

health club management

APRIL 2017

No 245



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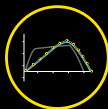


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APRIL 2017

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MONEY TALKS

What would an investor look for in your business? **p58**

SCHOOLS ON THE MOVE

Finland leads the way in getting kids active **p76**

STAY ON TRACK

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CREATING FANS

Why New Zealand has such loyal members **p82**

THE McFIT GLOBAL GROUP

The German fitness giant unveils two new health club brands **p42**

According to their recent industry survey, ASCM has officially named 2017 the year of wearable technology for the second year running. Contact MYZONE® to learn how gamification can lengthen member retention and drive ROI by increased new member engagement in the first 90 days.

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Restoring the personal touch

New research shows the extent to which members are disengaged and disenchanting with their clubs. Is it time to take a step back from all the hot-off-the-press innovations to focus on the basics: namely, speaking to customers?

Half of members get frustrated with their gym or health club, while 45 per cent are apathetic about it, reporting that nothing particularly great happens while they're there. This is the rather depressing topline finding of new UK research by The Retention People and Dr Melvyn Hillsdon.

More specifically, this new NPS (Net Promoter Score) study shows that 49 per cent of all members in the UK regularly experience a hassle at the club that they find annoying – and this is directly linked to them becoming a 'detractor' (someone who not only has no loyalty to the club, but who may also put negative thoughts in other members' minds and put prospects off joining).

Meanwhile, 45 per cent of members report no, or at best rare, 'uplifts' at the club – positive experiences that might go at least some way towards balancing out any hassles, but without which a member is likely to be neutral at best (what NPS classifies as a 'passive'). Worse still, 13 per cent of members report three or more regular hassles as well as a lack of uplifts. That's a shockingly high percentage of customers who already have a foot out of the door – but with fitness a service that, rightly or wrongly, many still feel they can do without, if we make them want to tear their hair out every time they visit and give them nothing to smile about, why on earth would they stay?

It needn't be this way though. On page 82 of this month's magazine, Leisure-net MD Mike Hill writes about his experiences in New Zealand, where the average NPS score is 70 per cent (compared to a UK average of just 34 per cent, and a US average of around 43 per cent). Hill gives his views on why this is – and it isn't rocket science. While



SoulCycle: Infectious enthusiasm among staff and riders

bears witness to an army of highly vocal fans (the so-called NPS 'promoters') all wanting to share their love for the brand.

So what did I think? Well... I'm a promoter too, after only one ride. And that's quite simply because – in addition to the great vibe created by the music, décor and a full class of 54 SoulCyclers at 7:00am – the staff delivered a first-class experience from the moment I walked in. Yes, you can book online, but you don't have to. When I'd popped in unannounced the day before, I'd had a warm welcome from an enthusiast-turned-staff member who couldn't have made me more excited about what I was about to experience... which turned out to be a party-like class led by an instructor whose infectious enjoyment rubbed off on you. And the personal touch continued after the class when my tweet, which demanded no response, nevertheless got one within the hour.

So SoulCycle embraces tech... but subtly, using it to support and add convenience to what remains a very human experience. Crucially, it doesn't replace people. Rather, it's used to build on and enhance the sense of community that's already been created in the studio.

And that's really important in this dizzying era of hi-tech change. Technology – from VR to AI to live streaming, plus a multitude of innovations not yet conceived – will transform our sector. But people still relate to other people. It's time to stop creating apps just because we think we should have one, and work out where tech can be implemented to genuinely enhance our offering.

Kate Cracknell
katecracknell@leisuremedia.com
[@healthclubcate](https://twitter.com/healthclubcate)

**SoulCycle embraces tech, but it does
 so subtly, using it to support and
 add convenience to what remains
 a very human experience**

much of the talk today revolves around technology's transformational impact on a business, it's a good old-fashioned focus on people which lies at the heart of New Zealand's soaring NPS results: community-building, strong personal relationships and great communication.

It was with all of these findings in mind that, while attending IHRSA in Los Angeles last month, I took the opportunity to visit a selection of the city's boutiques, and specifically the much-vaunted SoulCycle. NPS data doesn't exist for this operator, but the sheer volume of rave reviews that flood both social and traditional media

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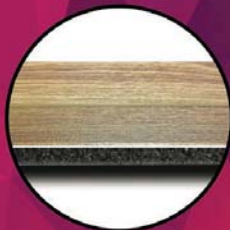
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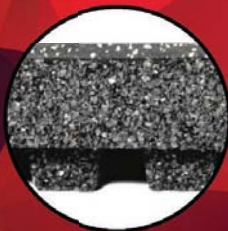
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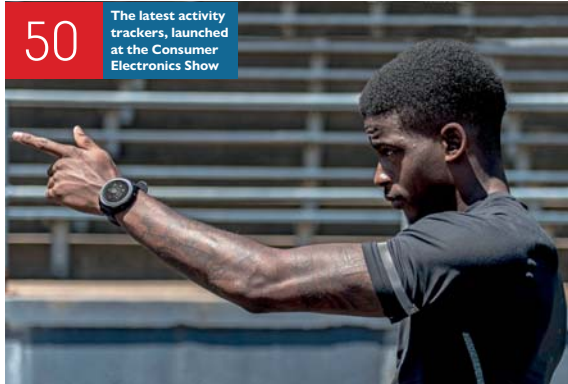
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Finland has
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McFIT: The German fitness giant shows no signs of slowing as it launches two new club brands

Money talks: Investors reveal what they are looking for in a fitness operation

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Lanserhof's Nils Behrens on aiming to be the world's leading medical spa brand

Mandarin Oriental's Jeremy McCarthy discusses the psychology of wellbeing



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Rio Ferdinand's Legacy Foundation: building communities around sport

Sports governance: A look at what the new code will mean for the sector

Eugene Minogue: the founder of Parkour UK explains why this sport can be life-changing



The Gym Group has posted record profits following its move onto the stock market

School children will receive discounted entry to World Para Athletics Championships

British Cycling's funding from UK sport is safe for now, despite credibility concerns



Husband-and-wife design team transform Bali holiday home into a wellbeing resort

Michelle Christensen has been appointed spa manager for Rosewood CordeValle spa

Two former banks in Bristol have been merged to form Bristol Harbour Hotel & Spa



Financial discipline remains a top priority for Seaworld, says CEO Joel Manby

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*IHSA Health Club Consumer Report (2011)

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Write to reply

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An opportunity to put mental health evidence into practice

Patrick Murphy, development services manager, South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture

I was interested to read your recent piece on how health clubs can get involved in mental health ('Emotional Wellbeing', HCM Feb 17, p52). South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture has not only recognised the percentage of

residents affected by mental health issues, but has made a conscious effort to embed solutions into our services.

This has not been a specific marketing tool but more a shift in organisational focus, which is very much welcomed by the recently formed Health and Social Care Partnership.

From an operational point of view, the key driver has been to engage GPs to proactively prescribe physical activity while

encouraging patients to 'invest in their health'. However, it has taken time to build partnerships with the NHS and convince GPs that services and programmes are both professional and have positive outcomes.

SLL&C has also noticed that not every mental health referral from a GP results in physical activity prescription. Many referrals instead focus on weight management, walking or even cultural pursuits like

reading or pottery. We do, however, have some specific programmes that are a perfect fit for people suffering from low mood, stress or anxiety like the Weigh To Go: New Mum, Active Mornings or Healthy Families programmes.

Unfortunately, I feel that both the general public and our health partners have a long way to go in discussing the stigma that surrounds mental health issues. I strongly feel there is a true opportunity to get behind the evidence that simple physical activity has an almost immediate benefit to an individual. We need to make that very clear when an individual seeks advice.



Patrick Murphy

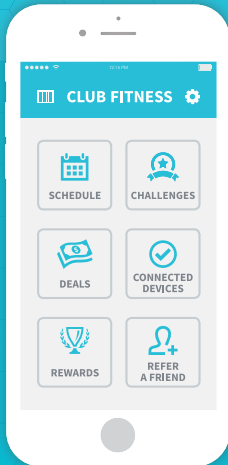
"Physical activity has an almost immediate benefit to an individual. We need to make this clear when they seek advice"



Exercise has been proven to alleviate mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety ▶

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By leaving fitness out of T Levels, the government is undermining its own strategy

Rob May, director, YMCA Awards

► In his first budget

announcement, the Chancellor pledged £500m to new 'T Levels', a technical alternative to A Levels. In doing so, the education routes for more than half of UK occupations have been left out in the cold.



Rob May

The definition of what constitutes a 'technical' occupation has never been properly explained. The 15 technical routes earmarked for investment were decided by a five-member panel and were included in the government's new Post-16 Skills Plan, without consultation, by the then Skills Minister Nick Boles.

Given previous pledges to restore the nation's health, it came as a great surprise when fitness was left out for not being 'technical enough'. This could drastically undermine the government's own ambition to reduce strain on the NHS by creating a more active nation.

The £4.4bn fitness sector isn't just about leisure time. It needs a rich supply of highly technical, trained professionals who can work with the rising number of patients referred by GPs, as well as hard-to-reach populations at grassroots level.

The investment in T Levels may result in training providers gravitating towards funding

and cancelling courses in neglected sectors. This will de-professionalise the sector and create future problems.

We need a properly funded skills strategy, aligned to the economic and health needs of the country. If the government is serious about improving the UK's health, it needs to invest in its future workforce now.



We need a rich supply of highly trained professionals

"If the government is serious about improving the UK's health, it needs to invest in its future workforce now"

Trampoline parks are not as risky as media reports make out

Gill Twell, head of group development and Quest operations, Right Directions

I was disappointed to read The Sun's recent article 'Flipping Dangerous', which stated that more than 35 people are taken to A&E every day with trampoline-related injuries.

With over 34 per cent of year six children (aged 10–11) currently overweight or obese

in the UK, it's important to find new and innovative ways to get them active. Trampoline parks have cornered this niche, by being so much fun, children don't even see it as exercise.

It's estimated that thousands of people visit trampoline parks every week; while injuries do

occur, they are few compared to the number of people using the parks, and considerably fewer than in sports such as rugby and football.

However, safety must be the number one concern, and that's why the International Association of Trampoline Parks was behind the launch of the BSI Publicly Accessible Specification (PAS) 5000:2017 that came into effect in March. Alongside our Trampoline Park Safety Operating Plan – which sets out how a trampoline park should operate on a day-to-day basis – the PAS helps operators identify key risks at



Gill Twell

both design and operational stages, establishing an effective approach to managing, if not entirely removing, the risk of injury to customers and staff.



Trampolining is so much fun, children don't realise it's exercise

"While injuries do occur, they are few compared to the number of people using the trampoline parks"

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Government policies are squeezing young people out of the industry

Gary Lockwood, CEO, 24/7 Fitness

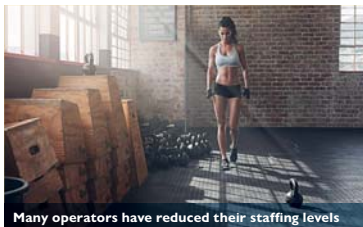
► **The last 10 years** has seen significant downward pressure on the price of gym memberships, with many clubs charging less for a membership today than they did a decade ago. At the same time, the UK government has repeatedly refused to remove VAT from gym memberships and has consistently increased the minimum wage.



Gary Lockwood

This, together with rapidly rising utility and facility costs, leaves many operators with shrinking profits and a dilemma. Raising prices in such a price-sensitive market is too bold a move for most, and with facility costs fixed, the only alternative is to employ fewer people.

Sites that previously employed 20 people are now running with two or three members of staff. Fitness instructors have been replaced with freelance personal trainers. No employment rights and no guaranteed income mean many PTs leave the industry for more secure work after only a short period. Meanwhile, most management positions are now rolled up into one multi-purpose manager with



Many operators have reduced their staffing levels

a tiny team and few upward progression prospects.

