sports Strategy, but what comes across most clearly is that the delivery of sports and leisure needs to fit within a more rounded approach. Fitness, sport and health are – from the local authority view – no longer separate entities, but delivered as one. From a

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FRIEND OR FOE?

In the second part of their internet middlemen series, Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson of ClubIntel take an in-depth look at US market leader ClassPass

ClassPass has a dual brand promise. By allowing its members to access classes across its network of partner clubs and studios, the first part of its promise is a consumer one: one that's built around incredible convenience, the flexibility to work out at a host of great venues – and all at below market price.

Second is the promise promoted to club and studio owners (partners) that involve new consumer traffic, the potential for more members or regular clients, incremental revenue growth, increased brand presence and brand recognition.

Let's take a look at how well ClassPass delivers on these promises.

THE CONSUMER PROMISE

ClassPass does an excellent job of delivering on its consumer promise.

First, it offers convenience and flexibility: consumers can go online and reserve space at over 3,000 studios – typically at a time that's convenient for them, although recently some operators have begun to limit the number of classes they open up to ClassPass members.

Second, the price is incredible value. Access costs US\$79–US\$125 a month, and typically around US\$99. If you take IHRSA's 2015 *Health Club Consumer Report* data, which shows the average boutique member visits their studio 80 to 117 times annually (seven to 10 times a month), that equates to a price of US\$9.90–US\$14 per ClassPass visit.

That's significantly less than the average list prices charged by boutique studios: AFS's 2015 *Studio Operating and Financial Benchmarking Report* showed the average monthly price charged by studios

for unlimited access to group exercise was US\$111, and for small group training US\$159. The charges for a single group exercise class or small group training session were US\$24 and US\$34 respectively.

Consumers therefore pay considerably less – anywhere between US\$10 and US\$20 less per visit – using ClassPass than if they go directly to the studio.

In an article on Mindbodygreen.com last year, the author highlighted 10 things only ClassPassers understand. One of those was: "Paying the regular fee for a class which isn't on ClassPass seems insane."

We have to give ClassPass a score of nine out of 10 in delivering on its consumer promise; the only thing preventing it from a 10 is the fact that many clubs and studios have begun to limit class availability. If class availability erodes, it may become harder for ClassPass to deliver on its promise.



PHOTO CRUNCH

Even big names that sign up to ClassPass – such as Crunch and Barry's Bootcamp – don't get as much press as ClassPass itself

THE PARTNER PROMISE

The promise to studios has several elements, so let's look at each separately.

■ Increasing brand presence, brand recognition and brand value

ClassPass is very similar to other digital middlemen in the way it builds its brand on the back of its hosts. We know who Uber is, for example, but do we know the names of the drivers? We know who Airbnb is, but do we know the homeowners whose home we use? Do studios get the press ClassPass receives? No – not even the big names that have signed up, including Barry's Bootcamp, Flywheel, Crunch and Gold's Gym.

Operators are certainly exposed to a significantly larger audience of consumers by being on the ClassPass platform, but they are one of more than 3,000 options competing for a share of attention.

In addition, when you bring in consumers at a price point that's typically 50 per cent below the single session rate of your discounted 10-pack rate, it devalues the studio's brand – consumers begin equating the value of the studio's experience with the ClassPass fee. We have to give ClassPass a score of four out of 10 in fulfilling this partner promise, though for some start-up clubs and

studios the fact they gain wide exposure may offer greater value in the short-term than the possible devaluation of their brands over the long-term.

■ Increased consumer traffic

According to the aforementioned AFS study, the average number of monthly visits generated by studios using ClassPass was 65 (approximately two a day), or 3 per cent of the studio's overall visits. The highest volume of monthly visits generated by ClassPass was 300 (approximately 10 per day). In this instance the traffic represented less than 3 per cent of total client visits.

But these numbers do vary. We recently obtained ClassPass usage data from a national boutique operator which indicated that, across its brand, it had approximately 130 ClassPass visits per

studio per month. Data from one yoga studio showed that, for the classes it opened to ClassPass, 75 per cent of participants were from ClassPass rather than its regular client base. Finally, one operator of traditional health clubs received approximately 120 additional visits per club per month from ClassPass.

It should be noted that not all these guest visits are unique, as a ClassPass member can use a studio up to three times in one month.

While this data may not be reflective of the entire boutique or club industry, it does offer a realistic glimpse. On an absolute basis, it appears ClassPass generates a reasonable level of additional traffic, although when looked at as a relative percentage of the total visits a studio experiences, the average traffic increase is small. Nevertheless, as the above data shows, there are clubs and

**An average of 6%
of ClassPass visitors go on to
acquire a membership
or class pack at the studio**

You garner new revenues but the cost of acquiring those revenues is extremely high

► studios that receive a greater number of ClassPass visits. For them, the traffic numbers may be more significant.

We would give ClassPass a score of six out of 10 in fulfilling this partner promise.

■ Conversion of guests to members

In the AFS study, the average conversion for studios using ClassPass was 6 per cent (the percentage of unique ClassPass visitors who go on to acquire a membership or class pack at the studio) – conversion rates were typically below 10 per cent and in some instances as low as 2 per cent.

These conversion rates are eerily similar to those seen in other digital business models that offer a free or low-price value proposition and then attempt to upgrade the user to a premium experience. For example, in the free-to-play video game market, conversion rates range from as low as 0.5 per cent to as high as 30 per cent, with an average range of 2–5 per cent. Meanwhile platforms such as Dropbox and Skype see conversion rates to premium services in the neighbourhood of 4–6 per cent.

If high conversion rates aren't being achieved, the only other way for internet middlemen to drive significant absolute conversion for a seller is to generate extremely high visit counts – in video gaming, the audience can be in the millions,

sometimes even tens of millions. As noted above, however, in fitness the absolute number of visits remains fairly small.

Some might hope the sense of community created by boutique studios especially might influence conversion rates. However, in the Mindbodygreen article mentioned earlier, the author noted that: "You bond with other ClassPassers." If ClassPassers already have this sense of community, then conversion becomes a nightmare.

But potentially the biggest challenge to conversion has to do with price. A monthly subscription to ClassPass is lower than the average studio's subscription pricing, and in some instances significantly lower. When it comes to more traditional health clubs, the ClassPass pricing may actually come at a higher price point.

We give ClassPass a score of two out of 10 in fulfilling this partner promise.

■ Generating incremental revenue and profit for studios

The revenue potential of any partnership with internet middlemen is driven by the volume of additional guest traffic driven by the partnership (increasing class occupancy), the rate received by the seller for delivering the service, and the seller's ability to convert the guests to regular clients. The key to driving incremental

revenue is to leverage at least one and preferably all of these variables.

In the case of ClassPass, the seller typically receives 50 per cent of its base price for the lowest priced class pack – in essence 40 per cent of its single session base price. For example, one yoga studio we talked to that offers a 20-pack price point of US\$320 receives US\$8 from ClassPass for each visitor. One club operator we talked with indicated that they get US\$3 for a gym visit and US\$10 for a class visit. So from a price point perspective, the seller is sacrificing a considerable amount of revenue.

In respect to driving incremental guest traffic, the data clearly shows that on average most boutiques gain at least 65 additional guest visits a month (22 unique visitors) from ClassPass; some gain closer to 300 additional visits (100 unique visitors) a month. Viewed from this perspective, the seller gains a revenue advantage.

Lastly, with an average conversion rate of 6 per cent (AFS study), the seller obtains some benefit, but minimal. Having said all this, let's take a look at some revenue numbers based on AFS data.

The average studio generates 65 additional visits each month at an average of let's say US\$12 per visit (50 per cent of the average price charged for a single class by a boutique in the AFS study). Using these numbers, the average studio will generate US\$780 in additional monthly revenues (we're assuming that without ClassPass they would not have these additional visits). If we then take the average of four conversions at an average price of US\$111 per month (average monthly fee charged for group classes by studios in AFS study) that comes out to



The challenge is getting ClassPass users to convert to membership

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

DEAD QUIET

AN EMPTY CYCLE STUDIO IS A VERY BAD PLACE

2:28:29 PM

“TRULY TERRIFYING”

Many multi-purpose clubs' cycle studios are sitting empty for more than 80% of their opening hours.

“I HAVEN'T SLEPT PROPERLY SINCE”

Boutique cycle studios are growing fast, with 42% of US club members also using boutiques – it was half this number in 2014!

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*Based upon a club with 3,000 members increasing from 18 to 40 live classes a week and bringing class utilization up to 70%.



Used effectively,
revenue and profit
can be generated
from ClassPass

If members get an **experience** with **ClassPass** that's similar to what your studio or club offers – **at half the price** – they will be inspired to switch

► another US\$444 a month. All told, that's US\$1,224 a month in incremental revenue. Not a great number; but for a small studio it could be the difference between going out of business and remaining in business.

Now let's look at the cost to generate the revenues from the above scenario. By offering a 50 per cent discount to attract the additional guest traffic, the club/studio is sacrificing US\$12 in revenue per guest visit. Therefore, the sacrificial cost of generating those 65 additional visits each month is US\$780, equal to the revenue generated by those visits. Since the average club would generate US\$1,244 in additional revenue at a cost of US\$780, the average monthly profit would be US\$464 or US\$7 per guest visit (63 per cent cost margin, compared to average studio marketing costs of 4 per cent). As the data shows, while you garner new revenues, the cost of acquiring those revenues is extremely high.

Chances are most operators don't assess their costs in this manner; though they should. Instead, most will see their margin as the total revenue from a class divided by the cost for the class (instructor payroll).

So let's evaluate the profit effectiveness of ClassPass from this perspective. Let's

say, before ClassPass, you average 12 students per class at a rate of US\$24. That represents US\$288 in revenue before instructor costs. Let's say your instructor receives US\$60 for teaching the class. The cost margin is 21 per cent, with a profit of US\$228. ClassPass now provides an additional two students per class (based on data from a national boutique operator) at US\$12 per class – that's another US\$24, bringing class revenue to US\$312 with a profit of US\$252 and a cost margin of 19 per cent. If you have 15 classes a week open to ClassPass guests, you'd increase incremental class revenue by US\$360 a week and with a lower cost margin. Using this approach, there's revenue and profit to be gained by using ClassPass.

What we haven't brought forward is the possible cost associated with a devaluation of your brand, and the cost of existing clients switching to ClassPass as a result of the favourable pricing and flexibility it offers. Unfortunately at this time we don't have data to model this cost. What we do know is that, if members are able to get an experience with ClassPass that's similar to what your studio or club offers (good instruction,

energy, camaraderie) – and at half the price – they will be inspired to switch.

As a result of the above discussion, we would give ClassPass a score of four out of 10 in fulfilling this partner promise.

Nevertheless, if a studio operator is vigilant about what classes they open up to ClassPass guests (limiting them to only low occupancy classes) and negotiates hard for higher than average fees (above the standard rate of 50 per cent), then the revenue and profit benefit of ClassPass is reasonable and makes sense – see part one of this series (*HCM* Nov/Dec 15, p44) for our tips on this.

If these steps aren't taken, however, it's probably a losing proposition in which you gain a small amount of short-term incremental revenue while devaluing your brand and having your client base shrink.

Based on this deep dive into the ClassPass value proposition, we can definitively say that it's a fabulous deal for the majority of fitness consumers, but for studios, care must be taken to ensure it's a symbiotic, not a parasitic, relationship. ●

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A complimentary
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SPEEDFLEX: HIIT WITHOUT THE HURT

High intensity interval training proves to be the fitness trend which doesn't tire. Founded in 2011, **Speedflex** continues to provide a unique HIIT group exercise concept, which offers an effective alternative to conventional exercise with excellent results



Based around innovative Speedflex machines which automatically respond to, and create resistance based on the individual's force, Speedflex is suitable for any age or fitness level and enables users of all abilities to exercise together and at their own pace.

Offering users a fun and exhilarating group, full body workout, Speedflex sessions are low impact and designed to improve fitness levels and enhance strength, power and speed; all with the added benefit of little to no post workout muscle soreness. All sessions are led by qualified Speedflex trainers and heart rate monitored, motivating users to work to their maximum, for optimum calorie burn and enhanced results.

Before undertaking Speedflex training, users complete a comprehensive induction process and health screening led by Speedflex

Physiologists. This assessment includes an in-depth body composition analysis to give all users a baseline for development and identify areas for improvement.

With Speedflex centres nationwide from London to Aberdeenshire and overseas from Dallas to Dubai, Speedflex are looking to expand further and partner with existing businesses, offering investment to enhance their facility and incorporate Speedflex training into their offering.

"Speedflex will offer your customers a distinctive point of difference" comments Graham Wylie, Speedflex Europe's chairman. "We believe we have created one of the best small training concepts in the world, and our growing popularity and membership base means that we're looking to expand further and offer more people the chance to meet their health and fitness goals with Speedflex."

Speedflex training offers a wide range of benefits including accelerated fat loss, improved muscle tone, strength and bone density and enhanced power and speed. When incorporated into a healthy lifestyle, regular sessions can also help to improve heart health, decrease blood pressure and achieve long term weight loss.

To date, Speedflex has acquired a wide range of high profile fans including former England Captain Alan Shearer and Good Morning Britain presenter Ben Shephard, who have both become ambassadors for the brand and regularly fit Speedflex into their busy schedules.

So, whether you're looking to transform unused areas of your facility, or offer members a unique point of difference, Speedflex can help your club stand out from the crowd, retain members and drive additional revenue.