Fitness has traditionally been a haven for youngsters who

perhaps struggled academically. With so few jobs now available in the industry, what does the future hold for them?

"No employment rights and no guaranteed income mean many PTs leave the industry for more secure work"

Why hasn't customer service in health clubs improved yet?

Mike Hill, director, Leisure-net Solutions

It was good to read three great articles in the January 17 issue of *Health Club Management*, all on different aspects of customer service: Paul Bedford's 'War on attrition' (p48), Andy Bourne's 'A service culture' (p74) and Chris Brindley's 'Creating fans not customers' (p80).

However, if you look back at past issues of HCM you'll see similar messages from similarly enlightened contributors over the last 10 years. So why haven't things improved?

During the 14 years I've been running Leisure-net – with only a few exceptions – we



Mike Hill

haven't seen a measurable improvement in customer experience, despite the time, money and effort put in and the advances in technology, data

and insight. In fact, a lot of the 'new thinking' is made up of the same ideas many of us had over a decade ago, just wrapped up in new technology.

Increasingly, I believe the UK lacks a service culture. When visiting countries like the US, Chile and New Zealand, I see a different understanding of 'service' and pride in its delivery.

So can we change this culture? Perhaps, but it will take time, because we need to attract and recruit a different sort of person and spend time developing their communication and motivational skills. Then, finally, we must reward them

as the professionals we expect them to be, to stop them leaving for jobs that pay significantly more and are more highly valued by society. ●



It's important for staff to develop communication and motivation skills

"During the past 14 years, we haven't seen a measurable improvement in customer experience, despite the time, money and effort put in"

PEOPLE



It's no longer enough to pick up the bill when someone gets sick or injured – we need to get involved earlier



MATTHEW WARD

HEAD OF INNOVATION, AXA PPP HEALTHCARE

Insurance is arguably the only product in the world that you buy but never want to use," says Matthew Ward, head of innovation at AXA PPP Healthcare. "That doesn't sit very well with us, because it pitches us as the bad guys."

Ward is explaining the insurance giant's new strategy – a shift in focus from being a technical business to becoming a customer-led one.

Specifically, it plans to become a 'health partner', encouraging its customers to live healthier, more active lives.

"By taking steps to safeguard their health now, customers may lessen the likelihood of ill health – and requirement for medical treatment – in the future," explains Ward. "We've therefore realised we need to get involved earlier in the process. It's no longer enough to pick up the bill when someone gets sick or injured – we need to encourage people to be healthy and go to the gym, to try and prevent health issues from occurring in the first place."

Preventative approach

AXA is exploring a variety of ways to encourage this sort of preventative healthcare approach – not only through its own products, but also through partnerships and marketing.

"When it comes to medical insurance, cost is a key consideration for individuals," according to Ward.

"We asked ourselves what we could do for those who may not be able to



AXA wants to encourage its customers to take up exercise

afford full medical insurance. One of the options we've introduced is a cost-effective health assessment. With prices starting at £100, this assessment not only gives an individual insight into their current health and fitness level, but also provides an interactive, personalised health improvement plan."

Meanwhile, given the proven positive impact of exercise and activity on health, Ward believes it should be made as easy as possible for people to exercise.

With this in mind, last year AXA entered into a partnership with Pure Gym, whereby AXA members, employees and corporate clients get discounted gym memberships.

The company has also created social media campaigns designed to encourage healthier lifestyles, based around the hashtag, 'TryIt'.

The campaign challenges people to commit to small activities to boost their health and wellbeing, including a 'Caffeine Curfew', 'Walk 30' and 'Me Time'.

The best medicine

AXA is also looking at ways exercise can be used as treatment. "If someone has back pain and/or other musculoskeletal problems, an exercise programme comprising physiotherapy or yoga, for example, might alleviate the problem without the need for further treatment," explains Ward.

"We've therefore developed a service that provides our members with telephone access to an experienced physiotherapist for clinical assessment and referral. If self-management proves sufficient, the physio will recommend a tailored programme of exercises to alleviate the symptoms and prevent recurrence."

Detecting illness earlier is another area AXA is exploring: "We're working with a company called Biobeats, which is developing a piece of wearable technology that would be able to measure cardiac stress, and that would show the effect that stress and burnout can have on employees. This would allow for intervention before, for example, more serious heart or mental health problems materialise."

Ward adds: "We want to inspire our members to be healthy, and to make it easier and more cost-effective for them to live life well. That's what it's all about. By changing our strategy in this way, we're challenging people's assumptions about what they can expect from us. This is no small task, but we know it's the right way to go."



Ward wants to 'inspire members to be healthy and make it easier and more cost-effective for them to live well'



I rarely hear any of my riders talking about losing weight, yet the industry still pushes this as the main goal



BANGS AND A BUN

HEAD INSTRUCTOR AT BOOM CYCLE & FITNESS EDITOR FOR ELLE MAGAZINE

► Where did the name 'Bangs' come from?

I've had a blog called 'Bangs and a Bun' for years, so that's always been my handle on social media. My real name (Muireann Carey-Campbell) is of Irish origin, and people mispronounce it all the time. When people started calling me 'Bangs', it made things a lot easier!

How did you get into the fitness industry?

I actually had no intention of joining the industry. After being a couch potato for too long, I got into boxing and running in 2010 and started tweeting and blogging

about it. Before long, those became the most popular posts on my blog. I had people messaging me to tell me I'd motivated and inspired them.

I started getting groups of women together to train for half-marathons. It was more of a support group than anything else. I didn't know any more about running than anyone else, but I liked seeing the confidence boost in people when they were surrounded by a supportive group.

I had messages from people asking where they could train with me – they mistakenly thought I was a personal trainer. I figured, if people found me

motivational or inspiring in some way, I'd have to be the change I want to see, by getting into the industry and spreading the fitness message that worked for me.

How has your career progressed since then?

I started teaching BOOM Cycle classes in 2014. I really threw myself into becoming the best instructor I could be. Before long, I was promoted to master trainer, in charge of training up new instructors.

I loved this new part of my job and felt it was where I could really excel. I noticed a gap in the way we did training – we'd train people up, give them some classes to teach and that'd be it. I helped to expand the training programme so it's ongoing – once you've 'graduated', we do monthly assessments to help you grow and develop. We call it 'BOOMiversity' and I've since been promoted to Dean.

What do you think the industry needs to focus on?

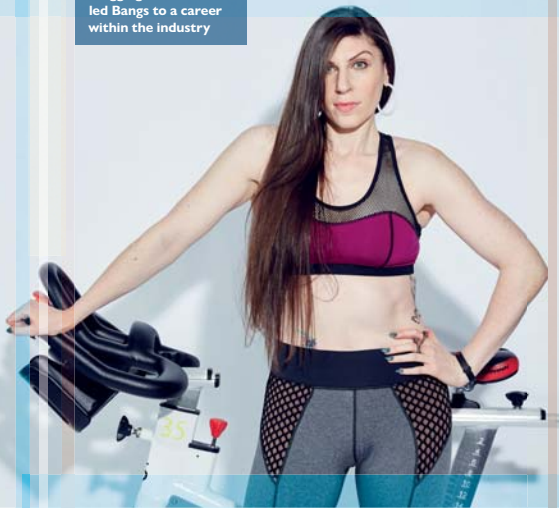
Mindfulness. I very rarely, if ever, hear any of my riders talking about losing weight, yet the industry still pushes this as the main goal. I believe it's now more about seeking a balanced lifestyle, de-stressing, boosting energy levels, being social, having fun and taking time out for yourself.

How important is social media in getting people active?

I think the rise of fitness blogs and columns has really helped. If you're looking to get active, there's so much information at your fingertips now. You'll find people with the same passions, interests, insecurities and struggles as you. It opens you up to a whole world of people who can motivate and inspire you.

On the flip side, platforms such as Instagram tend to reduce the benefits of fitness to purely aesthetic ones, and that can be intimidating when you're starting out. As with anything, I would say: find your tribe and what works for you and you'll be cruising. ►

Blogging about fitness led Bangs to a career within the industry





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We sit at the point where the fitness world meets the medical sector, offering a 'prehabilitative' approach to exercise



JOANNE MATHEWS

FOUNDER OF TEN HEALTH AND FITNESS

► Where did the idea for Ten Health & Fitness come from?

I was in a car accident and suffered a number of injuries, including severe whiplash, a fractured coccyx and soft tissue damage. The impact on my quality of life was significant. I was often in pain, I lost a lot of mobility and wasn't able to work for around six months.

I saw GPs, physios and sport massage therapists, all based in different practices and none very interested in a joined-up approach to my case. I became frustrated by this lack of consistency and joined a local rehab gym where I met David Higgins, a personal trainer who specialised in a dynamic form of pilates.

David had also recognised this lack of joined-up thinking in the sector, and together we saw a gap in the market for a boutique pilates studio that could offer both rehab and functional exercise. By combining my marketing background with David's fitness expertise, we felt we had a chance to make our business idea a reality.

Can you describe your offering?

We're not one of those 'get a beating in a nightclub' providers. Our focus is

on small classes and expert trainers.

Combine that with our in-house physiotherapy, massage and rehab offer and we occupy a really interesting place in the boutique fitness sector. We sit at the point where the fitness world meets the medical sector, offering a 'prehabilitative' approach to fitness and exercise.

How did you get started?

We were lucky to be one of the first entrants into the boutique fitness sector; when we started in 2007, no-one was entering the sector with the amount of funding we're seeing now. We were (and still pretty much are) self-funded, and had a really tight budget. When we opened, David taught 40 hours of classes a week while I manned the reception.

But we were in the right place at the right time, with a strong product. By the end of 2008, we were doing well enough to hire more trainers and open a second studio.

Where did the name

'Ten' come from?

We always felt a good name should mean everything and nothing. Think of brands like Apple, Gap, Reebok,

Audi... whatever the initial reason for the name, they've just become ciphers, a memorable short-hand for a brand or experience. We wanted to get to that point quickly with something short, memorable, different and recognisable, and also something that wouldn't limit us. Ten seemed to fit the bill.

How has business progressed?

Dynamic reformer pilates will always be at the heart of our business, but as we've grown we've been able to broaden our offering. We've recently introduced two new classes: TenStretch, a reformer-based stretch class; and TenYoga, developed in conjunction with physios to make it more suitable for today's sedentary and desk-bound lifestyles.

We've also used the learnings from our own in-house REPs-accredited training academy to launch TenEducation, which offers reformer-based courses for external fitness, rehab and therapy professionals. Our eighth studio opens in Fitzrovia, London, in a couple of months, but I think there's still room for growth.

How has the market changed?

The boutique fitness sector has grown exponentially since we opened. There's now much more competition for sites and rents have gone through the roof in recent years, which puts pressure on margins.

A relatively new challenge affecting us – and the sector – is the arrival of ClassPass and other aggregators. It's great that they're encouraging people to experiment and maybe fall in love with something they wouldn't have otherwise tried, but they're also in danger of devaluing what we do.

A ClassPass user can do a basic exercise-to-music class in a room full of 50 or 60 other people one day, and a highly specialist class with just a handful of people the next. But they're doing it all on the same monthly pass. So they're encouraged to value all classes – and all providers – the same, when they're patently not. It's something we have to manage carefully. ●



Dynamic reformer pilates remains at the core of Ten's offering



Mathews has seen the boutique fitness sector grow exponentially since she launched her studio brand in 2007



Four-time Paralympic medalist, long jumper Lex Gillette, at a 24 Hour Fitness club in San Diego

24 Hour Fitness signs US Olympic partnership

US-based fitness operator 24 Hour Fitness has signed a pioneering partnership with the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) for the run up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The deal, which will see 24 Hour Fitness expand its role as the official fitness partner of Team USA, is part of USOC's desire to "provide more programmes and training resources for future Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls".

Among the innovative elements of the partnership – believed to be the only one between a fitness operator and an Olympic body – is the USOC Certification Program, developed exclusively for 24 Hour Fitness personal trainers.

As part of the programme, USOC will create sport-specific courses for fitness professionals working at 24 Hour Fitness.

[Read more online](#)

Title Boxing Club plans major expansion

Title Boxing Club is set to open more than 70 new clubs in the US northeast over the next three years.

The boxing fitness franchise has identified specific areas in which it will look to accelerate its growth – namely New York City, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C. and Virginia. It currently has 10 sites operating in the region.

In addition to the Northeast, the franchise looks to target areas it already has a strong presence in – such as Denver, Houston, Atlanta, Austin and Chicago. In total, the company is planning to

open 40 to 50 new clubs throughout 2017.

"Demand for Title Boxing Clubs continues to grow as people seek fun, empowering activities that fuel a healthy lifestyle," said Susan Boresow, president of Title Boxing Club.

Founded in 2008, Title Boxing Club started franchising in 2009 and has since exploded domestically – and also has plans to expand internationally. The brand is marketed as a premium boxing fitness concept, offering group boxing and kickboxing workouts.

[Read more online](#)



Title plans to open up to 50 new clubs during 2017

Fitness First opens ladies-only gyms in Saudi Arabia

Fitness First Middle East will launch ladies-only gyms in Saudi Arabia this year, complementing the existing portfolio of men's clubs it has in the Kingdom.

In line with new regulations issued by Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Sports, the operator will be recruiting internationally qualified female personal trainers.

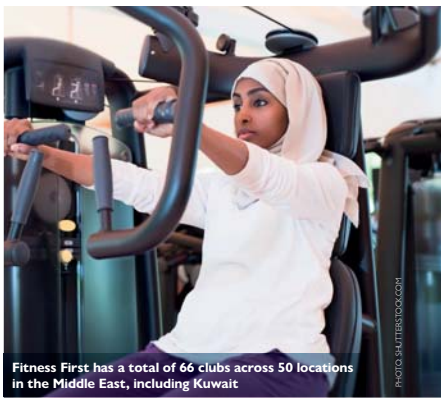
The clubs will offer classes, including BodyPump, Zumba, RPM and exclusive group training 6D, which is based on six dimensions of fitness: move, lift, core, burn, function and recover. Members will also be able to use other Fitness First ladies-only clubs in other countries. The operator has a network of female-only gyms across the United Arab

Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan and Kuwait.

In February, Princess Reema bint Bandar, vice president for women's affairs at the sports authority said that Saudi Arabia would begin granting licenses for women's gyms. Saudi Arabia wants to increase the percentage of people exercising at least once a week from the current 13 per cent to 40 per cent by 2030.

George Flocks, Fitness First Middle East chief operating officer, said: "Fitness First is excited to be bringing ladies-only gyms to the Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia. Our concept will have more than 70 GX classes a week and will be purpose built for ladies."

[Read more online](#)



Fitness First has a total of 66 clubs across 50 locations in the Middle East, including Kuwait



Founded in 2004, Retro Fitness has evolved from a regional gym concept into a national fitness chain

Retro Fitness on track for 100 new openings by 2019

US-based low-cost operator Retro Fitness is on track to hit its target of securing 100 new sites by the end of 2018.

The franchise-based group opened 14 gyms and signed more than 20 new franchise agreements for new or emerging market development in 2016.

There are currently 155 Retro Fitness-branded sites

operating across the US – four of which have opened during 2017. Last year, the group announced a target of having 250 sites by 2019.

According to Retro Fitness CEO Eric Casaburi, a key factor to the chain's success has been its strategy to adopt proven, popular fitness trends and making them accessible for a wide range of consumers.

"We're taking the best of functional training and boot camp classes and making it a far more effective and affordable fitness regimen for our members than what they would get at a boutique fitness studio," Casaburi explained.

"Our members can join at the lowest training membership tier and get the same workout that they would pay US\$149/

month for at a boutique concept. We are innovating fitness and doing it at affordable prices, something we've done since our inception."

Founded by Casaburi in 2004, Retro Fitness has evolved from a regional gym concept into a national fitness system with gyms open in 16 states.

[Read more online](#)

Merger sees creation of Evolution Wellness

Celebrity Fitness and Fitness First Asia have merged to create one of the largest fitness club networks in Asia. The new entity, Evolution Wellness, will comprise 152 wholly-owned fitness clubs across the continent, with 400,000 members and a staff of 7,000.

Fitness First Asia has clubs in Hong Kong (9), Indonesia (11), Malaysia (12), Philippines (13), Singapore (17) and Thailand (28). Celebrity Fitness has operations in Malaysia (23), Indonesia (35) and Singapore (4).

Celebrity Fitness and Fitness First Asia recorded revenues of US\$76million (£61.4m, €72.1m) and US\$219m (£176.9m, €207.7m) respectively for the 2016 financial year.

Simon Flint, Evolution Wellness CEO, said: "We're turning the page and beginning an exciting new chapter. Joining forces will allow us to operate with increased scale, reach and efficiency in the region."



Simon Flint, CEO

[Read more online](#)



Lauren Foundos, FORTÉ co-founder

FORTÉ launches live streaming platform

Tech firm FORTÉ has launched a subscription-based streaming platform, offering live and on-demand boutique fitness classes.

Classes are broadcast by using technology that FORTÉ has developed and installed in their partner studios, enabling workouts to be shared worldwide. Headquartered in New York, US, it is partnering a number of US studios and plans to partner studios from other countries within the next six months.

Users pay a monthly or annual subscription, which FORTÉ then revenue shares to its partners. Studios are paid each month based on the amount of minutes their classes are streamed.

[Read more online](#)

Chancellor's Budget 'fails to tackle inactivity crisis'



Philip Hammond delivered the Budget on 8 March

Chancellor Philip Hammond's Spring Budget was a "missed opportunity" for the government to demonstrate its commitment to tackling the nation's physical inactivity crisis, ukactive executive director Steven Ward has said.

Hammond confirmed a shake-up of vocational and technical education in England, outlining a Post-16 Skills Plan that specifies 15 core areas of employment that the framework will deliver.

Sport and physical activity was not one of the 15 areas, despite equivalent-sized industries such as hairdressing, catering and hospitality being named. The reforms are based on recommendations from a 2016 report into technical education by an independent panel, chaired by Lord Sainsbury. A total of £100m (US\$121.5m, €115.1m) will be allocated in 2019/20 for the

first technical level qualifications and this will rise to more than £500m (US\$607.5m, €575.9m) by 2022.

During his Budget speech, the chancellor said investing in education and skills would help tackle the UK's productivity gap and that a recurring concern was whether young people were being taught the relevant attributes needed.

In response to the announcement, Ward said: "The Budget represents a missed opportunity for the government to deliver clear action on its commitment to tackle Britain's physical inactivity crisis."

"The glaring omission of sport and physical activity from the 15 career pathways under the new Post-16 Skills Plan drastically underestimates the importance of our sector to the future of UK PLC."

[Read more online](#)

JONATHAN BRADY/PAARCHIVE/PA IMAGES

The group is set to expand further in the UK



Gymbox profit surges

London-based gym chain Gymbox experienced a 28.2 per cent surge in profits as its expansion gathered pace in 2016. The firm's membership base grew to 24,000, with several signing up at its newest clubs in Old Street, Stratford and Victoria.

Gymbox also opened a ninth club in Farringdon, which features a three-lane running track and the largest free weights area in London.

As a result, its gross profit grew from £12.4m (US\$15.1m, €14.3m) in 2015 to £15.9m (US\$19.4m, €18.3m) in 2016. Revenues also mushroomed from £13.1m (US\$16m, €15.1m) to £16.8m (US\$20.5m, €19.4m) over the same period.

The expansion is set to continue after the company secured a £39m (US\$47.5m, €45m) funding package in October 2016.

[Read more online](#)

£1.3bn David Lloyd sale

TDR Capital, the owner of the David Lloyd gyms, is gearing up to sell the chain in a £1.3bn deal following its recent acquisition of 16 Virgin Active clubs.

According to a report in the *Daily Telegraph*, a number of private equity firms are circling the mid-market brand ahead of an official auction in the summer.

David Lloyd was bought by TDR for £750m in 2013. It's estate comprises 83 fitness clubs in the UK and a further 12 on the continent, in the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.

That number will eventually rise to 111 clubs overall once the acquisition has been rubberstamped by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), although a formal investigation is still due to get under way.

[Read more online](#)



DLL was bought by TDR for £750m in 2013

Archaic' planning laws blocking gym projects

"Archaic" town planning laws are blocking fitness businesses from having impactful presences on English high streets, which are "drowning in betting shops and fried chicken joints", according to ukactive chair, Tanni Grey-Thompson.

Talking at the fitness body's Sweat conference, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson said the government should plot a radical overhaul of regulations to make it easier for gyms and health clubs to reach more of the country's population.

England's National Planning Policy Framework currently stipulates that gyms and leisure centres can only occupy Class D2 category buildings, whereas retail shops can occupy "far



Tanni Grey-Thompson called for a change in planning

more abundant" A1 buildings – i.e. on the high street.

"Archaic planning laws currently make it easier to

open takeaways and betting shops than businesses that make a positive contribution – economically, socially and

physically – to the community," said the Paralympic legend.

Calling for more flexible business rates for fitness companies, she added: "Health and fitness operators breathe life and vibrancy into the UK's high streets, which are currently drowning in a sea of betting shops, fried chicken joints and empty shop windows that cannot be filled."

Research by the Royal Society of Public Health has recently found that unhealthy high streets are commonly linked to deprived areas and towns that have a larger proportion of people suffering with ill health.

[Read more online](#)

Alliance secures UK-wide leisure framework

Facility development specialist Alliance Leisure has been appointed to lead a new UK leisure framework, which could help providers around the country to save cash and time when it comes to developing facilities in their area.

As Denbighshire County Council's partner in the scheme, Alliance Leisure will be at the forefront of the delivery of design, refurbishment, construction, equipping and development of leisure centres, theatres, play, recreation and sports facilities across the UK public sector. It will also provide marketing support. The two organisations have worked together on eight projects over the past four years and are now offering their expertise through the model. They say that the new framework will make it easier and more cost-effective for public sector providers to scope, develop and deliver physical leisure developments.

The framework, which is available until January 2021, has a potential value of £750m (US\$923.5m, €874.7m).

[Read more online](#)



Hugh Evans, council leader; Paul Cluett, Alliance Leisure managing director; Jamie Groves, the council's head of facilities, assets and housing



Alan Shearer at the opening of the Cork-based club

Speedflex opens in Ireland

Former England football captain Alan Shearer has opened a 760sq ft (70.6sq m) Speedflex studio at The Health Club in The Kingsley Hotel in Cork, Ireland. The studio, which is open to both members and hotel guests, is Speedflex's ninth.

Sessions are performed in a group with up to 16 participants in a studio environment, offering high intensity interval training (HIIT) that uses hydraulic machine-based technology.

The machines allow users to perform traditional exercises, such as squats and shoulder press, and generate personalised resistance levels so every individual can train at their own level.

Suitable for all ages and abilities, the harder a person pushes the machine, the more resistance they face. A typical session includes a combination of Speedflex machines and auxiliary stations. The combination delivers the benefits of HIIT, but does so with minimum risk of injury and reduced post-exercise pain.

[Read more online](#)

NICE: Gyms should highlight risks of drugs

Gyms should display posters and mount social media campaigns to highlight the risks of drug misuse, a new health guideline says.

The guideline, which has been published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), says that local authorities should work with venues, such as gyms, nightclubs and pubs, to target people who may use drugs, or are at risk from doing so.

The document, titled 'Drug misuse prevention: targeted interventions', says people in gyms "who are taking, or considering taking, image- and performance-enhancing drugs" should be targeted.