The new Speedflex studio at Newlife Fitness in Laurencekirk runs 30 and 45-minute sessions

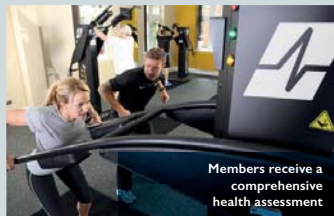
SPEEDFLEX BOOST FOR CENTRE

Following the successful openings of standalone Speedflex centres throughout the UK, Speedflex has recently entered the UK Health Club market with the opening of its first Speedflex studio hosted within an existing gym environment.

As part of this deal, Newlife Fitness in Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire has opened a fully-functioning, 2,400sq ft Speedflex studio in its already operational leisure facility.

Opened to the public in May 2015, the new studio delivers 30 and 45 minute Speedflex sessions and offers comprehensive health assessments in order to provide members a tailored approach to health, fitness and wellbeing.

Owner of Newlife Fitness and Centre Manager of Speedflex Aberdeenshire, Gary Fairweather, says "Incorporating Speedflex into our offering has changed the face of my business and helped to drive lots of new enquiries and membership sales, giving me the edge against competitors in the area. We have received overwhelming feedback from both new and old customers. Speedflex training has helped them achieve some amazing results and they are thrilled with the flexibility Speedflex training offers. In fact, we have had people sign up from miles away to train with us, helping to spread the word and extend our customer base."



Members receive a comprehensive health assessment



People have signed up from miles away to attend the new sessions

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SPEEDFLEX

OLIVER PATRICK

The former head of physiology and nutrition for Nuffield, now co-founder of health management business Viavi, believes there's a huge opportunity for the fitness sector to bridge the gap between illness and wellness. **Kath Hudson** reports

What's your background?

Following my degree in exercise physiology, I started my career at a boutique clinical practice in the City of London, working alongside doctors in the delivery of executive health assessments.

Our business grew and was acquired by what became Nuffield Health Wellbeing, where I became the head of physiology and nutrition, responsible for the professional direction and support of several thousand practitioners in the UK.

Six years ago, the medical director – Dr Sabine Donnai – moved on from Nuffield Health and I joined her in the creation and launch of a new high-end international health management business, which we called Viavi. Among other things, we deliver arguably the most advanced health evaluation and personalised health management programme globally, applying the latest science, technologies and approaches to help individuals optimise their health.

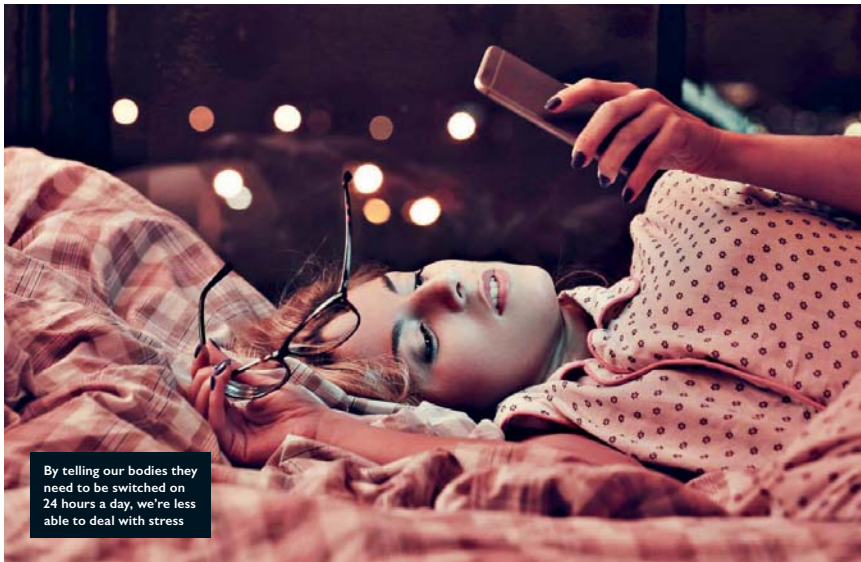
Our model uses a number of elements that could relate back to the fitness industry. On the basis of our consulting with the sector, we've therefore created Viavi Academy – a specialist training facility to enable fitness industry practitioners to significantly upskill while also improving their earning capacity.

So many people are now interested in proactively managing their health, but are often not doing so as effectively as they could. There's an opportunity for fitness professionals to fill the void that



Patrick is co-creator of Viavi, a personalised wellness brand

We have a problem with mis-education. There's an opportunity to unpick all the mixed commercial messages around wellness



By telling our bodies they need to be switched on 24 hours a day, we're less able to deal with stress

Checking emails in our downtime stops our bodies from entering physiological rest. The big thing we're seeing with young people is a rise in sleeping disorders

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exists, applying the latest knowledge and techniques and providing the best possible personalised lifestyle advice to both existing and new clients.

One of the modules you offer is on stress. How significant a problem is this?

Most people I see have ailments like back pain, bad sleeping, low energy levels or loss of libido. These functional issues don't necessarily count as disease, but everyone wants to improve their functionality and many functional symptoms are stress-related.

People still think of stress as being in the psychological bracket, but many physical symptoms – such as cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer – have their root cause in stress. We try and help people improve their physical resilience, so the same outside world affects them less.

Accessing stress coaching can be difficult, because it's still perceived as a very negative word. Sometimes people who are dealing with stress feel they're not strong, or that it's a reflection on their professional capabilities.

What we see more often than not is a diminished ability to switch off from stress, rather than excessively stressful events. People are giving their bodies the message that they need to be switched on 24 hours a day. The new phenomenon

of checking emails and engaging with social media in our downtime stops our bodies from entering physiological rest.

The big thing we're seeing with young people is a rise in sleep disorders: difficulty getting to sleep, light sleep, heavy dreaming or waking up at 4.00am and being unable to get back to sleep.

Could health club operators get involved in all this?

Yes. There's currently a gap between who deals with disease and who deals with wellbeing. If I said to you now: "I don't feel on top of my lifestyle, I don't really know what I'm eating, I don't know what exercise I should be doing and I feel stressed" – where do I go? To a GP, a PT, a nutritionist, a psychologist?

Where we had a problem 20 years ago with lack of education, we now have a problem with mis-education. People don't know what to believe any more; there are opportunities for skilled wellness professional to unpick all the mixed commercial messages around wellness.

Is the fitness industry ready to take on the role of wellbeing professional?

Not at the moment. It has the facilities, the brands and the capability – at the top tier I think there's potential for staff to expand their role into being holistic wellbeing professionals.

However, at the moment it's too focused on its products rather than services, and is still preoccupied with swapping its client base between existing facilities and price points.

If we keep thinking of fitness in its current mode and go to trade fairs to see another way of throwing a heavy load, or another piece of equipment that contorts the body in an ever more confusing way, then it makes fitness increasingly inaccessible to the 55-year-old, obese, non physically literate person.

However, within fitness professionals' existing skill set there are great tools that could help them become wellbeing professionals – people who could have a conversation with a client worried

- about diabetes, for example. A GP can tell someone whether or not they have diabetes, but will struggle to coach that person's lifestyle away from early markers of the disease in the way the health and fitness sector potentially could.

Why can't our GPs offer lifestyle advice?

GPs do a brilliant job, but they can't do every job. The modules they do on health and fitness are generic and minimal, so there's a knowledge gap. Also, five or six minutes for a diagnostic consultation doesn't allow for high quality behaviour change advice too. For behaviour change,

Those who don't like working out want absolute efficiency. They're not coming to the gym for fun or a hobby and we should stop trying to convince them they are

haven't been into health clubs before. These people need to be given a reason to believe in the quality of the services.

In many ways, the fitness industry doesn't understand how it sits alongside the medical profession. I sit in consultations with all types of medical

with people who don't go to gyms, the more you realise that your language must be broader, softer and you need to listen.

Why do you think so many people still don't engage with the fitness industry?

Although things are starting to change, I do think that exercise is too often still seen as merely cosmetic and/or a young and sporty person's activity.

Those who don't like working out want to enter this strange world with absolute efficiency: they want to do the exact thing they need to do to get the desired result, and they need to be shown that it's working. They're not coming to the gym for fun or a hobby and we should stop trying to convince them that they are. Time and again I see how powerful it is to use evidence to reward behaviour, but health clubs want people to stay members for six or seven years without giving them any feedback.

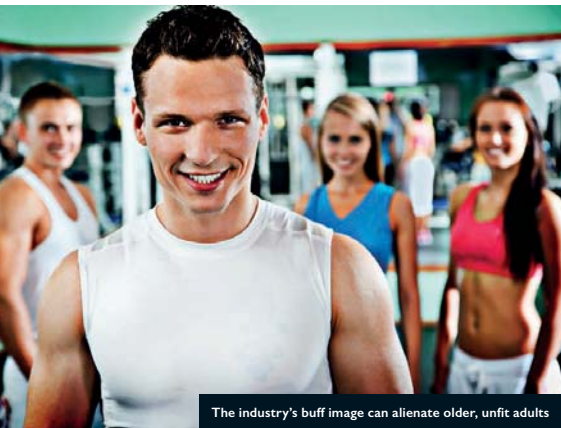
When I consult with health clubs, I ask them what percentage of their members got fitter this year. They can't answer. What percentage sleep better? They can't answer. Which of your members have improved their body composition? They can't answer.

At the moment, there's only pressure to provide entertaining services, not effective services. Operators aren't showing members the progress they've made towards the goal which was most likely the reason they joined. That should be the future of wellbeing, but it can only be led by upskilled fitness professionals.

What evidence should our sector be presenting to the NHS to bid for funding?

It has to be the right metric. I think it's ludicrous that health clubs are still talking about weight rather than measuring body fat composition.

The industry needs to start understanding the metrics associated



The industry's buff image can alienate older, unfit adults

people need time and an empathetic communicator – something fitness professionals could be great at.

People are tired of being given a list of things they should be doing and feeling a sense of guilt for falling short. They need to be led in a relationship fashion, rather than simply being told what to do.

What must the fitness industry do to prepare to take on a wellbeing role?

There needs to be an element of culture change to appeal to those people who

professionals and I sit in with fitness professionals and it's very different.

Fitness instructors don't look as professional. I know we have to accept it's a dynamic and fun industry, but is a 65-year-old obese person going to feel comfortable with someone who looks incredibly fit, buff, young and trendy raising issues about their health?

A lot of fitness professionals enjoy fitness and healthy eating and are good at sport, but they might not have spent enough time with people who hate all of those things. The more time you spend



Do your clients know the alcohol they drink is the reason for their anxiety and £40-a-week coffee habit?

with the issues people are coming in to solve – the very reasons people are joining the clubs. If someone's joining for better fitness, better body shape, better sleep, better energy then we need to measure the metrics that reflect these areas and prove what members are doing is working.

The sector wants to be accessible in terms of pricing, but still maintain its bottom line. How does it balance those two needs?

There's no shame in the industry wanting to be commercial. I prefer transparency in a commercial operation and would rather charge a higher fee upfront for my knowledge than charge a smaller fee and then have to make more money on selling products. Hidden ways of making money come with a potential risk of losing trust.

If the fitness professional is robustly qualified and operates in a commercial framework the consumer understands, people should be able to perceive the value of that service and be happy to pay. But the fees should be visible and upfront.

Should the NHS be paying for health club memberships as part of a preventative healthcare approach?

If private sector health club operators can show the way, it would be easy to justify NHS funding down the line.

They need to prove their ability to reduce obesity, cardiovascular risk and also improve productivity – that would be the basis of a financial return on investment case to take to the NHS.

However, you can put people on a programme but it doesn't mean they will come. If you give people the choice of medication or lifestyle change, most people will choose medication because it works immediately and is low effort.

It's so powerful to use evidence to reward behaviour, but gyms want people to stay members for six or seven years without giving them any feedback

Some people have no idea that an inflammatory condition can be affected by the way they eat, or that exercise can help you sleep better. To me it would be a wonderful situation if, at the point of diagnosis, you could have a referral to a wellbeing professional.

In your opinion, what's the opportunity that currently exists in the gap between illness and wellness?

We have two industries working at polar ends of the scale. One end is premature

death and the other is optimum fitness, but the gap in the middle is not well served and is a far bigger market than those at the two ends.

The majority of people are in the middle area. They would like to have better functionality, more energy, better stress control, better immunity, fewer niggles and some degree of change in their physical appearance, but many of them don't really know where to start.

Sadly, many people aren't interested in long-term disease. The fear of getting liver damage in 30 years' time is often less of a reason to stop drinking alcohol than conveying to them that the reason they're getting anxious and spending £40 a week on coffee is because of the impact of the alcohol they're drinking.

Coaching these kinds of clients around those individual reasons for change is not an impossible skill and is something that today's health and fitness professionals could – and in my opinion really should – be trained to do. ●

READY FOR FIBO 2016?



Brand new halls and a hands-on exploration of the future of the sector: Ralph Scholz, FIBO event director, explains why FIBO 2016 is a must-attend event

For anyone who doesn't know FIBO, how would you describe it?

FIBO is the world's leading event for the fitness industry, embedded in a strong German and European market.

Each April, suppliers and operators from around the world attend the trade fair in Cologne, Germany, to learn about the sector's innovations in a space equivalent to approximately 22 football fields. Last year we welcomed around 136,000 visitors – a quarter of them from abroad, with delegates from around 100 countries.