Around one in 12 adults had taken an illicit drug between

2015 and 2016, equating to 2.7 million people. For children and young people aged 11-15, statistics from 2014 show that 10 per cent of school children had taken drugs.

The new guideline, which covers illegal drugs as well as 'legal highs' and prescription medicines, says that information should make people aware of support services and how to access online tools to assess their own drug use.

Professor Gillian Leng, deputy chief executive at NICE, said: "We want to help prevent people at risk of drug misuse from taking drugs. We also want to prevent people who already use drugs from using them



Prof Leng wants to help prevent drug misuse

regularly and to excess. Local authorities and public health teams in local government will play an important role when helping to implement our recommendations on drug misuse prevention.

"We hope to see them bridging the gap and working together with venue owners, local health services and social care to help prevent drug

misuse in people, including children and young people, who are at risk."

Professor David Croisdale-Appleby, chair of the guideline committee, said: "We urge venue managers and healthcare services to consider the guidelines to help prevent people from misusing drugs."

[Read more online](#)

Ten Health and Fitness to open eighth studio

Fitness operator Ten Health and Fitness is launching a 2,700sq ft (251sq m) studio in west London's Fitzrovia at the beginning of May. The studio will be its eighth in the capital city, and as well as offering Ten's Reformer Pilates classes, physiotherapy, massage therapy, rehabilitation and personal training, it will also be home to athleisure brand HPE's (Human Performance Engineering) first ever retail store in the UK.

Ten stocks a selection of HPE's clothing at its other studios in Little Venice, Mayfair, St James, Chiswick, Hatton Gardens, Notting Hill and The City.

The Fitzrovia studio will also be home to the TenEducation programme – its external training for fitness professionals. The training and education business offers industry-accredited courses to exercise professionals in the UK.

Its Dynamic Reformer course has been designed for Pilates teachers and personal trainers wanting to improve their equipment and training knowledge, as well as for physiotherapists, osteopaths, rehabilitation specialists, sports therapists and other exercise professionals.

"We're really excited about the launch of TenEducation," said Joanne Mathews, Ten's founder (see also p26).



Joanne Mathews

[Read more online](#)

Everyone Active lands 20-year leisure contract

Everyone Active has signed a 20-year deal to provide sports and leisure facilities in the East Hampshire area, which will involve almost £30m (US\$36.9m, €35m) of investment in two new leisure centres and extensive redevelopment of another.

New facilities will be built in Alton and in Whitehill and Bordon, with money invested in Taro Leisure Centre in Petersfield.

East Hampshire District Council and Everyone Active will invest £29.5m (US\$36.2m, €34.4m) in the three projects.

Work at the Taro centre will begin this year while the two new facilities will be built simultaneously in 2019.

The site at Alton will include a six-lane 25metre pool, a six-court sports hall,

two fitness studios, squash courts and a gym.

The Whitehill and Bordon centre will feature a six-lane 25m pool, two fitness studios, a learner pool and a gym.

Work at Taro Leisure

Centre will include improvements to the reception area, redevelopment of the fitness studio and refurbishment of the changing rooms.

Councillor

Richard Millard, the council's deputy leader, said: "We can look forward to two brand new leisure centres and improved facilities across the district. The commercial elements written into the contract will ensure the facilities will generate profits that the council will invest in improved services provision at no cost to the council."



Richard Millard

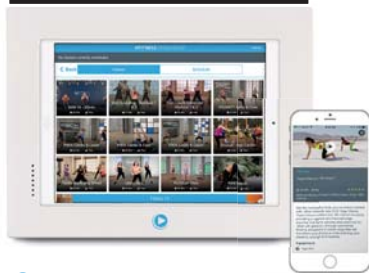
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Tech news

Technogym and IBM to bring artificial intelligence to fitness

Italy-based equipment supplier Technogym has joined forces with computer giant IBM as part of plans to develop an artificial intelligence-driven, "cognitive coaching platform" for the health, fitness and wellness markets.

The partnership aims to create a "human-like" virtual coach, with the ability to

interact with people using natural language.

The vision is for the coach to offer personalised training programmes, based on people's individual needs, while taking into consideration a multitude of context conditions – such as weather and the person's health metrics and diet.

Integrating IBM's cognitive computing and utilising the Internet of Things, the coach will be native to Technogym's MyWellness platform and able to interact with the user, managing data, evaluating results and guiding users during their workouts.

Nerio Alessandri, founder and CEO of Technogym, said: "Our goal has always been to offer our users a personalised



The virtual coach will be available through MyWellness

training experience via connected equipment, services and content capable of interacting with them.

"Our collaboration with IBM represents a further step towards the creation of an increasingly customised and engaging training experience for our clients."

Alessandri added that he is hoping for industry operators and personal trainers to benefit from the new virtual coaching platform, as it can be harnessed to assist clients and club members while they train outside the facilities.

[Read more online](#)



Nerio Alessandri

Software company benefits from studio boom

US-based software specialist Zenrez has credited the increasing popularity of boutique fitness and yoga studios among the millennial generation for its rapid growth.

The company, which offers management software tools for fitness studios, recently raised US\$10m in private funding, which it will use to expand into major cities across the country – and to leverage its technology to expand into other fitness and wellness services.

Matthew Capizzi, Zenrez's co-founder and CEO, said the company was benefitting from a trend of studios coming up with new ways of engaging – and retaining – customers.

"Fitness classes are the preferred method of workout style for millennials and boutique studios offer the highest quality experience," Capizzi said.

"Boutique studios have moved away from the old

big-box gym subscription breakage model, and instead, have opted for a more consumer-friendly but also more complex model in the form of pay-as-you-go packs. Therefore, they need much more sophisticated solutions to effectively manage their business – and that's what we've built with Zenrez."

A recent report by IHRSA showed that from 2012 to 2015, consumer-reported membership in traditional fitness clubs grew by 5 per cent, while in studios the number grew by 70 per cent.

[Read more online](#)



Matt Capizzi

Wearables 'not dead, just shifting focus'



The wearable market is still seeing healthy growth

The latest report charting the wearables market has suggested that the sector is in "good health" – and that there are signs that the focus and demand of consumers is increasingly shifting towards wellness tech.

According to the *Worldwide Quarterly Wearable Device Tracker* report, by International Data Corporation (IDC), the global wearables market reached a new all-time high as shipments reached 33.9 million units in the fourth quarter of 2016, growing by 16.9 per cent year over year.

In the report, IDC states that in the past few months, two major app platforms, WatchOS and Android Wear, have pivoted towards fitness and health applications, as the ability for apps to run third party apps has "taken a back seat".

"Like all technology, wearables are changing," said Ramon Llamas, research manager for IDC's Wearables team. "Smart wearables are evolving. Fitness remains a major focus, but once the devices become connected to cellular networks, expect unique apps and communications capabilities to be available."

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Supplier and training news

Retention Convention to focus on happy workforces

The Retention Convention will focus on the impact a happy workforce has on retaining leisure centre, gym and health club members at its event in May.

Now in its third year, Dr Paul Bedford – who founded the conference in 2015 – will be joined by Justin Tamsett, Lexie Griffiths and Keith Smith.

Tamsett, a former health club owner and now a business mentor and coach, will share seven key areas to building a winning team during his session 'Building Retention Starts Off The Field'.

Tamsett, managing director of Active Management, which shares practical ideas from outside the industry that can be implemented to stay ahead and grow profitability, said: "We can use a game of sport

as an analogy for the retention challenge. Our staff are the players on the field, competing hard and carrying out our game

plan. The strategies we build will win the game.

"But as any sportsman knows, many games are won

(or lost) on what happens on the practice pitch and in the locker room."

Owner of the professional development programme Sizzle Maker, Lexie Griffiths will deliver a session that will share tips and strategies to help brands create fans. Griffiths, who is coaching Holmes Place Clubs and the Johnson Health Tech UAE team, has experience of working with high-profile companies, including Mercedes-Benz and L'Oréal.

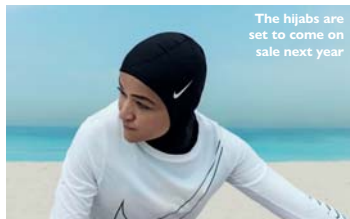
Dr Bedford said: "This year we want to take a different focus. Throughout the day delegates will hear about staff retention strategies."

The convention takes place at the Manchester Conference Centre on Thursday 18 May.



Dr Paul Bedford first set up the conference in 2015

[Read more online](#)



The hijabs are set to come on sale next year

Nike targets Middle East fitness market with hijab

Nike is planning to launch a hijab for female Muslim athletes, as it looks to tap into the Middle East fitness market.

The pull-on design has been made from durable single-layer Nike Pro mesh, which is breathable and stretchy, and allows for a personalised fit that adapts to both the wearer's head and her sport. The sportswear firm were made aware of problems with wearing a traditional hijab after meeting with athletes. Amna Al Haddad, a female weightlifter from the United Arab Emirates, said the traditional garment's weight, the potential for it to shift during action and its lack of breathability regularly disrupted her focus during training and competition.

Nike's design team created a range of prototype hijabs for testing by athletes from around the Middle East. As each country has its own particular hijab style, Nike asked the opinions of a number of advocates and local communities.

[Read more online](#)

Myzone reaches installation milestone

Global wearable tech company Myzone has completed its 4,000th installation at Fitness World, Durham in North Carolina, US. The wearable tracker and activity system, which uses real time heart rate monitoring, social media and smartphone-based gamification to track and incentivise its users, will be used to track heart rate during personal training sessions at the facility. Myzone's game-based platform has been designed for all abilities, with responsive targets and personal feedback for each individual.

Fitness World will incorporate Myzone technology into its athletic movement and training programme.

[Read more online](#)





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Active IQ welcomes Donohoe, Keely and Chapman



Tad Chapman is Active IQ's business development manager

Fitness and leisure qualification body Active IQ has strengthened its team with the addition of three senior appointments.

Former YMCA head of quality and operations Michael Donohoe has been hired as head of operations, where he will be responsible for "streamlining" Active IQ's systems and processes.

Donohoe has been joined by Valerie Keeley and Tad Chapman.

The former has become Active IQ's external verifier for the North West region and will be responsible for ensuring quality assurance across training providers.

Chapman is the company's new business development

manager. Previously the workforce development manager at SkillsActive, Chapman will make sure Active IQ's qualifications meet the needs of employers across the sport and physical activity sectors.

Jenny Patrickson, Active IQ managing director, said the trio joins the organisation "at a time when there has never been more importance for the need of quality assured training for fitness".

"With their combined industry knowledge and experience I am confident that they will help Active IQ grow and fulfil our ambitious aims this year and beyond."

[Read more online](#)

TRIB3 hires European MD as part of global strategy

Boutique gym operator TRIB3 has recruited Rod Hill as its European managing director. The appointment comes as the operator is in advanced talks with a private equity firm. TRIB3 is looking to raise capital and open its concept in Spain and Russia, before moving into other European countries.

The expansion into Europe is planned to begin with Spain's Barcelona and Madrid in the second quarter of 2017, with St Petersburg and Moscow, in Russia expected to follow shortly after. The operator,

which has three studios in Sheffield, also plans to open a further 15 sites in the UK.

Hill began his career in health and fitness as a trainer at Fitness First in 1992 and went on to help develop the chain from one gym to more than 450 in 20 countries.

During this period he moved to Barcelona where he lives with his family.

Hill has also worked for Anytime Fitness in Spain, helping set up 30 clubs throughout the country in the last three years.

Kevin Yates, TRIB3 managing director, said: "With more than 15 franchisees already signed up to take a TRIB3 store, our main goal is now to secure the European market – and I'm confident with Rod Hill and his international experience behind us, we are well placed as a business to deliver our operating goal."