FIBO is actually three shows in one: FIBO Expert, FIBO Passion and FIBO Power. FIBO Expert is the international business platform for managers, distributors, suppliers, investors and decision-makers in the fitness, wellness and healthcare sectors, with exhibitors including major international players such as Amer Sports/Precor, gym 80, Johnson Health Tech, Life Fitness, MoveToLive and Technogym.

FIBO Passion offers a very special fitness experience for fitness fans, with lots of

opportunities to get actively involved and to shop. FIBO Power is Europe's largest meeting of the bodybuilding, weight training and martial arts community.

What do you believe is so special about FIBO?

It generates momentum for the fitness industry, and it's more international than any other event. The fact that major industry players encourage their global distributor networks to attend FIBO highlights the international significance of the event.

Our aspiration is to be a driver in the market, which means leading the way on up-and-coming issues in a bid to strengthen the industry as a whole. We want to make fitness a fixture in all spheres of society. To that end, we'll be creating the first fitness immersion world at FIBO 2016, with a new Active Hall as part of FIBO Passion. Visitors will get a chance to test different fitness concepts for themselves, rather than just watching them – a way for us to reach new target groups at a consumer level.

An equally important topic for us is the role of fitness in healthcare, and the perception of our sector among policy-makers. The European Health & Fitness Forum (EHFF) – held the day before the trade fair, away from the hustle and bustle of the show – addresses this, bringing together leading figures from the fitness industry, associations, science, politics and healthcare.

When did FIBO first take place, and how has it grown since then?

FIBO was founded in 1985 by Volker Ebner and Kurt Thelen – we celebrated our 30th anniversary last year.

Sixty-nine exhibitors and 10,000 visitors participated in the inaugural event. Lots has changed since then – but not everything. The trade fair still uses the same name today. FIBO, an acronym formed from the words Fitness and Bodybuilding. However, today's tagline – International Trade Fair for Fitness, Wellness and Health – has been selected to align the event with the requirements of the modern era.

In 1985, fitness training was still considered a rather exotic sport. Fitness today is firmly established in society, and issues such as prevention and health rank high in the public psyche. FIBO visitors these days represent a vast range of facilities: fitness studios; health, physiotherapy and rehabilitation centres; spa and wellness facilities; sports clubs; and many more. FIBO has gained lots of new fans over the years.

What's new at the show this year?

This year we'll open two new halls with the aim of providing more space for forward-looking themes. Both FIBO Expert and FIBO Passion 2016 will focus more closely on digitisation of fitness studios. Electrostimulation training (EMS) will feature prominently in Hall 5.2 – the new

As in 2015, around 136,000 visitors are expected at FIBO 2016





FIBO 2016 will feature two new halls, including a special area for mobile devices and wearables

FIBO Expert hall – which will also house a dedicated sports nutrition area. Meanwhile mobile devices and wearables will be located in Hall 4.2 – the FIBO Passion hall.

As I described earlier, FIBO Passion will also get a new Active Hall where manufacturers are tasked with creating a variety of theme worlds. Fitness instructors will supervise the area and provide guidance to visitors who want to try things out for themselves.

Our biggest challenge for FIBO 2016 is definitely how to appropriately depict the digitisation theme. We have to deal with the consequences of so many fitness industry spheres going digital, as well as questioning what it means. What products and ideas exist today, and what challenges are gym operators running into? Exhibitors at FIBO approach this issue from vastly differing perspectives. Our goal is to tie it all together.

How do you balance the distinct needs of your trade and consumer visitors?

Two show days are exclusive trade visitor days – Thursday and Friday. This arrangement allows us to create a pleasant trade fair experience for industry pros and a peaceful ambience for talks. Doing so is more important than ever because of the massive growth in visitor numbers.

That's why the private visitor programme – FIBO Power stage shows, for example – is cut back on the trade visitor days and why the FIBO Passion Active Hall doesn't even open until the weekend. We created FIBO Expert and FIBO Passion specifically to offer appropriate selections for each target audience. Then, at the weekend,

trade and private visitors alike will have an opportunity to experience all halls, which benefits both groups.

Can you give us some predicted stats for FIBO 2016?

Quantity isn't our primary driver – first and foremost, we care about qualitative growth. This applies equally to the international decision-makers visiting FIBO Expert and to the diverse range of fitness-loving private visitors who bring their purchase power to FIBO Passion. We focus primarily on developing the content of the show and on covering emerging topics.

But I don't want to withhold the numbers: based on our latest forecasts, we expect more than 850 exhibitors in 2016, along with approximately 136,000 visitors again. Occupying 10 halls for the first time, we'll be expanding our exhibition space to 160,000sq m.



More than 850 exhibitors will be showcased at this year's event

Tell us more about the EHFF

In co-operation with EuropeActive, we've put together a one-day summit for the world's top manufacturers and leading European industry experts.

The headline topic this year will be 'Growing the fitness sector through innovation': innovation across all segments is needed to attract more members who'll work out more frequently and more actively. This doesn't just call for new technologies: marketing, sales, finance and human resources must also reinvent themselves.

FIBO China launched last year. Do you have any other exciting plans in the pipeline?

We have additional innovations lined up for 2017, but all in due time. This year we're continuing with our FIBO Innovation Tour, and we're launching a new consumer-focused event series for the German market – FIBO Fitness Festivals – which will take place this summer in four major cities: Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich. Our goal for the festival series is to get even more people excited about fitness, which should contribute to the growth of the industry.

WANT TO VISIT FIBO?

Location: Cologne Messe, Germany
Dates: 6 April (EHFF), 7–10 April (FIBO)
For more info: www.fibo-global.com



EXPERT
 shape the
 business.

DNA

MAKING IT PERSONAL

More commonly associated with crime scenes and paternity tests, DNA testing is going mainstream – and it's time for health clubs to get on board. **Kath Hudson** reports

Each time you have a new member, rather than embarking on a training programme you think will progress them towards their goals, wouldn't it be great to immediately give them a training programme and diet plan that's tailored to their genetic make-up – a way of helping them get better, and quicker, results?

Wouldn't it also be great to know the member is more engaged and motivated to change their behaviour, because they know their programme is perfectly tailored to them and not the result of informed guesswork?

With DNA tests tailored to health and fitness now costing as little as £99, this knowledge is now available to everyone.

BETTER, FASTER RESULTS

DNA testing might conjure up images of laboratories and blood samples, but it's very simple to do: a quick mouth swab can simply be popped in the post.

Fitness profiles commonly tested for are power, endurance, risk of injury and recovery time. Meanwhile, from a nutrition

point of view, DNA profiling can reveal how people react to carbs or saturated fats, and which type of diet suits them best. It can also uncover any intolerances, as well as vitamin deficiencies, that might be causing issues – a suppressed immune system or fatigue, for example.

So how effective are DNA-based programmes? Anecdotal evidence says that, if people follow their training programmes, results are both better and quicker. A two-year study of 191 obese people – conducted by the University of Trieste in Italy – also showed encouraging results. Those on DNA-based diets lost 33 per cent more weight than those who were simply counting calories. They also gained more muscle mass and their BMI went down by an average of 1.8 points, compared with 1.3 for the other group.

But is there a down side to all this science? Do consumers want it? Do the resulting programmes guarantee success? What are the barriers to introducing the tests, and what infrastructure needs to be put in place to make them work well? Will you get left behind if you don't offer this service?



CHRIS COLLINS
Product developer,
My Inner Go

At the moment, gym instructors are only taking individuals' stated goals and environment into account when designing training and nutrition plans. DNA testing allows for genuine personalisation based on genetics.

We test for 187 genetic variants, within 30–40 genes, to inform decisions about which sports and nutrition people are most suited to, as well as identifying any vitamin deficiencies.

It's not about being told you can't do a sport, but rather how to make the best of your attributes: whether you're more suited to power or endurance activities. For example, if we test a footballer and find out they're not suited to endurance activity, they know they need to focus more on the skill and power movements.

It's a way of knowing yourself better and then using that information.

DNA testing allows clubs to take training to a more scientific level. It could be offered as part of the membership or could be another revenue stream; it also offers an opportunity to upsell people into PT. In addition, by helping members get better results, it also aids retention.

In the next five years, operators will be forced to embrace this technology – so better to buy into it now and make a name for themselves.



David Lloyd Leisure first introduced DNA testing in September 2015

In the next five years, operators will be forced to embrace DNA technology. Better to buy into it now and make a name for themselves – *Chris Collins, My Inner Go*



KATE BROOKER
National
operations
manager, **Lifestyle
Fitness Personal
Training, UK**

We introduced DNA testing into our nationwide PT business last year, through Genefit DNA. We started with a number of our own PTs taking the tests and implementing the recommended protocols. They saw a big difference in their results, which made it easier for them to promote the benefits to clients.

It takes out the trial and error approach, allowing us to give clients a bespoke plan and advise on their individual needs. For example, I'd always done endurance sports, but my tests showed I was more suited to power sports. Reducing the amount of endurance work I did and adding in some

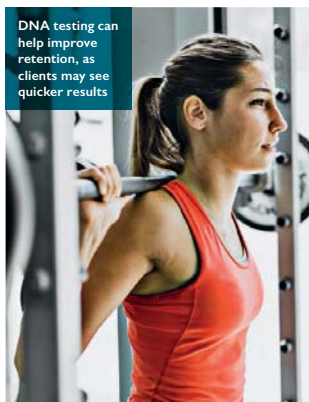
power exercises like dead lifting gave me better results. Meanwhile one of our PTs – a competitive bodybuilder – found he could achieve greater results if he built in more recovery time during his training.

We're now increasing awareness and promotion of DNA testing. We're having to do some re-education, as some people assume it's really only for elite athletes, but the interest we're getting is phenomenal.

Retention has improved because clients are seeing results quicker – they're staying positive and keeping on track. If a person sticks to their training programme, they can see results within one month.

The test costs £99 and the results come back within four weeks. Genefit DNA then offers a consultation, giving a full breakdown of what the results mean, and we then develop a tailor-made training and nutrition plan. It's a great addition to the PT tool kit and is also an additional revenue stream.

DNA testing can help improve retention, as clients may see quicker results





AVI LASAROW
CEO,
DNAFit

DNA tests give people extra information so they can make better informed lifestyle choices. For example, if a test indicates that someone has a high genetic risk of injury, they know they may need to take more time to warm up.

Also, the 'one size fits all' approach to diets has long been a problem, leaving consumers at the mercy of frequently changing, often bad advice. DNA testing could prove to be an important factor in tackling the UK's obesity problem.

We've been involved with an obesity intervention project in the east of England. In the Enable East pilot project,



DNA testing could be the next real market disruptor in the fitness sector

56 people took DNA tests and were given tailored exercise plans. They were also assigned one of five diet plans, taking into account any dietary intolerances the tests uncovered. If the programme is successful, it will pave the way to roll out this technology across the health service.

People are getting used to the idea of big data, and soon it will be a no-brainer

for all health clubs to be offering DNA testing. It's a really exciting opportunity to disrupt the marketplace and make a difference. The tests can give people the information they need to solve issues that have been bothering them for years, and can be useful for behaviour change as people know the advice is truly personalised to their needs.



RAÚL TORNEL
Transformation
director,
Grupo Marti,
Mexico

As a premium operator, we're always looking for products to offer a high-end service and for ways to help our members get the best results.

When we started offering DNA tests across our 40 Sport City Fitness Clubs around two years ago, they were part of a premium membership package: they were included in the membership if people committed to the club for a year. Now we're also selling them as an add-on.

We test for three things: what type of exercise/training you're best suited to; how you react to certain foods; and your body's risk of injury and ability to

Those on DNA-based programmes see a 10–15 per cent greater improvement than those on standard programmes – Raúl Tornel

recuperate. On average, members on DNA-based programmes see a 10–15 per cent greater improvement in strength, CV capacity and weight loss than those on standard programmes. Results also happen quicker. In addition, users have a clearer objective and a greater sense of urgency.

The challenge has been to train all of our staff so they're able to deliver the techniques, as well as training the sales

staff to sell the service. Trainers need to be able to deliver the tests and the programmes, and follow up.

It's not a magic pill: there still has to be commitment from the members and our team have to encourage them to follow through, as well as follow up on their training. But I believe that, as testing techniques even get more advanced and more information becomes available, we'll be able to get even better results.



HAZEL GEARY
Business
development
director, David
Lloyd Leisure, UK

DNA testing gives us the opportunity to offer our members a more holistic approach to their health. It was introduced to our clubs in September 2015 – part of a multi-faceted project to create more personalised programmes, help members achieve their goals, save them time and avoid fads.

We're now offering sophisticated body composition tests, weight loss sessions and online meal planners, so DNA testing is the final piece of the puzzle.

When they get the results, members have a one-hour consultation with a PT from which they take away an action plan, signposting them to our other products and services to support the change they desire. The test itself costs £159, but all of the support for the action plan is offered as part of their membership. Trainers check in with members every six weeks from a programme review.

It took 12 months to implement our new approach – to make sure we had the right mix of products and the right partners, ensure our staff understood the overall product mix and had bought into it, train the staff to deliver it, and embed the new approach into our teams.

I believe the health and fitness industry is moving further towards personalisation. Lots of health clubs are doing this on digital platforms only, but our model allows us to offer more face-to-face interaction to support members throughout their journey. ●

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spring in the step

Following the lead of the US and Australia, trampolining parks are springing up all over the UK and Europe. So what's all the fuss about? **Kath Hudson** reports

I'm sure there's a physiological link between bouncing and smiling," says Dave Stalker, former CEO of ukactive and now founder of Oxygen Freejumping, London's first trampolining park, which opened in July 2015.

He's not the only one to cross over from health and fitness to trampolining. Gary Knill, director of Bounce – the UK's first trampolining park, which opened in Milton Keynes in May 2014 – previously had a Fitness First franchise in the Middle East. "I've gone from selling long-term memberships in the fitness industry to one-hour slots where there's no sense of selling," he says. "Even I have been shocked by the popularity."

Both Knill and Stalker agree that, after spending lengthy careers trying to motivate people to get active and change their lives, suddenly – by

switching to selling fun rather than fitness – they can see it happening.

"I've never seen anything like it in my 26 years in the fitness industry," adds Stalker. "People are doing fitness and loving it. We're not pushing the exercise angle – we're just selling it as fun."

All the bouncing around is a good workout: an hour of energetic jumping is said to burn a whopping 1,000 calories.

"Rebound exercise is the best form of exercise known to man – and that's according to NASA, which uses it as a rehab tool for astronauts, helping them improve bone density after being weightless in space," says Lisa Evans, marketing director of Go Air, which launched in Cardiff in November 2015.

She continues: "It has an amazing array

of health benefits including stress relief, muscle toning, draining the lymphatic system and improved co-ordination – but most of all, it's great fun!"

NEW FITNESS CONCEPTS

Alongside the wide range of facilities already offered at the new trampolining mega-parks (see 'More than just bouncing', below), a number of operators have also launched their own in-house fitness concepts to broaden their appeal.

Bounce, for example, has created Reboot. A combination of rebounder-style exercise (which uses one-person mini-trampolines) and bootcamp, these classes are aimed at kids aged eight upwards, as well as adults of all abilities. They have been very popular, with 223 people signing up for the latest 10-week course at a cost of £79–129 per course.

More than just bouncing...

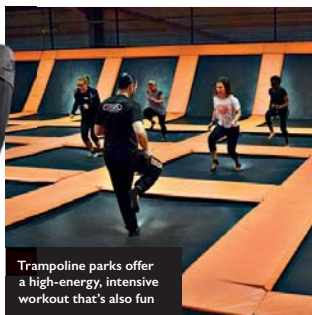
The new breed of trampoline parks are warehouses that span between 15,000sq ft and 30,000sq ft, full not only of interlocking trampolines, but also a heap of other attractions that allow people to jump, bounce and fall without hurting themselves: air bags, fidget ladders, slack lines, trapezes, trick tracks, foam pits, reaction walls and even inflatable wipe-out machines.

Most centres run Dodgeball sessions and many also offer freerunning and parkour; Oxygen Freejumping has teamed up with *Casino Royale* freerunning star Sébastien Foucan to run a Freerunning Academy (see *HCM* Oct 15, p28).

Trampoline lessons are also usually offered for those who want to learn double somersaults, and Stalker believes this could have a positive impact on participation in gymnastics and other aerial sports like freestyle snowboarding.



Freerunning star
Sébastien Foucan



Trampoline parks offer a high-energy, intensive workout that's also fun



Bouncing offers an array of health benefits – but most of all customers just have great fun

People are doing fitness and loving it. We're not pushing the exercise angle – we're just selling it as fun

There's also a Reboot Ripa class, which is run just occasionally for people who want to push themselves harder.

"The park was designed with an area for functional fitness at the core," explains Knill. "It was always my intention to introduce fitness, creating a club within a club. Going forward our sites will include soft play areas for infants as well, so we'll be able to cater for ages zero to 80."

Meanwhile, Go Air is running its own aerobics classes on the trampolines, with the sessions designed by its staff who have a background in sport and personal training. "They're high energy, but low impact on the joints," says Evans.

And Oxygen Freejumping has taken on two master trainers to run HIIT classes in the floor space alongside the trampolines – thereby maximising the available space in the centre. Even without advertising, these classes are booming.

Oxygen is also offering Rebound classes on individual trampolines. While the main trampoline hall appeals mainly to kids through to young adults, not to mention the occasional corporate event, Stalker says

the Rebound classes – held in a separate studio next to the café – are typically attended by women aged 23 to 45 who are looking for a fun alternative to the group exercise classes being offered by gyms.

Rebound director James Winfield says the company is already in talks with other operators too. The classes are a great option for people who want to lose weight, he explains: "People are weightless at the top of the bounce, but three times heavier at the bottom, which leads to high calorie burn."

Knill adds: "It would be great to have health clubs next door to trampoline parks. I really believe this could help in the fight against obesity."

Trampolining has also proven to be popular for people with disabilities, particularly those with mental health issues such as autism. "Trampolining builds social skills and better engagement with peers, families and teachers," says Stalker. "It also improves motor skills and confidence, muscle growth, sensory skills and allows for a release of energy in a positive way."

Many of the parks are now reaching out to groups that work with autistic children. For example, Go Air has hired staff who are experienced in working with disabled people and those who are on the autism spectrum. "Go Air has always been far more than just a place to play. We genuinely feel that we have a role to play in encouraging the nation to be active," says Evans.

WHERE NEXT?

At the time of writing, there were 65 trampolining mega-sites in operation in the UK, with many more in the pipeline. Bounce also has plans to franchise its model in Europe and the Middle East.

"In the UK, operators are initially looking at primary towns such as Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, then expanding out to secondary and tertiary towns," says Nick Booth, MD of Continental Sports, which includes trampolines among its product portfolio. "Our orders are coming in thick and fast. The only thing slowing down growth is finding suitable properties, negotiating ►

It's clear that trampoline parks are effectively creating a new leisure category

- rents with landlords and getting planning permission for a change of use."

He adds that a number of local authority leisure operators are looking at turning sports halls, or parts of them, into trampolining parks. "Ideally we need about 15,000sq ft, but they do range from 10,000 to 40,000sq ft," he says.

THE NOVELTY FACTOR

The general consensus is that the UK can safely accommodate 300–350 centres, so there's a long way to go before saturation – but will the novelty start to wear off?

The operators, confident they have struck gold, think not. With 308,000 visitors in the first 19 months, Knill points to an upward momentum: he says there's now a trend towards booking two-hour, rather than one-hour, sessions. He also believes it's a recession-proof business, as mums will always find the money for a kids' party or to give them a treat – and at £9.99 per person per visit, it's affordable as treats go.

Nevertheless, as time goes on and more sites open within a closer proximity, operators will have to work harder to differentiate their offering. Dave Booth, director of Luna Trampolines, says there are some exciting new developments in the pipeline to help keep things fresh: "We've allocated significant resource into the R&D of new trampoline activities,



With supervision, trampolining is statistically safer than other sports

and in the past six months alone we've developed a plethora of new features including slack lines, cardio walls, balance beams and hanging walls. The next period of R&D will be very exciting."

The market may also segment – with some sites specialising in particular types

of activity or user group – and ancillary activities are likely to be added. Bounce has already added an arcade with air hockey, table tennis and two Star Wars machines.

COMPETITION FOR CLUBS?

It's clear that trampoline parks are effectively creating a new leisure category, providing competition for traditional family activities like cinemas and bowling, and also crossing over into sport and health and fitness territory.

So what does this mean for traditional health clubs and leisure centres, which are unlikely to have 25,000sq ft of unused space to transform into a trampoline park? Are trampoline parks a threat to traditional gyms, or can the fitness industry take valuable lessons from them?

Perhaps the biggest lesson to learn is the importance of making workouts fun. Ask yourself this: whether it's introducing Rebound classes with great soundtracks, or coming up with new exercise concepts where fun comes first and fitness is a by-product, how can you get members smiling while they workout? ●

Health & safety

Safety is the main challenge facing this emerging sector of the industry: staff need a high level of first aid training, and when the competition does get more intense, operators will have to be careful not to cut costs either by skimping on supervision, or by letting too many people in at once.

"Indoor trampoline parks are potentially seen as an extreme sport," says Luna Trampolines' Dave Booth. "Accordingly, they have to be managed as such with appropriately trained staff, control measures, risk assessments and method statements in place."

According to Go Air's Lisa Evans, trampolining is statistically much safer than many sports. "Incident rates in trampolining are typically two in 1,000, compared to 21 in 1,000 when playing football, for example," she says. "Yet it's still a fairly extreme sport, which is why we're extremely careful about keeping our jumpers safe. All jumpers must watch the Go Air safety video, which explains how to jump safely, and our highly trained Go Air Crew are always on patrol to make sure everyone is observing the park rules at all times."



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MAKING THE SWITCH

A growing number of health and fitness clubs across the UK are working with Ojmar to upgrade their traditional keyed locking systems to electronic solutions

Why? Because, as wearable devices continue to impact the health and fitness industry – the American College of Sports & Medicine (ACSM) cites wearable technology as the top fitness trend for 2016 – operators are realising the benefits that electronic locking systems working in conjunction with Mifare wristbands can offer them.

Leading innovator Center Parcs was an early adopter of the technology, working with locking solutions specialist Ojmar to install its OTS Transponder System at the new Center Parcs Village at Woburn Forest. Following their successful installation at Whinell Forest and in a number of the group's Aqua Sana spa facilities, approximately 2,000 locks were installed throughout the Woburn Forest village, including in the Subtropical Swimming Paradise, Sports Plaza, Outdoor Activity Centre and the Aqua Sana Spa.

Using the wristband, guests can operate lockers, access accommodation and make cashless payments. This means no more trips to the locker to collect a wallet to pay for drinks or food by the pool, creating a better experience for guests.

The Mifare wristband is becoming the wearable of choice for health and fitness operators. As well as being cost effective, the silicone wristbands are waterproof and can be branded with the club's logo for further marketing opportunities. Operators can also increase their secondary spend through band rental and cashless purchases.

EASY INTEGRATION

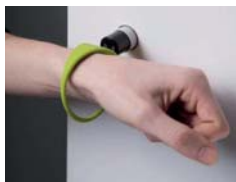
Implementing an electronic system requires operators to take a leap of faith. They need to be assured that the system is reliable, cost effective and easy for staff to manage and maintain. The technology also has to



Ojmar's NFC Programmer is a popular choice for leisure sites



The wireless system operates with bands and locks



Users wearing RFID wristbands perform a one-click operation

perform well with existing systems without complicated integration.

Ojmar's systems are constantly being upgraded to work seamlessly with other technologies such as cashless payment systems, cardio equipment from suppliers like Technogym, Precor and Milon, as well as with membership systems provided by the likes of Gladstone MRM.

The OTS Advanced locks have been improved to work with multiple technologies, including Ojmar's new Near Field Communication (NFC) programmer offering wireless reporting from the locks and over 100 use events logs as well as instant lock programming and battery testing. The locks can be future-proofed with simple firmware updates, achieved by touching the unit to the lock. Ojmar will continue its programme of innovation throughout 2016.

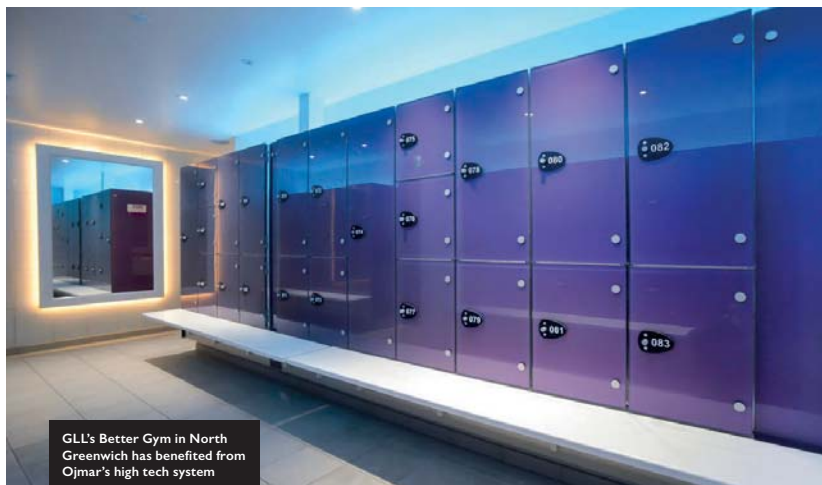
CLUBS THAT MADE THE SWITCH

2015 was an incredible year for Ojmar with numerous operators upgrading to Ojmar's electronic range of locking solutions. These include Village Hotels, which has installed the OTS basic system at three of its Velocity health and fitness clubs, with a further three sites in Maidstone, Bournemouth and Cheshire to follow in 2016.

Other operators include corporate gyms such as HSBC's headquarters in Canada Square, operated by Nuffield, and Sky which replaced digital code locks in its head office changing rooms with the OCS digital system to allow automatic opening after three hours to maximise usage and to prevent locker reservations.

In the public sector, leisure centres like Sheffield's Ponds Forge, part of the SIV group, and GLL's Better Gym in Greenwich are also benefiting from the technology.