Rod Hill joins TRIB3

[Read more online](#)

IHRSA names 22 Rising Stars for 2017



Erica Tillinghast is among the 22 "Rising Stars"

The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) has revealed the 2017 cohort of its Rising Stars initiative. The IHRSA Rising Stars initiative was founded to showcase promising young talent – those aged 35 or younger – within the health and fitness sector.

A total of 22 industry professionals from across the globe were named at IHRSA's 36th Annual International Convention & Trade Show in Los Angeles in March.

One of those to have been selected, Precor's global education manager Erica Tillinghast said the initiative is a great way to recognise the talent within the fitness industry. "I am thrilled to have been identified as a Rising Star in recognition for the work I undertake and for what I have achieved," she said.

[Read more online](#)



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Sam, Crown Sports Lockers



"A flexible approach always helps when fine-tuning a project if client requirements shift"
Spencer, Crown Sports Lockers

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EVENTS CALENDAR

APRIL

6-9 | FIBO 2017

Exhibition Centre, Cologne, Germany

FIBO is the world's leading trade show for health, fitness and wellness, offering an international platform for managers, distributors, suppliers, investors and decision makers across the industry.
www.fibo.com

12-13 | BASES 2017

University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, UK

This year's theme is Clinical Exercise Science based on practice and research involving exercise as a treatment for cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease and metabolic disorders.
www.bases.org.uk

20 | eGym NEXT

The Goldsmiths Centre, Farringdon London

eGym NEXT is the first event exclusive to fitness professionals to deliver business success strategies for the digital connection of the training floor.

With a second event at Etihad Stadium Manchester on 2 May, eGym NEXT features seminars from experts on digitalisation and the importance of connectivity between hardware and software. Practical workshops provide valuable information to help clubs thrive.
www.bit.ly/NEXT-UK



CHARITY EVENT

6-15 October 2017

India Himalayas Trek, India

Trek through the Himalayas and raise money for people with terminal illnesses and their families. This Marie Curie charity event takes you through a region of India that is home to nine of the ten highest mountains in the world and some of the most dramatic sights on earth. You'll see bustling Delhi, walk through forests to Kareri village, navigate Indrhar Pass and see the granite rock of Lahesh Cave.

Distances will be around 12-14 km per day (around 7-8 hours). Registration is £250 and participants must raise a minimum sponsorship of £3,450.
www.mariecurie.org.uk

28-30 | Fitness & Health Expo ICC, Sydney, NSW, Australia

The southern hemisphere's largest fitness and health expo, with world-class events, fitness demonstrations and tips on leading a healthy and active lifestyle. The opening expo is being held at the newly refurbished ICC Sydney, with

further expos being held in Perth (6-7 August), Melbourne (13-15 October) and Brisbane (21-22 October).
www.fitnessexpo.com.au

MAY

3-4 | Millennial 20/20

The Old Truman Brewery, London

Millennial 20/20 will gather more than 2,000 brands, companies, founders and start-ups to examine and understand the highly desirable Millennial consumer and the future marketplace they create.
www.millennial20-20.com/london2017

10-11 | Elevate ExCel, London, UK

The UK's second cross-sector event, bringing together academia, healthcare, government, the physical activity sector and performance experts to focus on an increasingly important and complex societal challenge – turning the tide on inactivity.
www.elevatearena.com

CHARITY EVENT

17 June 2017

Edinburgh Night Ride Edinburgh, UK

Edinburgh Night Ride is a one day charity bike ride event. Pedalling 50 miles around Edinburgh you'll pass numerous iconic landmarks and sights, including Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh Castle, The Forth Bridges, Scottish Parliament Buildings and Holyrood Palace. Registration starts from £90 per person, and you are encouraged to raise funds for your chosen charity.
www.edinburgh-nightride.com/





THE McFIT GLOBAL GROUP

Kate Cracknell speaks to the management team at the German fitness giant about the rapid growth of its new premium chain, the launch of a corporate fitness offering, and a brand new virtual fitness club

“Our vision as a Group is to have all the solutions you need for your fitness lifestyle,” says Pierre Geisensetter, spokesperson for the McFIT Global Group. “We’re pretty much there.”

That’s a bold statement, but when you look at the breadth of the offering within the McFIT Global Group – the newly formed umbrella company – you have to acknowledge that the team does seem to have most of the bases covered. Its health club chains span both low-cost and premium offerings, there’s a nutrition brand, and customised at-home fitness is provided via its own apps (see The McFIT Family, p45). It even has its own sports model agency.

THE HOME OF FITNESS

So what’s the story behind this fitness mega-brand – how has it reached the position it occupies today?

“McFIT was founded in 1997 by Rainer Schaller, who had an ambition to make fitness training affordable for all,” explains Geisensetter. “The first McFIT club opened in Bavaria, Germany, with the strapline ‘The fitness hall for all’. In the 20 years since then, the chain has grown to 243 clubs in Europe.

“But while the overall philosophy has stayed very much the same – making fitness affordable – the offering has evolved. In 2012, McFIT introduced a new concept: ‘Home of Fitness’. The pricing was still discount, but the offering now looked and felt premium. We added modular training systems in our gyms, and for the first time had group exercise in the shape of cyber training.

“By the end of this year, all our clubs will be at the ‘Home of Fitness’ standard, and that makes them very special.

“And we believe there’s plenty of opportunity for further growth, even in Germany where we have the majority of our clubs: only 12 per cent of the population is exercising at the moment, but the market grew by 4.2 per cent last year. We can do a lot more here.”

But that view is, he agrees, based on the strong position McFIT already has in the market. “If I were looking at the low-cost market now as a potential new entrant, I wouldn’t go there – not with McFIT in the mix. So I’m happy we’re the big player. It means we can concentrate on our own business. It’s good to have competition, but we don’t spend too much time looking at what they’re doing. We channel our energies into taking our own brands where we want them to go.”

He continues: “Looking beyond Germany, we also see a lot of potential across Europe. The market is changing, with growing interest in fitness-orientated lifestyles. We’ve just opened more clubs in Poland and Italy and have three more coming up in Spain.”

And then there’s the matter of the new parent company, which tellingly has been named the McFIT Global Group. Are there corresponding plans to push beyond Europe and into other parts of the world, I ask? Geisensetter smiles, in a way that suggests there are details he’s not willing to share at this stage. “We’re thinking about that for sure. If you’re



If you’re the biggest player in Europe, it’s only natural to think about how you might take your operation overseas – Pierre Geisensetter



OLIVER
SCHULOKAT
MANAGING
DIRECTOR AT
CYBEROBICS

MARCUS ADAM
HEAD OF MARKETING
AND MUSIC,
JOHN REED FITNESS
MUSIC CLUBS

PIERRE
GEISENSETTER
SPOKESMAN FOR
THE MCFIT GLOBAL
GROUP





HIGH5 is a small footprint, functional fitness studio brand offered at an affordable price

- the biggest player in Europe, it's only natural to think about how you might take your operation overseas. But right now, we're just taking a look at the market."

PORTFOLIO GROWTH

That topic gently sidelined, we move on to discussing the second brand out of the McFIT stable: the small footprint, functional fitness studio brand HIGH5, which launched in Berlin in April 2015.

"The idea behind HIGH5 was to make fitness training even more affordable," says Geisensetter. "McFIT was already low-cost, but HIGH5 is half the price of McFIT – just €9.90 a month.

"But again, the studios don't look discount. They look like sports and athletic training facilities in US colleges – and they attract a clientele to match. People don't really come for the price. They come because they're really into their sports. As a result, we haven't really experienced cannibalisation from our other brands."

Then, in April 2016 – just one year after the first HIGH5 opened – the McFIT Group unveiled its next big launch: virtual class content under the brand name Cyberobics.

Managing director Oliver Schulokat takes up the story:

"When we launched the 'Home of Fitness' concept for McFIT in 2012, we'd already identified the huge potential of virtual training. From the outset, we decided not to work with

live trainers, but instead to have group exercise rooms with our own self-produced Cyber Training content.

"Compared with what we have now it was quite basic, with an instructor showing the exercises and giving advice against a white background. But in spite of that, it was very successful: we got many more people into our classes, and particularly women.

"In 2014, we therefore decided to develop a new virtual product. We wanted to make Cyber Training more of an experience for the user, so we brought in expertise from the attractions sector. That resulted in us going to New York to film two workouts with celebrity personal trainer David Kirsch, on a rooftop with a view down to Manhattan.

"Our group exercise rooms were packed as soon as those classes went live. We felt we'd found a new formula for virtual training: workouts with the best trainers in the US, taking place in the most breathtaking locations in the world. That was the beginning of Cyberobics."

In addition to using Cyberobics as a USP in its own portfolio of health clubs,

Cyberobics licences are also available to non-competitors, and to all operators in countries where McFIT has no presence. "We're talking to operators around the world, and especially in the UK," confirms Schulokat.

A NEW CLUB FRANCHISE

Cyberobics is also working on other vertical markets, hotels being one. "There are two possible models, either



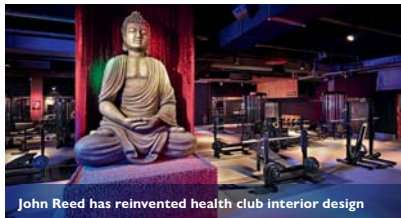
We'll open a few Cyberobics-branded clubs as corporately-owned sites, but this model will also be franchised – *Oliver Schulokat*



The **HIGH5** concept resembles the sports training facilities offered in US colleges



McFIT now has almost 250 clubs across Europe



John Reed has reinvented health club interior design



Cyberobics is McFIT's innovative virtual class concept

THE MCFIT FAMILY

McFIT: The grandfather of budget health club chains, McFIT was founded by Rainer Schaller in 1997, with the first club opening in Bavaria, Germany. His mission to make fitness training affordable for all resonated with the public and the chain grew rapidly. At the time of our interview in February, there were 243 McFIT clubs across Europe – all owned by the company – in Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland and Spain.

HIGH5: Launched in Berlin in 2015, HIGH5 is a small footprint functional studio model. The aim: "To make fitness training even more affordable" – it costs just €9.90 a month, which is half the price of McFIT. There are currently 16 studios across Germany.

JOHN REED FITNESS MUSIC CLUBS:

Launched in 2016, this super-cool premium brand is rolling out fast, with plans to reach 30 clubs by the end of 2017. Influenced by different cultures from around the world, it's highly design-led. It also has a big focus on music, as the name suggests. At the time of our interview in February, there were nine John Reed clubs – in Germany, Austria, Italy and Hungary – with a jam-packed pipeline for the rest of the year, including Switzerland and the Czech Republic, as well as more clubs in Germany.

CYBEROBICS: McFIT has invested millions of Euros in producing what it believes is market-leading virtual class content, launched last year under the Cyberobics brand. It has also built a one-off concept store in Berlin – World of Cyberobics – where the public can drop in and try out a class (see also HCM March 17, p40).

Qi2: The McFIT Global Group's own nutrition brand offers product ranges – drinks, shakes, bars, powders and tablets – for men and women, as well as a special range for elite athletes.

At-home training: The original McFIT app, LOOX, features videos and expertise from more than 100 experts, with users able to customise their own training plan. A new Cyberobics On Demand app will launch by June 2017; the content is already available at home to Sky customers, through Sky TV.

McFIT Model Agency: The largest sports model agency in Europe is also part of the McFIT Global Group.



John Reed allows you to train hard, but in a visually striking environment

- ▶ a small Cyberobics room – all you'd need is 40sq m – or an in-room Cyberobics TV channel," says Schulokat.

"We're in talks with a big German hotel chain that wants to integrate Cyberobics into its in-room entertainment, with 10 short workouts you can do in a small space and with no equipment. Then, if you want to do a longer workout, you can go to the dedicated Cyberobics room. We see it as a huge opportunity because hotel fitness can often be quite boring."