Combining value for money and longevity, Ojmar's electronic solutions are



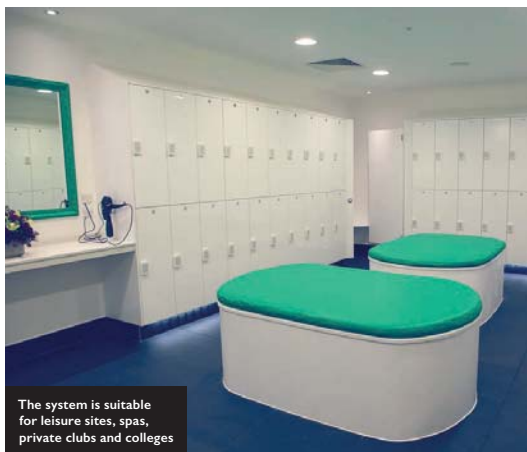
GLL's Better Gym in North Greenwich has benefited from Ojmar's high tech system

also proving popular among independent operators and smaller chains like London's boutique club Psycle, which has invested in the OCS digital system at two sites.

In 2016, Tribeca Studios, a pay-per-use fitness studio inspired by the group classes taking New York by storm, will install Ojmar's OTS advanced system with NFC technology, which will be managed digitally via customers' wristbands.

Ojmar has also worked with the owners of Shoreditch House, an exclusive private members club in East London, to replace a confusing and unreliable digital code locking system with Ojmar's OCS digital lock. The OCS Digital system uses a simple four digit code to access lockers and proved so popular with members that it has been rolled out to the group's sister sites Babington House and Soho Farmhouse in the Cotswolds; a favourite of Prime Minister David Cameron and supermodel Kate Moss.

With the new 12-sided £1 coin due to be introduced in 2017, there has never been a better time to go digital. ●



The system is suitable for leisure sites, spas, private clubs and colleges

ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION

These are just some of the operators benefiting from Ojmar's electronic solutions:
Center Parcs, GLL, SIV, Village Hotels, Nuffield Psycle, Tribeca Studios, Soho House

Numerous universities including:

Bath, Cambridge, Derby, St Andrews, Nottingham Trent, Warwick, Oxford Brookes, Edge Hill, Huddersfield



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Talking retention

While it's true that 13.7 per cent of the UK population now has a gym membership – the highest ever level – member retention remains a real challenge. **Abigail Harris** speaks to five UK retention experts to find out where it's being done well

1 FROM LOSS TO GAIN

Client: **Active Stirling, UK**
Programme: **6x6**

Dr Paul Bedford
Retention Guru

Active Stirling has doubled its membership since joining my 6x6 project in July 2014, which saw its team engage in six one-day business growth training sessions across a six-month period. This led to the operator consolidating its 20+ membership packages to just four, which include access to all activities.



The leisure trust manages the £27.3m Stirling Sports Village, which includes outdoor facilities, as well as The Peak, offering a nine-court sports hall, two swimming pools, sauna/steam, three fitness studios, a 100-station gym, a climbing wall and a curling/ice skating rink.

Matthew Bunnell, Active Stirling's head of health & wellbeing, told me: "Having so much activity choice through the all-inclusive memberships has encouraged users to try new things. It's also helped spread members around and reduce the bottleneck that could form in the gym, so there are fewer complaints too."

But the biggest difference is the rise in memberships – from 3,000 to 6,000



The Peak offers a wide range of facilities, including a curling rink

in just six months, with 20+ members still signing up each day and significantly fewer leaving, meaning the trust is adding 300–400 net members each month.

I asked Matthew what factors he thought had driven this, and he replied: "It was the change in our focus and our membership packages. Our Group membership is truly unique. For just £79

a month, any mix of four people can join on one membership. This has definitely helped with retention as it adds to the social environment. The more links you have, the more likely you are to stay.

"Since launching in April 2015, we've had 3,000 people sign up to this package. In addition, less than 10 per cent of all cancellations are from Group members."

Historically the trust saw seven months of the year with a net membership loss and just five with a net gain, leading to a reduction in the overall membership figures. Now Active Stirling is seeing a year-on-year increase in membership income of 20 per cent.

Having so much activity choice through the all-inclusive memberships has encouraged users to try new things

Matthew Bunnell, head of health & wellbeing, Active Stirling

2 LISTENING TO MEMBERS

Client: **Xercise4Less, UK**
Programme: **Listen360**

Jon Nasta
Director, Retention Solutions

In the past, by the time Xercise4Less knew a member was in danger of cancelling, that member was already out of the door; the company needed to find a new way of engaging with 'at risk' members. In July 2013, it began working with Retention Solutions' Listen360 member feedback service, which also gives a rolling NPS score for each of the 34 Xercise4Less sites.

There were two key areas that attracted the budget brand to the service.

Firstly, members giving an NPS score of six or lower would be highlighted on an in-club dashboard for the manager to contact. To date, using this method,



Xercise4Less' average NPS score rose from 32 to 53 in just one year

Xercise4Less has been able to move 1,313 members from being classed as brand detractors to brand promoters. Each week, across the estate, club managers speak to more than 300 members and avoid cancellations before they happen. Although that's just 10 per cent of members, over a year it represents well in excess of 90,000 potential cancellations.

Secondly, key word analysis of member feedback enables Xercise4Less to see exactly what members feel is done well and not so well, in each club and across

the business as a whole. Knowing what members are talking about on a weekly basis gives the company the power to make operational decisions in an objective way.

In July 2013, Xercise4Less' overall brand NPS score was 32. Just over a year later, the average NPS score across the estate was 53, with some clubs over 80. Joe Hall, Xercise4Less' head of member engagement, says: "We now put so much store in the system that we run monthly competitions based around KPIs such as NPS percentage improvement."

3 WHEN SUPPLY MEETS DEMAND

Client: **Glasgow Life, UK**
Programme: **GYMetrix**

Rory McGown
MD, GYMetrix

Glasgow Life boosted retention rates and increased membership by 45 per cent at its Gorbals site after working with us to solve the problem of low equipment availability.

The leisure trust, which operates 30 venues including 22 gyms, invited GYMetrix to conduct a study at Glasgow Club Gorbals in September 2013. The 45-station gym had 2,788 members, but growing demand was putting pressure on the facility and had reduced how available members found equipment.

Bob Peck, commercial development manager for Glasgow Life, told me they knew growing demand had far outstripped availability – particularly for free weight equipment – but it was difficult to quantify without hard data.

Our study showed very low levels of equipment availability, which was



The gym was moved and expanded to increase equipment availability

hampering growth and negatively impacting retention. Among members who remained, customer satisfaction was low, with the facility recording a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of just 11.

Glasgow Life moved the gym to a sports hall, expanding its capacity to 93 stations, and invested in equipment that had been shown by GYMetrix to have the lowest levels of availability – an extensive list, as there were shortages in all areas, but with a particular focus on free weights benches, lifting platforms,

cable stacks, treadmills, cross-trainers and resistance machines.

Just six months after expanding the gym, the club reported a 422 per cent increase in the time free weight equipment was used, due to increased availability now meeting the high demand.

In addition, the facility had attracted 1,265 new members – a 45 per cent growth. Among those who had been members before the refurb, retention rose to a level 5 per cent higher than at other Glasgow Life gyms. NPS also saw a huge uplift to 62. ▶

4 MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Client: **Crow Wood, UK**
Programme: **Stick Around**

Guy Griffiths
Director, GG Fit

Crow Wood health club in Burnley was looking for differentiators to lift service levels and keep ahead of local competition.



With an initial focus on engaging more with members, the club started using the GGFit Stick Around service in early 2014. This system automatically triggers messages to new members at key stages (welcome, touch base, congratulations) and members absent for 24 days or longer (we miss you, wish you were here) by SMS, email and post, depending on member preferences. If they're still absent at 30 days, a follow-up is sent. Message content is worded to encourage members back into the club to have a meaningful interaction with staff; over half of absent members return in the week after the first contact. The second message is even more successful, leading to a return of 80 per cent of members.

Oliver Brown, director at Crow Wood, says: "We know it works because members approach staff apologising for their absence and requesting a programme review or asking to book a class."



Crow Wood won the UK arm of Technogym's Let's Move initiative (above)

From September 2013 to September 2015, Crow Wood's active membership was up by two thirds to 66 per cent, using GGFit's Stick Around service

In October 2014, Crow Wood upgraded to Technogym's MyWellness cloud to bolster member engagement online through exercise tracking, fitness challenges and improved communication with members. GGFit handled the onboarding, with emails to promote the system and set-up of fitness challenges.

A particular highlight was when 660 members collected over three million MOVES – Technogym's unit of measure for movement – to help Crow Wood win the UK arm of Technogym's Let's Move For A Better World global digital challenge in March 2015. This challenge

aims to get communities active and sharing their training experiences online, as well as promoting wellness education in schools.

From September 2013 to September 2015, Crow Wood's 12-month member retention increased from 72 to 78 per cent, and in the last 12 months average membership length increased from 70 to 72 months, with active members up by two-thirds to 66 per cent.

Additionally, in September 2015, 1,070 members averaged 5.6 workouts a month – in September 2014, 987 gym members averaged 4.9 workouts a month. ►

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► RETENTION

It's clear that our data-driven approach to decisions is increasingly paying dividends

Andy Robinson, head of analytics, The Gym Group



The Gym Group has seen a 10 per cent drop in attrition in the past year

5 DATA ANALYSIS

Client: **The Gym Group, UK**

Rob Gregory
LTH Consulting

Dr Paul Bedford
Retention Guru

Last year, we were given the mandate to analyse retention performance at UK low-cost operator The Gym Group, with the brief of delivering new insights into member behaviour and creating a retention model that predicts cancellation.

We used survival analysis across more than 800,000 member records to model probabilities of cancellation throughout their lifetimes. This took into account a variety of influencing factors, including gender and frequency of use, but also wider factors such as patterns of use and visit duration, busy-ness at peak times, pricing and the impact of prices changes, the impact of training with a friend, and acon-type demographic segmentation.

The six-month project enabled us to quantify the effect of these

individual factors on the probability of membership cancellation and expected tenure, which in turn allowed The Gym Group to identify high-risk points in a member's lifetime across the group's now 67 UK gyms.

Andy Robinson, head of analytics for The Gym Group, believes the project has been valuable to their business. "It has given us a better understanding of our customer lifecycle and behaviour, and has ultimately changed how we interact with members to help them form repeatable exercise habits," he told us.

"For instance, we're now looking at the induction process to ensure that members' initial contact is a good one, making sure the equipment fits the usage better and the class scheduling helps create a regular visit pattern.

"It's clear that our data-driven approach to decisions is increasingly paying dividends. Over the last 12 months, we've seen a 10 per cent reduction in attrition. This core analysis of our members' behaviour will continue to play a role as we open new gyms in new catchment areas and continue to learn, evolve and improve our model." ●





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THE OLYMPIC EFFECT

The Olympic Effect shows significant increases in sports participation during and following the Olympic Games and we expect the Olympic Games in Rio later this year to be no different. Richard Baker, commercial director of Wattbike, explains how they will be making a contribution to the Olympic Games this year:

The data the Wattbike provides has long been favoured by athletes and coaches ahead of major events like the Olympic Games. Are there any athletes who have been training on a Wattbike who we should look out for this summer?

Track cyclist Joanna Rowsell-Shand has trained on the Wattbike for the past two years and we have no doubt that the bike will form a key part of her preparations for the Olympic Games.

Joanna will be competing in the Team Pursuit which requires incredible speed, power and endurance, all of which can



Cyclist Joanna Rowsell Shand has used the Wattbike for two years



England Rugby Captain and World Cup winner Tamara Taylor trains on the Wattbike



Athletes use the Wattbike for strength and conditioning, warm up, testing and rehabilitation



The Wattbike found in gyms is the same model used by elite athletes

be effectively measured, analysed and improved through specific, effective sessions on the Wattbike.

As an indoor bike, the Wattbike is an obvious choice as a training tool for cyclists. Are there athletes in any other sports who may benefit from training on the Wattbike?

Yes. Whilst the Wattbike is primarily designed as an indoor bike for cyclists, many coaches and athletes in other sports including Toni Minichiello, Jessica Ennis-Hill and Tamara Taylor have been recognising the performance enhancing benefits of the bike. We've had a long-running partnership with many sports and individual athletes from sailing to athletics, and more recently swimming and rugby. Athletes tend to use the Wattbike as a strength and conditioning tool to help them enhance endurance and become faster and stronger.

The Wattbike is also used to protect athletes by allowing them to offload the

body during training, helping to prevent injuries whilst maintaining high outputs. All the ingredients needed for a medal winning performance no matter what the sport.

The Wattbike has a strong following in elite sport circles – how are you looking to transfer the benefits of the Wattbike to the casual gym users?

Our main aim when developing the Wattbike was to create a training tool which can be used as effectively by the casual gym goer as it is for the elite cyclist. That's why the product you see in the gyms is exactly the same bike as Olympic athlete Joanna Rowsell-Shand uses. Many of our users love the fact that they can truly train 'like a pro' just by heading to their local gym, setting up their training zones and riding each and every session precisely.

To enhance the gym user's experience even further, we've developed the Wattbike Hub, a unique digital platform which lets ▶



Wattbike is dedicated to sports talent development and training

- users ride along to workouts and training plans - some of which have been designed by Joanna Rowsell herself. Once their session is complete, the workout is saved directly to the Wattbike Hub, ready for further analysis and sharing with friends, coaches or personal trainers.

The digital platform sounds like an interesting development. Are you hoping this will encourage sports participation post Olympics?

In today's digital world, users expect to be able to measure, analyse and share every detail about their lives, and sports and fitness is no different. In recent years, we've seen fantastic online resources such as coaching software Training Peaks and ride analyser Strava rise in popularity. When thinking about how we could enhance our user's experience and increase sports participation, there was no doubt it would come in the form of a digital platform.