Corporate wellness is another avenue being pursued:

"We launched a new corporate fitness programme on 1 February this year. It has three prongs: special rates for membership at our clubs; at-home training offered through our Cyberobics On Demand app, which will launch by June at the latest; and Cyberobics units in offices.

"It's only been available for a couple of weeks and the response has been overwhelming: we're getting requests more or less every hour. The German corporate market has really just been waiting for this to happen – for McFIT to launch something like this."

The very latest news from Cyberobics is that the company will also be launching its own Cyberobics clubs. The first – a women-only club – will open in Berlin in May or June of this year. Offering three Cyberobics rooms, cardio and circuit training, functional training and personal training – as well as wellness, spa, bistro and kids' lounge – this inaugural club will measure 1,400sq m.

"We're planning to open a few of these Cyberobics-branded clubs as corporately-owned sites," says Schulokat. "But this concept will also be franchised as a boutique club model without wellness, spa, bistro or

World of Cyberobics is a one-off concept store



kids' lounge. Requiring only around 350sq m, we believe it has potential both in Germany and internationally."

CURATING MEMORIES

As if all that weren't enough, the newest health club brand in the Group's portfolio – John Reed Music Fitness Clubs – opened the doors of its first club in mid-2016, in the German city of Bonn.

These clubs are design-led, dominated by flavours and cultures from around the world: Buddha statues are commonplace, and one club even has a traditional wooden Indonesian house built inside the gym, with a CV area on the balcony. ▶



The most exciting thing about our business is the energy and the power and the speed to make ideas come alive – *Marcus Adam*



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HIGH5 has the lowest monthly cost in the McFIT portfolio, at just under €10 a month

VALUE ACROSS THE BOARD

HIGH5 offers the lowest monthly membership in the McFIT Global Group's club portfolio: at just €9.90, it's half the price of McFIT.

McFIT comes in at €19.90 a month – but the really surprising price point is found at John Reed. In spite of its premium fit-out, John Reed pricing starts at the same level as McFIT – provided you sign up for a long-term contract: €20 a month on a two-year contract gets you basic membership. This allows you to train only in the

John Reed club where you signed up. But there are, as head of marketing and music Marcus Adam explains, various packages available – each with a different membership card.

"Our silver card costs €25 a month on a two-year contract and allows you to train in all John Reed clubs, plus all McFIT clubs, plus all HIGH5 studios," he says.

"Meanwhile, at €35, our gold card allows you to train in all our studios and bring a friend on every visit. It

can be a different friend each day too. These gold members can also book small group training sessions, included in their membership, and get discounts on our Q12 nutrition products.

"Finally there's our platinum card. You can't buy this membership – we have to promote you to it, which we do after you've been a gold member for a minimum of two years.

"These members can bring two friends with them, and they get even bigger discounts on Q12."

► "Our founder and CEO Rainer Schaller loves to travel," explains John Reed's head of marketing and music Marcus Adam. "On all his journeys he's collected impressions, memories, inspiration – and at the beginning of 2016, he came up with a new concept that brings all these memories together and puts them into a club.

"He sent our design teams out to search for things to put in the clubs, and we have a lot of souvenirs from places like India and China – but every single club is different."

Widely referred to as a club for Millennials, Adam disagrees with this label: "I don't think it's a question of age. It's more a question of how you feel and what you expect from life.

"We have a word in German: 'Lebensgefühl'. I don't know how exactly to translate it – it's sometimes translated as 'lifestyle', or an 'awareness of life', but that isn't quite right because it's also about the special feeling you get when you're doing something you love.

"John Reed is all about creating that feeling, creating an atmosphere where you love to go because it's visually spectacular, the music is good and you meet great people to train with and hang out with afterwards – sitting in the lounge or maybe playing pool. It's the only one of our club models that really has social space."

He continues: "Music is key to the concept, and the music we play is contemporary – we don't play classical or jazz. We have DJs playing twice a week in all our clubs and we invented our own John Reed Radio, which plays only very dynamic, high-energy music: pop, R&B, rap, hip-hop, electro. If you don't like music, it isn't the right club for you. But if you are into music, it's a great place."

BRINGING IDEAS TO LIFE

Adam concludes: "If you look at the John Reed story, you get an understanding of the dynamism of the McFIT Global Group. We came up with the idea for John Reed in January 2016; the kick-off meeting happened in April or May; and three months later we opened the first club.

"This is the most exciting thing about our business: the energy and the power and the speed to start projects – to have ideas and to make those ideas come alive.

We're very flexible and very dynamic in the way we work.

"What that also means is that it's hard to say where we'll be in five years' time. We might have had three new ideas for other club concepts, or we might have opened 300 John Reed clubs all over the world. It's hard to say! But that's an exciting position to be in – it's what makes the job so interesting." ●



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STAY ON TRACK

Wearables, fitness trackers and biometric data technologies take over more and more floor space at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) each year. This year's event in Las Vegas was no exception. **Tom Walker** reports

QARDIOCORE

Among the preventative healthcare solutions on show at CES was QardioCore, a wearable ECG monitor set to be launched later in 2017. Created by US-based digital health company Qardio, QardioCore will be marketed as the first wearable medical ECG monitor that allows users to monitor their heart health without the need for wires or patches.

Packed with proprietary sensor technology, QardioCore records more than 20 million data points, streaming the user's live medical-grade data to their smartphones. The device is worn as a chest strap and records continuous ECG, heart rate, heart rate variability, respiratory rate, temperature and activity data. The data can be easily – and automatically – shared with, for example, medical professionals. Athletes can also take advantage of QardioCore to help them achieve peak performance and optimise their training.

QardioCore pairs with the free Qardio app for iOS and works with iPhone, iPad and iPod, as well as Apple Health. It works with other Qardio products too, including: QardioArm, a smart blood pressure monitor; QardioBase, wireless scales and body analyser; and QardioMD, a dashboard for doctors.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **QARDIOCORE**



QardioCore is a new wearable, medical ECG monitor

MOTIV RING

San Francisco-based tech start-up Motiv introduced an innovative sleep tracking device that doubles as a fitness tracker – as well as a fashion statement.

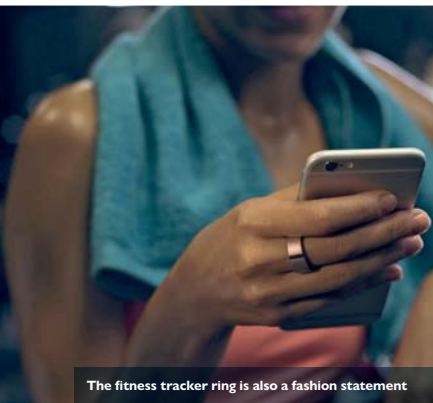
The new Motiv Ring is being marketed as the “first highly advanced wearable device that changes the way that people measure both activity and sleep”.

The device uses micro-technology and packs a lot into its slim, ultralight design. It is able to monitor heart rate as well as tracking the user's active minutes, activity type, sleep duration, calories burned, distance and steps taken. Software includes an intuitive app, which establishes weekly goals and adjusts daily targets based on the user's activity.

With a battery life of five days and a waterproof casing that allows for showering and swimming, Motiv Ring has been designed as a ‘wear-at-all-times’ device.

“Despite the rapid growth of – and innovation within – the wearable market, over half of those who buy a fitness tracker lose interest and discontinue use because current solutions are uncomfortable, unattractive and don't provide truly meaningful insights,” says Mike Strasser, co-founder and CEO of Motiv.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **MOTIV RING**



The fitness tracker ring is also a fashion statement



The RunIQ smartwatch is designed 'for runners, by runners'

NEW BALANCE & INTEL – RUNIQ

Sporting goods giant New Balance came to CES to showcase its first foray into the smart wearable market. Developed in partnership with some of the world's leading tech firms – including Intel, Google and Strava – New Balance's new RunIQ smartwatch was launched in tandem with PacerQ wireless headphones, which can be paired with the watch using Bluetooth connectivity.

Specifically designed 'for runners, by runners', RunIQ aims to help users focus on their performance by keeping distractions to a minimum. Benefiting from strong processing power provided by Intel Inside technology, the watch features built-in GPS, heart rate monitor, lap button, interval capability and marathon distance battery life.

Through the collaboration with Strava, the waterproof RunIQ allows runners to upload and share workouts with Strava's global community of athletes. The built-in GPS allows for course tracking, pace and distance measurement, while the heart rate feature monitors in real time. Runners can also sync, store and listen to Google Play Music from an

Android phone and stay connected to smartphone notifications for on-the-go replies when connected to WiFi or Bluetooth.

Brian Krzanich, CEO of Intel Corporation, says: "We're reinventing the boundaries of computing to evolve the way people get fit, stay active and improve their performance. Our collaboration with New Balance brings to market a smartwatch with enhanced design and functionality, resulting in a smart and connected device for runners that makes amazing experiences possible."



The new smartwatch has built-in GPS

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **RUNIQ**

TOMTOM SPORTS APP

Dutch GPS and navigation specialist

TomTom was among the technology companies entering the fitness and sports tech sector at CES. Promising to bring "not just activity data, but insights and motivation", the new TomTom Sports app promises to get people active by introducing motivational messages, activity trends, comparisons and performance stats "down to the second".

TomTom Sports works with iOS4 and Android3 smartphones and supports a number of TomTom products – including TomTom Runner. The app also enables data sharing with a range of third-party platforms including Strava, Nike+, Endomondo, MapMyFitness and Runkeeper.



Co-created with a range of athletes and a panel of fitness app users, TomTom Sports is able to accurately track up to 12 different types of physical activity – ranging from running, cycling and swimming to skiing, trail running and hiking.

Users will be able to track their latest efforts and achievements, such as changes in body composition and resting heart rate, at a glance. It also offers a wide range of social sharing functions.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **TOM TOM**

The new TomTom sports app turns fitness data into key insights ▶



Bodytrak's access to the inner ear makes it highly responsive

BODYTRAK

Bodytrak is touted as the first device capable of implementing "precision physiological monitoring" using a simple earpiece. The small, non-invasive in-ear device can measure metrics such as core body temperature, heart rate, VO2 and motion (speed, distance, cadence). The data is then sent wirelessly to the user in real time via a smartphone, smart watch or internet hub.

With access to the inner ear – and being in close proximity to the brain – Bodytrak has been designed to detect changes in body physiology more rapidly and accurately than devices measuring levels from the peripheries of the body. By using miniature components, it also offers two-way communication, music playback and ambient sound transparency.

CEO Leon Marsh says that the device has relevance for a number of different sectors – such as military, healthcare and first response – but sport and fitness are among its key target markets. The first Bodytrak units are currently being trialled by a range of high-profile athletes across a number of different sports.

"Bodytrak exploits the only body site from which all vital signs can be measured," says Marsh. "It's been gold standard tested by leading universities, and we have trial partners across all target markets."

Bodytrak is expected to be available to the public in summer 2017.

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD** BODYTRAK

MISFIT VAPOR

Wearable tech specialist Misfit cleared the awards table at CES with its first ever touchscreen smartwatch. Vapor, which gobbled up no less than six awards at the show, features a heart rate monitor, built-in location services, music, GPS functionality, Bluetooth connectivity and "world-class fitness and sleep tracking".

Boasting a 1.39-inch vibrant, circular touchscreen, Vapor is able to display tracking data and smartwatch apps directly, without the need for a separate smartphone. A virtual bezel allows the user to quickly navigate watchfaces and applications – as well as respond to notifications – without obscuring content on the screen.

The launch of Vapor is part of Misfit parent company Fossil Group's plans to double its production of wearables to approximately 300 new products in 2017.

"Customers crave connectivity that doesn't compromise style," says Greg McKelvey, chief strategy and digital officer at Fossil Group. "We're creating more options to seamlessly integrate desired tech features into our customers' style and lifestyle."



fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD** MISFIT VAPOR

The Vapor smartwatch scooped six awards at CES

The sleeveless Polar shirt replaces the need for a chest strap monitor



POLAR TEAM PRO SHIRT

Finland-based sports technology company Polar introduced an entirely new wearable category to its growing portfolio of fitness kit at CES.