With the second generation of the Wattbike Hub, we wanted to go further than data analysis, we wanted to provide real value for our users in the form of a 'personal trainer in their pocket'. The Hub provides training plans, individual workouts and tests all designed to help each and every user achieve their goals whether they've been inspired by the Olympics or they simply want to live a healthy life.



For the younger generation, the Rio Games will be the event which inspires young athletes to represent their country and get to future Games. How will Wattbike be part of this future generation?

At Wattbike, we're passionate about talent identification and young athlete development. That's why we've partnered with the UCI World Cycling Centre - the coaching arm of the UCI - to identify and develop future stars.

The UCI World Cycling Centre levels the playing field for nations that may not have the resources or facilities that we enjoy here in the UK. In partnership with

our sport science team the WCC are close to finalising standard global testing and talent screening protocols for road, track, mountain bike and BMX athletes.

The protocols will allow the WCC team to assess and compare data of cyclists from around the world in order to identify exceptional talent. ●

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JAY BAER

Marketing strategist and bestselling author Jay Baer tells **Julie King** why 'help' is more important than 'hype', ahead of his keynote presentation at IHRSA 2016

You've published a book, *Youtility: Why smart marketing is about help not hype*. What is Youtility?

Youtility describes marketing that's so useful people would pay for it. It's marketing with so much intrinsic value that, if you were to ask somebody: 'Would you pay a couple of dollars to receive this?', they would. It's marketing people actually want to receive, as opposed to what we usually produce, which is marketing people simply tolerate. 'Youtility' is the word I use to describe this: it's about marketing that has utility for you.

You describe the difference between helping and selling as "just two letters", but note that they make all the difference. What's the connection with Youtility marketing?

Society has always been very overt and direct in terms of the relationship between marketing and revenue. We say: "Come on in right now and buy a car." The message is: "If you give us money, we'll give you something."

Youtility describes marketing with so much intrinsic value that, if you were to ask somebody: 'Would you pay a couple of dollars to receive this?', they would

However, technology now enables consumers to tune out this sort of commercial-based information.

Youtility therefore adopts a sideways approach to marketing. It's more about: "How can we provide value?" and "How can we be your friend?" With Youtility, we're going to give you something for free in the hope that, at some point in the future, you'll give us some money – but it increases the time between interaction and outcome. That's because

INTRODUCING JAY BAER

Jay Baer, 46, earned a bachelors degree in political science from the University of Arizona, US. He's a serial entrepreneur, venture capitalist, technology advisor, bestselling author and speaker.

He's also the president of Convince & Convert, a strategy consulting firm that focuses on the intersection of technology, social media and customer services – the fifth multi-million company he's founded.

Baer has advised more than 700 companies including Nike, Caterpillar and 31 of the Fortune 500 companies.

His second book, *Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help, Not Hype* rose to the number three spot on *The New York Times* bestseller list, and was a number one bestseller on Amazon.

On a personal note, Baer is an avid collector of rare tequila.



we believe, the more you sell overtly, the less you'll sell long-term.

If you provide value, and commit your company to being helpful and useful, customers will reward you and keep you close. They'll go to your website and bookmark it; they'll subscribe to your emails and open them; they'll follow you on Facebook. You have to ask yourself how, as a company, you can act more

we can make any serious decision.

And this is because people have access to information all the time, via smartphones. Consumers now want to research everything, and you have to provide more and more information so they can make as much of their buying decision as possible without having to talk to a real person.

Today, business relationships are based on information first and people second. If your information is good enough, you'll be permitted an in-person or human interaction. Your job as a marketer is to prepare consumers for that with self-serve information.

The second is 'radical transparency', which has to do with trust. Trust is the filter through which all business success must pass; without trust, nothing else matters. One of the best ways to gain and maintain trust is to be disproportionately open and honest with your information. Be transparent or, at least, translucent with people. This isn't so much about changing the message – it's about changing the messenger. Get real people – customers, employees, partners – to tell your story and give a human face to your business.

like the way we act with our friends. That requires companies to be more approachable, transparent and human.

In describing how businesses can become more helpful and useful, you discuss the Three Facets of Youtility. What are they?

'Self-serve information' is the most fundamental, because it rides on top of a larger consumer trend: the fact we feel we need more information before

Baer says, if he owned a health club, he'd start a blog reviewing healthy dishes at local restaurants

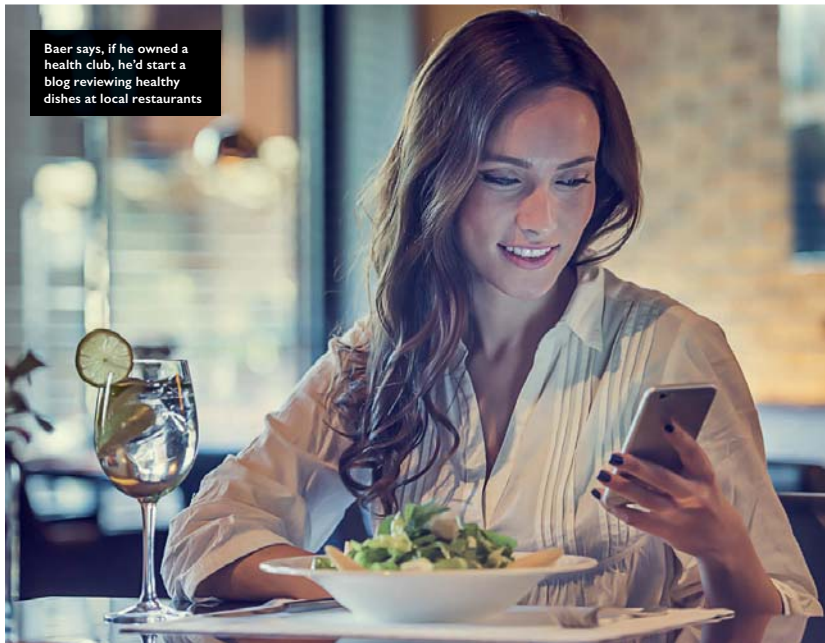


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The third is what I describe as 'real-time relevancy'. Companies are better off being massively useful in one particular set of circumstances, rather than being kind of useful all of the time. It requires that you be aware of and understand the micro-interactions that

a club. Engage people in a wide-ranging dialogue and keep them engaged, so some of them will ultimately conclude: "I really should join a club."

If I owned a club, I might, for instance, start a restaurant review blog, and review all of the healthy dishes at all

actively manage your reputation online. If someone is complaining about a club on Yelp, a lot of owners and managers might just ignore it. That's the worst thing they could possibly do. It makes the disgruntled client feel ignored, totally unloved, and everyone else who reads the review thinks: "Well, it must be true, because the club didn't even address the complaint."

Finally, get other people – members, for example – to tell your story, because they have more legitimacy, are believed at a deeper level, than a business ever is.

With Youtility, you have to think like a farmer, not like a hunter. You will get new members eventually, but not necessarily tomorrow

occur constantly between the company and the customer. Those companies who are best at using Youtility know their customer lifecycle – what they want and when they want it.

Health clubs sell exercise, which many people find inherently unappealing. What's the best way to sell a commodity that some people just don't want?

If you tell people why they should join a club, that's not Youtility – that's a brochure. The best way is to explore the broader topic of exercise. Make the story bigger. Talk about exercise in a way that isn't necessarily about joining

of the restaurants in town. That's a story you could credibly tell – there's a relevant intellectual adjacency there. That's how I'd get people interested. And once they were interested, I'd occasionally talk about the benefits of exercise, and the benefits of joining a club. I'd interview some club members to acquaint my readers with people just like them. That's the way that I'd generate new members, a few at a time.

What can clubs do to foster the all-important trust that you spoke about earlier?

First, run a good company and correct any problems it might have. Also,

Can Youtility marketing also play a role in terms of improving member retention?

Basically, what you're asking is what utility a club can provide you – as one of its members – after the sale. Just think about the manifold ways, small and large, that it could add to, enhance or otherwise improve membership value.

Could it, for instance, give members weekly recipes? Or recommend TV programmes dealing with such subjects as exercise, nutrition and healthy lifestyle in a 'Set up your DVR' list? These sorts of things don't take a lot



Baer will be presenting at IHRSA 2016, which takes place in March

PHOTO BY ANTHONY QUIN YANO WWW.IHRSA.COM/PHOTOGRAPHY/MEDIA LICENSE SOCIAL MEDIA

of time, but they give a club a little extra bump, so that when renewal time comes around, people will say: "You know, I like these guys!"

Are you recommending that Youtility marketing replace traditional methods of marketing?
I'm not suggesting that companies can, or should, only do Youtility-based marketing. It's not really possible, because by definition Youtility seeks

piece by offering a free copy of your restaurant review guide to individuals who visit the club. You're providing them with something that has value, at no cost, and that will bring some people through your door who otherwise wouldn't have come. This provides an opportunity for you to initiate a relationship with them and, hopefully, interest them in a membership.

One of the key underlying philosophies of Youtility is that you have

members who will work on it and give them free membership. Loyal members want others to be part of the club, so they should be telling the story. ●

People who are loyal to a club want other people to be part of the club, so they should be telling the story

to win hearts and minds one at a time, over time. You can't reach enough people at once with Youtility.

I advise that companies balance traditional marketing – which reaches more people simultaneously – with Youtility, which strengthens and deepens those relationships a few at a time. You can use the two in a number of synergistic ways.

For instance, you can use Youtility to produce a more effective direct mail

to think like a farmer, not like a hunter. You will get new members eventually, but not necessarily tomorrow. Youtility transforms the way that you think about customer acquisition.

Do clubs have enough staff to do Youtility marketing?

Staffing is a challenge. This isn't resource-expensive, but it is time-intensive. It works best if you use the people who actually know the club. Find a few

HEAR MORE AT IHRSA 2016

To hear all about Baer's rewarding new way to think about marketing, make sure you attend his **Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help, Not Hype** session at IHRSA's 35th Annual International Convention and Trade Show.

IHRSA 2016 takes place on 21–24 March in Orlando, Florida, US. Baer's keynote address will take place on Monday 21 March, from 10.45am–12.15pm.

For more information or to register, visit the IHRSA website: ihrsa.org/convention



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PULSE OF THE INDUSTRY

For over 35 years Pulse has been providing fitness and leisure solutions to organisations worldwide. In that time it has worked with a variety of different sectors including the military, educational institutions, public sector gyms, private leisure clubs and premium hotels and spas, to offer bespoke fitness solutions for every need.

Pulse is well known for its award-winning, IFI-accredited, high tech fitness equipment, but 2015 saw you win many contracts for Strategic Leisure Development (SLD) partnerships, worth in excess of £100m. What is SLD?

Strategic Leisure Development (SLD) refers to the development strategy for a local authority's entire portfolio of leisure stock on a long term partnership basis. Rather than looking at one facility or part of that facility, SLD looks collectively at the performance of the entire portfolio with the aim of dealing with current and future liabilities. SLD takes a holistic view of all local and national market research to create the best possible, innovative, phased development proposals which can encompass funding options and operational support.

In 2015 Pulse was appointed SLD Partner to Suffolk Coastal District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Bolsover District Council.

What services does Strategic Leisure Development encompass?

The process begins with an assessment of all leisure stock, creation of a business plan and full architectural designs by our teams. Once a facility is open we are able to provide a myriad of operational services which include operational management, staff training, IT Software and sales and marketing.

Pulse is unique in the amount of in-house services you are able to offer from your UK headquarters. Would you say that being British-based benefits you?

We believe our UK base gives us unrivalled flexibility compared to our competitors. Clients can sit with our in-house teams and create bespoke equipment, gym design and much more. This has helped us secure partnerships with the MOD and over the last three years we have supplied £6m worth of equipment to military bases all over the world. Our latest contract has seen us supply and install £300k of Pulse Fitness Equipment to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court.

We've seen Pulse invest heavily in technology over the last few years. With some of the most

technologically advanced products and systems on the market in your portfolio, what's next for Pulse?

Keeping our products and systems at the forefront of the technology market is extremely important as we recognise the power of data and engagement to gain and retain members. Our technology includes front of house management systems which capture join and book online, direct debits, KPI reports and CRM.

Our Console 6 technology offers an 18.5 inch touch screen which includes digital TV, radio and full internet browsing along with social media access.

Additionally, in 2015 we launched PulseMove, which was the first cloud-based activity tracking system that connects members' fitness inside and outside the gym, and we have also invested in a range of interactive fitness products.

Pulse proudly installed a range of equipment at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court



CASE STUDY: CREATING IGYM IN 10 WEEKS

Pulse transforms an empty shell into a uniquely inspiring hi-tech facility



Pulse designed, built, fitted out and will operate the new iGym London in partnership with Imperial College



Pulse's latest completed project is iGym, a £1.3m fitness facility at Imperial College London's new residential campus in North Acton.

Pulse won the tender to create a modern fitness suite which caters for students but also appeals to the general public to ensure it is self-financing for the long term.

Pulse produced plans and architectural drawings including a detailed quotation for a turnkey solution.

Careful consideration was given to the fit-out to ensure running and maintenance costs remained low whilst still giving a high tech, high quality feel, in line with the iGym brand created by Pulse.