The Polar Team Pro Shirt is a smart workout shirt designed mainly for professional (or "very keen") athletes.

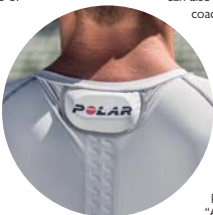
The shirt integrates Polar's heart rate technology directly onto the fabric and is the company's first heart rate monitoring and GPS tracking apparel. The shirt is compatible with Polar's Team Pro system, allowing athletes and coaches to gain insight into their effort, speed of recovery and other useful metrics.

The sleeveless, base-layer shirt replaces the need for a chest strap monitor by building two

thin, unobtrusive heart rate capture points directly into the fabric. The sensors in the shirt can also broadcast training data to a coach's iPad in real time.

"As a company with a deep heritage in team sports, we're constantly working to evolve design and function in ways that will improve an athlete's performance," says Tom Fowler, president of Polar US. "Polar technology and products are, at their core, developed for the needs of professional athletes and coaches."

"As a result of our continued focus on improvement, we've reimagined the chest strap for professional athletes and developed Team Pro Shirt."



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **POLAR**


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INTRODUCING...

MX4

by **MATRIX**



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MATRIX

MX4: A REVOLUTION IN SOCIAL FITNESS

MX4 is the latest turnkey group training solution, exclusive to Matrix, that includes 156 ready made 30-minute workouts for your gym. That's 3 unique workouts of 12 exercises per sessions, drawing on the 4 key areas cardio, strength, power and endurance, for every week of the year. Get ready for the social fitness revolution...

With currently no companies in the UK occupying a dominant market share in the group training sector, the benefits for gym owners are all up for grabs! The MX4 Training Solution is ideal for health clubs and independent fitness studios seeking to drive revenue by differentiating their group training offering in a way that's easy to deliver, cost effective, whilst attracting, engaging and retaining members.

The MX4 Training System draws on many of today's biggest trends in fitness, from group training, high intensity interval training (HIIT) and strength training to use of wearables, Yoga and personal training. It's a "social fitness" solution that allows today's gym user to tap into a community – a club within their club – to truly transform and enhance their fitness experience and keep them focused on reaching their fitness goals.

What is MX4?

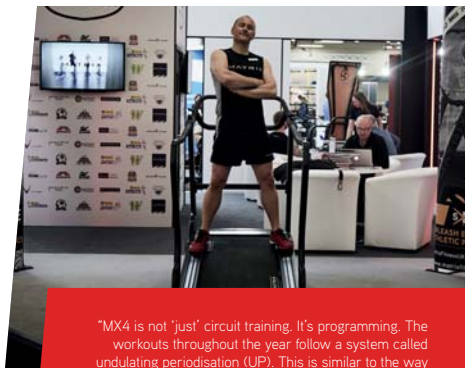
MX4 comprises two main components - a COMBINATION of at least two different modalities of Matrix-exclusive equipment AND original programming led by a trained MX4 coach.

Matrix-exclusive products featured in the MX4 Training System include the Connexus Functional Training System, Rower, S-Drive Performance Trainer and Krankcycle.

And we have also teamed up with a select group of world-renowned functional training innovators to offer the very best in functional training accessories.

But it's the programming, uniquely developed by our expert fitness professionals here at Matrix, which creates a signature group exercise experience that members will invest in and commit to more frequently.

Put simply, Matrix products sold without MX4 programming is not MX4.



"MX4 is not 'just' circuit training. It's programming. The workouts throughout the year follow a system called undulating periodisation (UP). This is similar to the way athletes train for an event but with UP we can deliver this in a group ex environment without the need for a specific start/finish date. This approach also ensures that people can join MX4 sessions at any time during the month or year and slide straight in to the workouts."

"MX4 is pre-planned and is the only programme I have seen which has an entire year of programming workouts designed from day one. Why is this important? Well, if you create sessions in isolation or ad-hock, the chances are they will either have a narrower, less specific set of outcomes than a system that has been planned and formulated around a specific set of goals and significant timeline or worse, pose no actual benefit to the gym member whatsoever."

Steve Barrett, Director of Global Group Education & Training at Johnson Health Tech. Co., Ltd.



MX4: A SOLUTION WHERE EVERYONE BENEFITS

The MX4 Training System perfectly bridges the gap between membership and personal training, benefiting the gym owner, the PT and ultimately, the gym member.

The Gym Owner

The MX4 Training System was created for customers who asked for support, guidance and solutions to grow their group training business and quickly generate a return on their investment in Matrix group training products.

Think of MX4 as being the 'software' that maximises the potential of Matrix 'hardware.'

MX4 is more than just another workout. Our comprehensive package includes an implementation guide, exercise library, signature programming and innovative marketing materials and will ensure a facility's MX4 launch doesn't go unnoticed.

The Gym Member

And members benefit from results-driven programming, group dynamics to keep them motivated and personal coaching from specialist trainers to help them stay focused on fitness goals.

The unique programming incorporates stations that enhance the four aspects of fitness: endurance, strength, power and cardio, which ultimately creates a sense of community, providing the camaraderie and motivation the member needs.

The PTs

The key objective of the MX4 Training System is to help trainers and instructors develop safe, effective programmes that help their members get results.

MX4 is designed to support the instructors, providing them with full training and ongoing world class programming so that they spend less time behind a desk and more time focusing on coaching and empowering their members in MX4 sessions.

Matrix group training products used in MX4 can be adjusted quickly for efficient transitions from one station to the next, always maintaining a high intensity level.

The beauty of the MX4 Training Solution lies in its simplicity. It doesn't have a specific type or demographic of person who uses it. It's a straightforward, flexible training solution with universal appeal, able to accommodate people new to exercise whilst also simultaneously challenge the elite athlete.



Scan here to learn
more about MX4.

For more information on MX4 the new Group Training solution from Matrix Fitness and how it could benefit your facility, visit matrixfitness.co.uk or contact us at Matrix Fitness on 01782 644900.

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CONNECTED TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Matrix has a whole host of enlightening connected solutions designed to fit in with everyday life. They are easy to use and familiar to members, functioning in the same ways as phones and tablets. All designed to support health and wellness in the gym, and beyond.

"The real value of our connected technology solutions is they save time and improve communications for gym owners, PTs and gym members."

Rob Knox, Product Director at Matrix Fitness

To find out more about the Matrix Workout Tracking Network, Personal Trainer Portal, Asset Management, and other connected solutions that could boost your offering and transform your members' fitness experience, call us on **01782 644900** or visit **matrixfitness.co.uk**



Scan here to see
It's All About You
campaign video.



THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT

Kath Hudson speaks to investors about the appeal of the fitness sector, and specifically those businesses they have chosen to support

ANDREW WOLFSON

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
PEMBROKE VCT



Pembroke VCT

likes to fund businesses that are above the level where friends and family could provide the funding, but below the

de-risked level: the space that the local bank used to fill with small business loans. We like to invest in strong brands with strong management teams.

Our investment model varies according to what the company needs, but generally

we invest with straight equity at the post-revenue, pre-profit stage. We want the founders to be left with enough equity so they continue to be entrepreneurs, not employees – we want to help them grow.

Appealing investments are those concepts that are already familiar to the consumer, which we can then build into big business. We invested in UK boutique studio operator BOOM Cycle in 2013, after seeing how popular the cycling studio model was in the US. We were impressed by the young, passionate, entrepreneurial management and spent time with them fine-tuning the brand, which is all about entertainment on a bike.

We believe that there's still plenty of growth in this sector, particularly with

integrated wellness concepts, as well as health and fitness businesses filling former retail space on secondary high streets. We're always on the lookout for interesting concepts in this sector and are currently looking at some pay-as-you-go opportunities.

Additionally, we'll be keeping an eye on the wider health and fitness industry – anything that helps to contribute to a healthy lifestyle, such as food and drink offerings that are low in sugar.

We've already invested in cold-pressed juice company Plenish. Like BOOM Cycle, this company had a young, active, female entrepreneur at the helm, with a passion for what she was doing and the vision to grow and diversify the brand.

"There's still plenty of growth in this sector, with integrated wellness concepts and fitness businesses filling former retail space" – Andrew Wolfson

BOOM Cycle has seen huge success in the UK market



GONÇALO MENDES

PARTNER, OXY CAPITAL
MEZZANINE FUND



We've invested twice in Fitness Hut in Portugal – a total of €12m, or 18 per cent of our fund. This operation is a good fit for our fund: we saw a

lot of growth potential, both in terms of Fitness Hut's expansion plans and the growth potential of the Portuguese fitness market, which currently has low penetration rates.

When we invested, Fitness Hut had seven clubs and was aiming for 45. Offering a premium low-cost model, its strategy is to provide a quality product at an attractive price, and it's the clear market leader in Portugal. Prior to our investment, Fitness Hut had employed capital well and achieved good returns, so we believed that would continue to be the case going forward.

We have a very flexible investment model and try to customise our investment to whatever the situation requires, so we can provide equity, take control, be minority investors or provide debt. This was a debt investment because that's what Fitness Hut wanted, although we took the right to buy a percentage of the company.

Fitness Hut management was very confident in the growth prospects and the shareholder value that would arise from that growth. Most importantly, the management team owns a significant share of the business – 50 per cent – which we like, because then they still act like owners.

We like the fitness sector because we see it as a sector that will grow, driven by people receiving more information about what's good for them. In general, when looking for investment opportunities, we seek growth potential, return on capital, high quality management teams and a transaction structure that shows that insiders really believe in the business.

Fitness Hut in Portugal is a premium low-cost model



Xercise4Less has been able to take market share from the mid-market

RICHARD TAYLOR

INVESTOR, BUSINESS GROWTH FUND (BGF)



BGF has two investments in the health and fitness industry, at opposite ends of the spectrum, and both are going very well.

We invested in Xercise4Less in August 2013, because the budget space was very exciting at this time. This disruptive model was demonstrating it could take market share from the mid-market and also increase penetration by enticing more people to join a health club.

Xercise4Less offered a differentiated model, with the lowest membership price (£9.99 a month) and the largest sites, which meant there were no queues for machines. Because it has a membership contract, unlike other budget operators, it was also doing well with retention and attrition rates.

There were also good opportunities for the company to grow, with landlords offering attractive rents in former retail sites. Finally, it had a strong management team who had all spent their careers in the sector and had accumulated a vast amount of knowledge.

Gymbox was a similar story, but at the opposite end of the market. Premium, differentiated, focused around London, quirky and high-end, the financial dynamics were attractive. Again, we were backing someone who had spent many years in the sector and we knew that the quality of the management was very high.

Our model is to take a minority equity stake in the business, backing the management while providing them with the funding to grow. As investors, we're always looking for other opportunities and differentiated models appeal to us. The boutique market looks interesting – we don't have any investment in this space at the moment. ▶

"We're always looking for other opportunities and differentiated models appeal to us. The boutique market looks interesting" – Richard Taylor



Barrecore has nine UK studios and is now geared up for expansion

IN OTHER NEWS...

OCTOPUS AND BARRECORE, UK

Octopus Investments invested an undisclosed amount in UK-based boutique fitness concept Barrecore last December, to allow the company to expand throughout the UK and Europe. The company had previously invested in Gymbox and has a track record of supporting sustained growth.

Barrecore currently has nine studios in the UK, offering high-intensity classes that incorporate body weight exercises and a ballet barre. To drive the European expansion, Peter Woods was appointed as Barrecore's new CEO. He has previous experience of scaling fast-growing businesses in the European health and leisure industry, at David Lloyd Leisure, Aspria, Holmes Place and Skn Clinics. See HCM March 17, p66, for an interview with Peter Woods.