As the operator, Pulse has been responsible for creating all the



Pulse has many in-house skills from their UK HQ including 2D and 3D visualisation artists

In just 10 weeks the space was transformed from an empty shell to a modern and unique facility, which boasts a high-tech 85-station gym with functional training zone and three group exercise studios including a cycling studio with Spivi software. The new gym currently boasts 1000 members and growing.

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infrastructure necessary for efficient running of the new fitness facility, including the staff recruitment, IT systems, access control, direct debit services, pricing policies, programming and marketing.



The year ahead



Steven Ward, executive director of ukactive, gives his views on what's in store for the UK fitness and physical activity sector in 2016

It's a pleasure to be publicly authoring my first 'forecasts for the year ahead' for ukactive. This article has always been a favourite here, as we try and predict what's next for the sector.

Perhaps the most confident prediction we can make for 2016 is that the variety of options to be active will continue to expand. Innovators and entrepreneurs who can bottle up a solid concept with a good price will go far, whether that's specialist boutiques, trampolining mega-centres or mass participation events. Certainly no man, woman or child will go wanting for the provision of fitness in any setting in the forthcoming year. Expect to see more traditional, mainstream operators muscling in on the trend.

THE MEGA-TRUSTS

Talking of the traditional sector, the sale of LA fitness to Pure Gym could be indicative of what we will see over the next year, especially if more big-name operators seek to move out of the squeezed middle ground between budget and high-end. What a tale Pure Gym has delivered – now the biggest private operator in the UK. What has that done for the growth appetites of its major competitors?

For public operators, contracts and tenders for increasingly long-term deals with local authorities will be big battlegrounds, with large operators now willing to front up more of an initial investment to seal lucrative partnerships spanning 10, 15 and 20 years. This will make it more difficult for small and medium-sized trusts to compete when the big fish come swimming in even the smallest of ponds. Will they battle on, or will they settle for peace through alliances with the big players?

Nevertheless, as leisure contracts increasingly become tied to local health and sport strategies, community roots and historic investment in local areas will

no doubt play a part; operators that can convince buyers their offer is not just a box with treadmills and barbells, but rather a lynchpin of modern community life, will thrive. However, they'll be expected to do that at a cost to the leisure operator, as opposed to the local authority client.

EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY

2016 will prove an interesting time for suppliers too, particularly the large equipment manufacturers. Competition is always tough in the supplier sector; but there are plenty of opportunities too.

The workplace health space for example – a core focus of government spending plans and HR policy of all sensible businesses – will require innovative solutions to keep staff moving. Expect to see suppliers reaching beyond their previous boundaries.

Suppliers should also be cautious of the impact of external technology; in the digital age, software can become defunct overnight. Seventeen-year-old app developers in bedrooms across the globe are in a race to once and for all crack the holy grail of fitness tracking aggregation; something big may be around the corner.

But technology need not be a bogeyman: the growth of tech capabilities means a new generation of fitness kit will have new and exciting capabilities beyond what we're seeing today. Maybe not next year, but sooner than we think, gyms will be using virtual reality to aid workouts. Why run on a treadmill watching *Homes Under the Hammer* when you could run the 10,000 metres immersed in the atmosphere of the Olympic Stadium? Or battle zombies through a group exercise class?

We'll see funding traditionally reserved for sports governing bodies widened to include the full span of physical activity promotion and participation



Pure Gym is now the biggest private operator – how will competitors react?

The options to be active will continue to expand in 2016. Zombie Run anyone?

The fusion of fitness with games – the gamification of real life – will be a revolutionary force in our sector, both inside centres and in other settings too.

SECTOR DIVERSIFICATION

The activity sector itself is growing too. *ukactive's Blueprint for an Active Britain* – developed in collaboration with the likes of the Royal College of General Practitioners, Mind, Age UK, Living Streets and the Outdoor Industries Association – shows there's now a huge number of providers coming under our remit. From sporting bodies and new NGBs to charity projects and voluntary initiatives, what our sector means, and the net it casts, is growing.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sports' consultation on the new Sports Strategy, published late last year, will increasingly tie the knot between the ambitions of sport and what our sector does every day. Whether this arranged marriage will be holy matrimony from the word go remains to be seen, but in the medium term we'll see funding traditionally reserved for sports governing bodies widened to include the full span of physical activity promotion, with any organisation that's able to deliver an increase in participation invited to the party.

We're also set to see a growing interest from large consumer brands wanting to partner with our sector to deliver CSR initiatives and so forth. Leisure operators will start to play a key role in delivering more programmes along the lines of the Coca Cola Parklives initiative.

Operators that can convince buyers their offer is not just a box with treadmills and barbells, but rather a lynchpin of modern community life, will thrive

Although the sugar debate rumbles on in the media, the activity sector stands to benefit from a greater focus on the activity narrative from all sides, and brands that act with the true intention of getting more people active – through a credible evidence-base programme not linked to product sales – will remain our partners.

EMBRACING PUBLIC HEALTH

Finally, we remain surer than ever that physical activity is the greatest avenue to improving the nation's health. Despite cuts to the Public Health grant of £200m, local authority public health teams continue to increase investment from their public health spending. This has now almost tripled since *ukactive* first unearthed this data in 2013. On average, all 150 top-tier local authorities in England are spending an extra £300,000 on physical activity versus two years ago, and we're proud of that.

Of course, the downside is that much of this extra spend is countered by cuts in leisure budgets, which have been ongoing for some time. In an austerity regime, it's unlikely this will cease any time soon. The message to operators is that it's crucial to get on board with the public health agenda, making sure local directors of public health are aware of the impact existing activity services have on local population health outcomes –

and that they share our vision of how even more could be done.

Driving investment from the NHS by establishing physical activity as core business of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will be a big part of *ukactive's* message during 2016. We want to show the CCGs that their local outcome frameworks – which are centred around lower incidences of long-term non-communicable disease – can be influenced by investment into public health initiatives to the extent that they can't afford to leave this solely in the hands of local authorities.

This year will also see the launch of the National Diabetes Prevention Service, an historic initiative that will see the NHS link with leisure providers in a structured, focused way. The opening of this door will bring added scrutiny of our evidence base, but also another welcome public partner to fulfil the mission of getting more people moving to turn the tide of inactivity.

In summary, we're confident that 2016 will be a positive one. The tide is certainly flowing in our favour as we continue to work with the public and government to get more people, more active, more often. ●



Public Affairs Media Partner



QUESTION TIME

Exercise for mental health and 'virtual versus personal' – these were some of the topics discussed at the panel debate that kicked off SIBEC Europe 15. **Katie Lewis** reports

KC: If you had an empty building and open-minded investors, what kind of physical activity facility would you build to meet the needs of the population – not just today, but looking forward 10 years?

JN: Investment priority shouldn't be in bricks and mortar but in education, both for staff and prospective members. The exercises being prescribed by fitness professionals are currently too generic – staff need the confidence, knowledge and tools to deliver more bespoke programmes. These are much more likely to influence behaviour and positively impact retention and referrals.

AY: Investing in customer education is definitely very important. In our venues we've started to offer health and wellbeing seminars to members. Topics range from how to understand food labelling to preventing type 2 diabetes, and sessions are proving very popular.

MG: I'd invest in the provision of more diverse activity centres – like the XC Centre in Hemel Hempstead, which includes high ropes and indoor caving – with the aim of encouraging more people to participate in regular physical activity.

RC: Creating a physical hub where health and wellbeing professionals work together to deliver services that cater for all of a community's healthcare needs is where I'd like to see investment. In order to secure our industry's place in the healthcare of the nation, we need to be positioned alongside other credible professionals such as GPs, physiotherapists and nutritionists.



The Panel - from left to right:

Martin Guyton (MG) – CEO, Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust

Jon Nasta (JN) – Director of ecommerce and marketing, Xercise4Less

Anastasia Yusina (AY) – President, Strata Holdings

Kate Cracknell (KC) Debate Chair – Editor, Health Club Management

Rick Crawford (RC) – Fitness & wellbeing manager, Nuffield Health & Wellbeing


Giles Dean (GD) – Co-founder, IRebel

Moving forwards, technology is also going to offer consumers much more opportunity to log and monitor their own health indicators. There's a huge opportunity to educate our staff so they can help consumers better understand the data they're collecting and adjust their behaviours to benefit their health.

GD: I'd invest in building a film production studio. Physical buildings can only serve a very local population; we

have to embrace the virtual platform. Building an online offering gives us the opportunity to address people in their own homes, taking our brand and expertise to a much broader audience.

For example, I was recently introduced to a product called Peloton which allows people at home to virtually link with a cycling class at their gym. This creates a feeling of being a part of something social without having to enter what, for some, is an uncomfortable environment.



Clubs must help members interpret the data they are collecting via trackers

KC: That leads nicely on to the next question. With the increased interest in virtual classes, and some clubs even installing virtual advisors, how do we ensure we maintain a strong personal relationship with members?

MG: There's a danger that moving down a virtual road will have a negative impact on the customer experience. Encouraging people to exercise at home, alone, is not where the focus should be. I agree we need to embrace technology, but let's not give up on people or underestimate the value of personal contact.

JN: A virtual offering, done well, can hugely enhance a customer's experience. It has the power to make individuals feel part of a community even when they're not physically present on-site.

The younger generation already seamlessly uses technology to virtually connect to their environment via their phones and tablets. Moving forward, this generation will expect a virtual offering – they feel very comfortable engaging with a brand in this way.

AY: I agree, but technology needs to be used to create a more personal experience. Simply firing out generic content and messaging will not work and could, in fact, have a negative impact on the customer experience.

That said, if the customer can be made to feel that the virtual content addresses a very personal need and enhances the relationship they have with a particular brand, then this can also be very

powerful. Clever planning and bespoke content is absolutely key.

Comment from the floor – Kevin Yates, iRebel: Social media engagement presents a huge opportunity but also a threat. Savvy individuals are attracting huge audiences. Body Coach Joe Wicks, for example, has over half a million Instagram followers. These online personalities are hugely influential. As a sector, we need to better engage

An online offering allows us to address people in the comfort of their own homes, taking our brand and expertise to a much broader audience

Giles Dean, iRebel

with these people. The danger is that consumers will choose to use free online resources for their wellbeing support rather than pay for our services.

KC: With physical activity proven to have a profoundly positive impact on mental health, what more could the sector be doing to address mental health issues among the population?

GD: It's unlikely that people with mental health problems will feel comfortable admitting to them and talking about them in a gym environment. Our role is to better promote the emotional and general wellbeing benefits of exercise to the masses, rather than trying to address what can be very complex mental health issues of individuals.

RC: We need to better engage with the GPs who are diagnosing mental health problems. There seems to be a heavy reliance on the prescription of costly anti-depressant drugs, so we need to work together to better educate healthcare professionals on the positive effects that exercise can have on many mental health conditions. We'll need to present evidence-based data though – something the health and fitness sector is historically poor at collecting.

AY: It's totally unreasonable to expect our current health and fitness teams to diagnose and prescribe solutions for mental health patients. Their level of expertise and experience simply doesn't qualify them to do this.

GP referral is the key to our sector supporting this special population. Initially we need to seek out and work with doctors who truly believe that an active lifestyle can positively impact a person's state of mind, and that exercise on prescription is more beneficial to them than a drugs programme.

Doctors who lead an active lifestyle themselves and who experience the benefits are more likely to prescribe it to others. We should, therefore, be offering incentives to targeted GPs to come and use our fitness facilities. ●

Reaching the Apex

Physical Company signs Dame Kelly Holmes as its APEX Ambassador

Physical Company has signed Dame Kelly Holmes MBE, DBE as an ambassador for its APEX gym floor training programmes. The 2004 double Olympic 800m and 1500m champion, Kelly Holmes remains a force to be reckoned with in the fitness world and is renowned for keeping fit, lean and strong herself while encouraging others to engage in physical activity.

APEX is a series of six, 30-minute programmes designed to revitalise the gym floor and reignite members' interest. The sessions are designed to be delivered by gym instructors and personal trainers, ensuring a high level of interaction with groups of up to 12 members.

Clubs and gyms can choose as many of the programmes as they wish to suit their demographic. Physical Company provides face-to-face training to get the clubs and gyms up and running with APEX. Additional training cards and access to an extensive exercise library give on-going support and content. The sessions are designed to be changed at least every 12 weeks to keep the exercises fresh and challenging.

EXCELLENT INSTRUCTION

"I like the way APEX gives people the opportunity to work in a group environment with a range of different exercises and a variety of equipment," says Kelly. "The programme includes excellent instruction by the trainers which I think is missing a lot in group training at the moment," she continues. "It's impressive how the instructors get really involved in the session and give teaching points as well as shouting at you - it feels like a master PT class."

APEX is a 'ready made' gym floor group training solution which can bolster the class timetable, bring fresh energy to the gym floor and develop strong relationships between personal trainers and members.

FAVoured BY FREEDOM LEISURE

Freedom Leisure is seeing great success with APEX. It currently runs two of the six available sessions across 13 sites and it



APEX is a ready-made gym floor group training solution



Holmes says the sessions feel like a master PT class

has more centres coming on board with the concept each month. The structure of the programming, with its variety and versatility, are key to its success says Richard Merrick, Freedom Leisure Group Fitness and Wellbeing Manager. "Gym floor training is not a new concept but the way Physical Company has developed the APEX series, its attention to detail and genuinely innovative exercises and programme combinations give it the edge," he says. "I'm genuinely pleased with this and

can see it will have a place in our long-term future plans here at Freedom Leisure."

"APEX is the perfect combination of bespoke programming that you can buy 'off the peg' and this makes it affordable and adaptable for us," Richard continues. "I like the fact that there is some uniformity across the group, yet the programming is versatile enough to be changed to suit our members, the space available and the kit that we have to hand."



Holmes' feedback on APEX has been 'invaluable'

CLUBS CAN CHOOSE FROM SIX PROGRAMMES



Kelly Holmes particularly likes the Agility high intensity session. "This is a great athletic workout designed to boost sporting performance," she says. "It keeps me really focused and the clever use of equipment makes it different from a traditional HIIT class."

STRENGTH

Implements functional strength training techniques – great for people who want to get stronger and who are looking for maximum training efficiency.

CORE

Advanced approach to core training that develops trunk stability and helps strengthen the spine. Great for people who want to improve core strength, posture, and balance.

IGNITE

A Total Body workout that is designed to get people leaner, fitter and faster. Great for those people who want to take advantage of short intense workouts and to also improve their body composition.

RELEASE

A next generation approach to recovery and performance that enhances muscle function, speed and recovery and reduces injury. Great for reducing tension, trigger points and for mitigating wear and tear.

AGILITY

This 'train like an athlete', performance-orientated workout is great for people who are looking for a playful, fun, athletic workout and to also improve balance, stability and co-ordination.

ACTIVE

A steady yet challenging session for older adults to improve mobility, balance, co-ordination and cardiovascular health. Great for people who want to reduce the impact of ageing and improve movement.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

APEX is also proving to be a powerful point of difference and retention tool for Freedom Leisure. "Having these gym floor sessions helps set us aside from nearby competition and the budget gym offering," says Richard. "Now when we are looking to upgrade our gyms, we are building in functional training areas and kitting them out ready to take APEX as we know these sessions will bring an uplift in gym usage and attendance."

"We are delighted to be working with Kelly Holmes and her insight into our programming and feedback has been really helpful," says John Halls, Physical Company MD. "APEX is a great solution for both members and club managers," he continues. "Gym users gain by training in a fresh new way with a high level of motivation from the personal training aspect while clubs can offer an enhanced member experience and maximise the use of their gym floor and functional training areas." To find out more about APEX get in touch with Physical Company by phone or email. ●

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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

We take a look at some of the latest group exercise trends coming your way



Ex-ballerina Darcey Bussell takes the lead in a DDMIX class

STRICTLY COME WORKOUT

TV dance star Darcey Bussell has launched a fun, dance-based aerobic workout programme for everyone, including youngsters.

Created by the *Strictly Come Dancing* judge and choreographer Nathan Clarke, DDMIX (Diverse Dance) incorporates different dance styles and is designed to give a full body workout. The dance styles and music change throughout the 45- to 60-minute class to deliver different levels of aerobic workout. Genres include 1960s, line dance, Bollywood, 1970s disco, African, Greek and Scottish.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD DIVERSE DANCE



Burlexercise includes the use of weighted feather boas

THE POWER OF BURLESQUE

Burlexercise is a dance and resistance fitness workout incorporating showgirl-style dance moves and traditional burlesque technique, and featuring the use of weighted feather boas.

Running across the UK and Germany, it aims to create a fun, entertaining atmosphere with music from *Moulin Rouge* to Beyoncé, Prince to Glee. The choreography and music is changed every 10 weeks, with the workout deliverable at low or high intensity, thereby catering for all ages.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD BURLEXERCISE



TV personality Chico's Block Fit is suitable for clubs and schools

IT'S CHICO TIME!

Block Fit is a brand new launch from British TV personality Chico. The group exercise concept fuses four workouts into one class: dance, combat, HIIT and yoga-inspired moves and meditation. These are delivered in easy-to-follow blocks of choreography accompanied by original, uplifting music. As well as being great fun, it's said to burn 650+ calories per class.

The programme officially launches this month, with a number of health club chains already in discussions to introduce Block Fit in 2016. In addition, Sports Minister Tracey Crouch is assessing the possibility of putting Block Fit into schools. The first school pilot launches on 22 January, with a view to a regional roll-out and potentially even inclusion on the school curriculum in the longer term.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD BLOCK FIT

DRUM YOUR WAY TO FITNESS

Pound is a full-body cardio jam session, combining light resistance with constant simulated drumming.

Created by California-based drummers Kirsten Potenza and Cristina Peerenboom, the workout fuses cardio, pilates, isometric movements, plyometrics and isometric poses into a 45-minute series. Participants can burn upwards of 400 calories an hour.

Ripstix – lightly weighted drumsticks – are used to add resistance while you drum along to rock, rap, dubstep, pop and old school music. The Pound concept can be modified for any level of fitness, and aims to strengthen and sculpt infrequently used muscles for a leaner, slimmer physique.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **POUNDFIT**



Pound fuses cardio, pilates and isometric movements

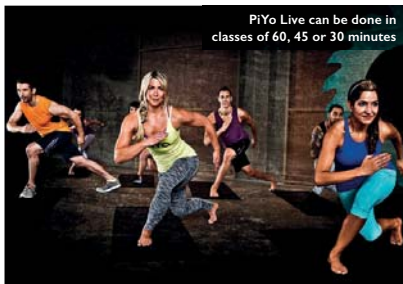
A ONE-STOP-SHOP

PiYo Live is a new body conditioning, no-impact combination class based on pilates and yoga and set to pop music. The programme – developed by Beachbody celebrity trainer Chalene Johnson – combines stretching, strength and cardio to offer flexibility and mobility as well as an aerobic workout within one class.

PiYo Live needs no equipment and can be done barefoot or with shoes. The class can be done in 60, 45 or 30 minutes, with strength or stretch focuses.

Director Will Brereton says: "People who don't feel comfortable with the spirituality of yoga, or time-poor people who know they need to stretch but don't want to give up their cardio time, are perfect fits for PiYo."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **BEACHBODY**



PiYo Live can be done in classes of 60, 45 or 30 minutes

LONG, LEAN – AND UK-BOUND

Lagree Fitness – a results-driven, full-body fitness workout that boasts high profile fans including Kim Kardashian, Jennifer Aniston, Michelle Obama and Nicole Kidman – is now set to launch in the UK.

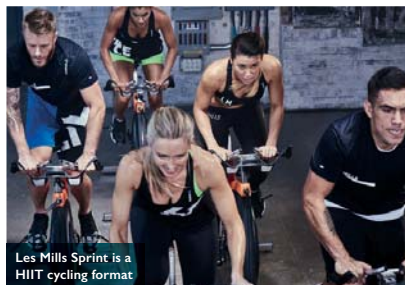
Classes take place on Megaformer machines designed by Los Angeles-based creator Sebastien Lagree. The intense 50-minute workout combines core strength, endurance, balance, cardio and flexibility. Every session features targeted exercises performed at a slow and controlled pace, activating slow twitch muscle fibres to build the long, lean physique that has made the workout famous.

Lagree says: "The Lagree Method works muscles to failure with very little rest, which burns maximum calories in a short time while also developing muscle tone and strength."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **LAGREE**



The Megaformer machines help build long, lean muscles



Les Mills Sprint is a HIIT cycling format

HIIT CYCLING

Les Mills International has launched a 30-minute, high intensity interval training (HIIT) group cycling programme called Sprint, based on cycle sprinting and high performance. Short bursts of intensity, followed by short periods of active recovery, push participants hard to help them achieve their fitness goals faster.

Martin Franklin, CEO of Les Mills UK, says: "Sprint meets the needs of the Millennial audience and those who are increasingly time-poor."

"Indoor cycling is getting a lot of air time at the moment, fuelled by the rise of the boutique studios, but there's also an opportunity here for health clubs operating in the traditional fitness space."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **LES MILLS**



SOSA includes salsa, Latin and ballroom dance moves

THE GIRLS-ONLY GROOVE

SOSA (Solo Salsa) Dance Fitness is a new workout for women only. The low impact, high-energy routines are designed to be fun and suitable for all sizes, ages and abilities. The choreography combines elements of salsa, Latin, ballroom and numerous international dance styles.

Instructors are given four new choreographed routines every month to add variety to their classes, with recent additions including bachata-merengue from the Dominican Republic, a sassy burlesque routine, and an Argentine tango workout, along with classic favourites such as salsa, cha-cha and samba.

Health and fitness club owners can sign up to a studio or corporate licence plan.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **SOSA**



Apex is a series of six 30-minute small group training classes

WHAT'S YOUR SESSION?

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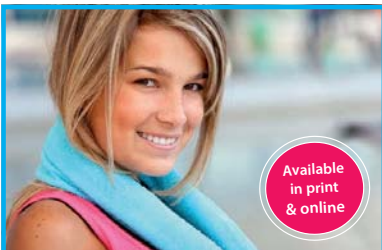
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HIITing the mark

Two new pieces of research show the benefits of high intensity interval training – both for diabetes sufferers and for improving endurance

High intensity interval training (HIIT) is undoubtedly one of the biggest fitness trends of the last few years, and with new research showing how effective it is, it's unlikely to dwindle in popularity. Most recently, one study has shown that short bursts of vigorous exercise are the best for battling diabetes, while another has revealed why it's so good for endurance.

HIIT versus diabetes

In research presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2015, HIIT was identified as being the best form of exercise for battling Type 2 diabetes. Scientists found that short bursts of HIIT (working at 85 per cent of target heart rate) improved cholesterol, blood sugar and weight among Type 2 diabetics more significantly than 30 minutes of sustained, lower-intensity exercise (at 65 per cent of target heart rate).

The study showed that three months of high-intensity exercise in 10-minute bursts done three times a day, five days a week, led to an average 0.82 per cent decrease in blood sugar patterns. This compared with just a 0.25 per cent decrease among those who exercised at a lower intensity five times a week.

Historically, diabetes management programmes have focused on low-intensity, sustained exercise, according to lead study author Avinash Pandey, an undergraduate at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. Pandey added: "However, more may be accomplished with short bursts of vigorous exercise, in which patients achieve a higher maximum target heart rate. This may also be easier to fit into busy schedules."

Researchers said it remains unclear why shorter bursts of high-intensity exercise would lead to more significant health improvements. One theory is that



Short bursts of HIIT may give better results than longer bouts of steady exercise

the activity uses energy in a different way, according to Pandey.

Good for endurance

Meanwhile, in Europe, Swedish scientists at the Karolinska Institutet have been investigating the specific benefits behind the training, and why a few minutes of HIIT is enough to produce an effect at least equivalent to that achieved with long doses of more traditional endurance training. Their findings, which are published in the scientific journal *PNAS*^{*}, highlight a specific cellular mechanism linked to the activity and also provide clues as to why antioxidants undermine the effect of endurance training.

To investigate what happens in muscle cells during high-intensity exercise, the

researchers asked male recreational exercisers to do 30 seconds of maximum exertion cycling followed by four minutes of rest, and to repeat the procedure six times. They then took muscle tissue samples from the exercisers' thighs.

They found that HIIT has a significant impact on the calcium channels in muscle cells, and that this can in turn help to create more mitochondria. Mitochondria act as the cells' power plants, providing energy – so any changes that stimulate the formation of new mitochondria help to increase muscle endurance.

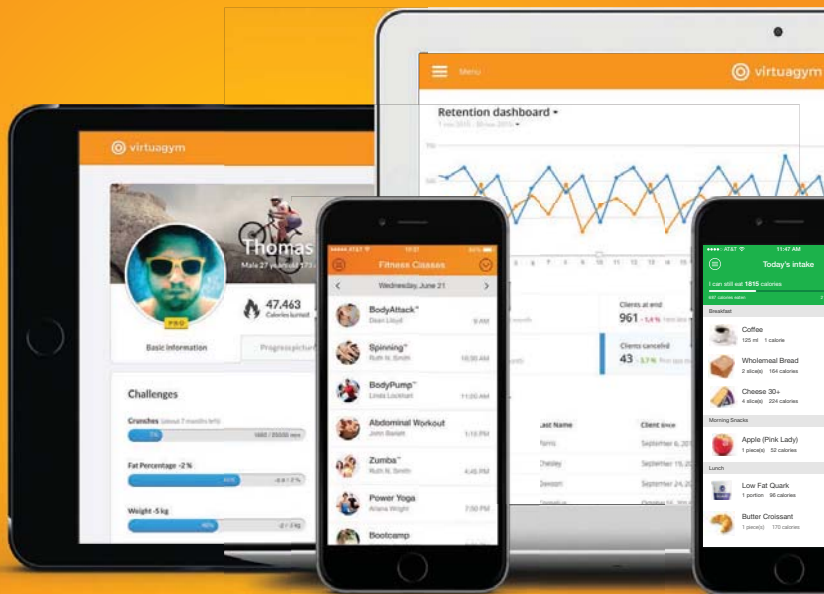
"Our study shows that three minutes of high-intensity exercise breaks down calcium channels in the muscle cells," said Professor Håkan Westerblad, principal investigator at Karolinska Institutet's Department of Physiology and Pharmacology. "This causes a lasting change in how the cells handle calcium, and is an excellent signal for adaptation, such as the formation of new mitochondria." ●

More may be accomplished with short bursts of vigorous exercise, in which patients achieve a higher maximum target heart rate

^{*}Westerblad et al. Ryanodine receptor fragmentation and sarcoplasmic reticulum Ca²⁺ leak after one session of high-intensity interval exercise. *PNAS*. November 2015

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