QUADRANT AND FITNESS & LIFESTYLE GROUP, AUSTRALIA

In September 2016, the Health & Fitness Lifestyle Group – created by Quadrant Private Equity as an umbrella company for its various fitness acquisitions – became Australia's biggest fitness group, in terms of membership, after securing Fitness First from Oaktree Capital Management. This deal followed Quadrant purchasing Goodlife Health Clubs from Ardent Leisure, as well as low-cost operator Jetts Fitness.

At the time of completing the deals, the combined portfolio included 224 gyms and 188 franchises – a strong national footprint of budget and full-service clubs. The group now has 650,000 members with annual revenues in excess of AU\$400m.

Quadrant executive chair Chris Hadley says there's a great deal of growth to

come in the Australian fitness sector: "The gym market in Australia is valued at about AU\$2bn and gym membership levels are still below some global benchmarks. The market is expected to grow by between 5 and 6 per cent over the next five years, driven by both population growth and rising awareness of health and fitness benefits.

"Sixty per cent of the population is overweight. Part of the government's agenda is to get people fit and keep them healthy. There's a conversation to be had with the government about how the fitness and gym industry plays a part in that." See HCM March 17, p32, for an interview with Greg Oliver, CEO of the Fitness & Lifestyle Group.

NORTHEEDGE AND TOTAL FITNESS, UK

In April 2015, NorthEdge Capital – a private equity firm focused on investing in companies in the north of England – backed the management buyout of Total Fitness. The membership base had grown by 14 per cent since January 2013, taking the group back into profit; the MBO released new investment for the next phase of growth.

NorthEdge is what partner Ray Stenton calls a "generalist investor" whose model involves bringing broader business expertise to back management teams in delivering their plans. It focuses exclusively on northern-based businesses in the UK and invested a reported £11.5m in Total Fitness.

See HCM Aug 15, p30, for an interview with the team behind the turnaround of the Total Fitness brand.



Quadrant recently acquired Fitness First Australia

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DESIGN SPOTLIGHT

We take a look at the latest home and international projects from leading architects and interior designers in the world of health and fitness

BOX CLEVER

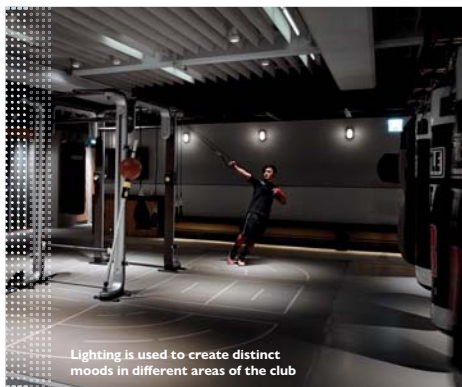
BOXING+ WELLNESS CENTER TAIPEI, TAIWAN

Boxing+ Wellness Center – designed by local interior designer Michelle Wei of MW Design, in collaboration with Jimmy Wei Chu of Chubic Lighting Consultants – occupies a 562sq m space in the basement of an industrial building. Its high-end finish aims to set a new boutique-style benchmark for the design of boxing clubs.

The space was specifically selected for its lack of pillars: the vista is entirely unrestricted from one end to the other.

Instead, lighting – which formed a key part of the brief from the outset, and which has since won numerous awards – is used to create the distinct zones in the club, wrapping areas in their own light in order to separate one zone from another.

Lighting is also used effectively to set the mood in the club: warm and welcoming as you arrive in the reception area; gentler light to unwind in the changing rooms post-workout; diffused spotlights above the functional zone to create a focused atmosphere without lights shining directly into your eyes; and energy-boosting colour in the boxing ring.



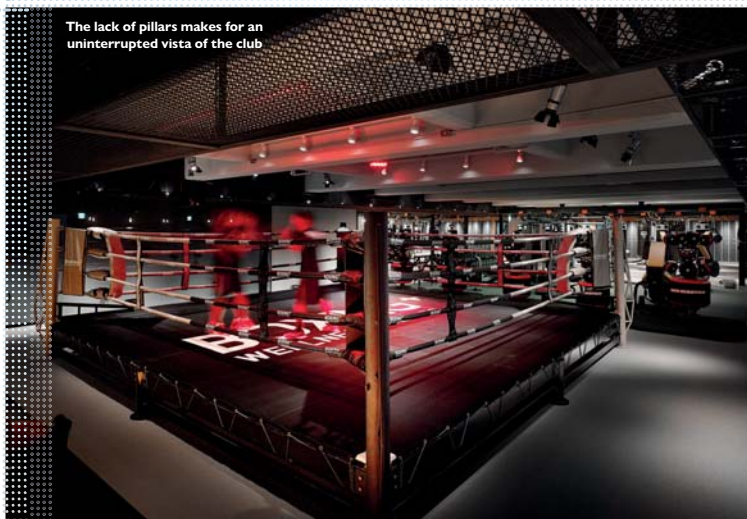
Lighting is used to create distinct moods in different areas of the club

The centre sets a new boutique-style benchmark for the design of boxing clubs





The centre is housed in the basement of an industrial building



The lack of pillars makes for an uninterrupted vista of the club



► BRINGING THE OUTDOORS, INDOORS

BIOFIT
LONDON, UK

Landscape architect Lily Jencks recently designed 'the world's first biophilic gym' for fitness concept Biofit. Described as "an organic gym concept for big city life", the pop-up health club opened the doors to its indoor oasis in west London from 9 January to 3 February 2017.

With a brief to "bring the outside world indoors", Jencks created an environment where gym-goers could work out amid natural vegetation, colours, materials, shapes, scents and sounds – the idea being that the use of natural materials and plants in a health club context would leave clients both physically and mentally fitter.

In addition to its biophilic interiors, Biofit also developed its own range of nature-focused, organic exercise equipment using materials such as timber, cotton and rope.

Biofit founder Matt Morley is keen to find partners to help roll the concept out into locations all around the world.



Even the exercise equipment introduces elements of the great outdoors



The use of vegetation, natural materials, scents and sounds are used to create a healthier indoor environment for exercisers



The use of mirrors and multi-level lighting in the club creates a great sense of space

ART DECO CHIC

ENCORE FITNESS MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Opened in late September 2016 and designed by the architectural bureau of Alexander Parkin, Encore Fitness' flagship health and fitness club is set within Moscow's elegant 85-storey OKO Tower building.

The club's Art Deco style references the work of legendary US architect Frank Lloyd Wright, with "precise geometry and architectural vectors meeting fluid lines and glossy surfaces". Huge panoramic windows and a large number of mirrors create a great sense of space, complemented by the complex's multi-level lighting system.

The 3,900sq m club offers eight fitness zones, a 25m pool, a 1,200sq m thermal complex, a café and a beauty salon.



The design elements of the new Moscow club mix 'geometry and architectural vectors' with 'fluid lines and modern glossy surfaces' throughout the interior



The architects set out a high-end design vision in their original artist impressions



► REACH FOR THE SKY

LIFE TIME ATHLETIC AT SKY NEW YORK, US

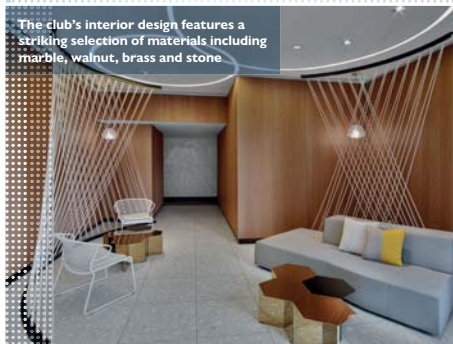
Health and fitness operator Life Time recently opened its first New York health and fitness club, located within Manhattan's largest residential tower.

The Life Time Athletic at Sky club occupies a 70,000sq ft (6,500sq m) space in the 71-storey Sky building, which was designed by Goldstein Hill & West and with interiors created by David Rockwell's studio, the Rockwell Group.

Rockwell Group has created a design palette of natural and handcrafted materials and finishes, including marble, walnut, brass and stone, in neutral hues "that express a fresh and more informal interpretation of luxury". ●



The club's interior design features a striking selection of materials including marble, walnut, brass and stone



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FLEXING ITS MUSCLE

After a decade of establishing its EMS system as a strong global leader, German innovator **miha bodytec** has opened a London office to expand its UK presence

MEET THE EMS MARKET LEADER AS IT CELEBRATES ITS TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY

According to current studies, EMS training is one of the top trends in the German fitness market. The modern workout relies on electronic muscle stimulation (electro-myostimulation - EMS). The special feature: a moderate use of electric impulses increases muscular contraction beyond the usual level, which leads to a stronger training stimulus. This allows EMS training to achieve better results in less time.

However, the highly developed technology is not the only decisive factor. Equally important – and even indispensable to guarantee safety and success of the training – is the trainer. He knows his customers and uses the EMS tool specifically in order to set a training-relevant stimulus in the shortest time possible. He accompanies and supervises the progress and is also the contact person for the right diet and healthy lifestyle. The appointments and the care provide for the necessary regularity and

motivation of the training, through which personal goals can be optimally achieved.

Whether in the traditional gym, in the so-called micro-studios or with a mobile coach, the EMS market is now booming in Germany. Around 190,000 people use it not only for medical purposes or for preparing for sports competitions, but as their personal and very efficient fitness training. There are now around 2,000 EMS providers.

In the midst of this new segment of the fitness market, the name miha bodytec is a constant reference. In particular, the brand is synonymous with innovation and quality among professional EMS operators. As the market leader for EMS, the German company has been selling its products for 10 years and supplies almost all relevant service models. For the UK market however, a proper introduction of



JÜRGEN DECKER

Jürgen Decker is CEO of the German miha bodytec GmbH and the UK subsidiary. Being active in the fitness industry for almost 19 years, the manager has been working with miha bodytec since its inception.

the company, as well as their innovative products is appropriate.

THE MIHA BODYTEC DEVICE

The brand's training device – the miha bodytec – is a popular tool that allows for maximising the effectiveness of the personal training while minimising exercise time. The training is based on electronic stimulation of the muscles, which in combination with a series of simple exercises is used to create a highly effective training stimulus.

The technical implementation is impressive in its simplicity. The device combines modern design and innovative



miha bodytec I



miha bodytec II

The first miha bodytec device was introduced in 2007, with a very popular successor being launched in 2013



miha bodytec II was presented for the first time at FIBO in Cologne

technology into a unique system that ensures a comfortable application. Perfect functionality and high efficiency make it an attractive option for a wide field of applications and target groups. The resulting "device-supported personal training" is ideally integrated into existing facilities or as a stand-alone solution (EMS-studio) or for mobile application. The training with the miha bodytec is always carried out under professional guidance and supervision, thus guaranteeing the highest effectiveness, visible and measurable results, as well as sustainable customer satisfaction. It is this combination of technology and personal training which makes up EMS Training.

THE MIHA BODYTEC GMBH

The name miha has its origin in miha Maschinen GmbH, which has developed and manufactured innovative products for the sports and medical industry for over 40 years. From this company miha bodytec GmbH – now celebrating its tenth anniversary – emerged in 2007



THOMAS REIL

Thomas Reil has been with miha bodytec GmbH as commercial manager (CFO/COO) since October 2016. As managing director of miha bodytec EMS UK Ltd, he is also responsible for the commercial processes in the United Kingdom. For his duties and responsibilities at miha, the graduate in business studies can look back on almost 20 years of professional experience in comparable positions in various sectors.

and has held the position of the world market and technology leader since the beginnings of EMS training.

This is not without good reason – for the company has set standards on the side of the product as well as in service ever since. Its mission remains the same – to offer a comprehensive package for commercial providers that enables them to successfully position themselves in the future market of EMS training.

In the meantime, a number of successful business models have emerged in close collaboration with miha bodytec, which

are currently growing in popularity with a wide range of customers.

THE COMPANY AND ITS ROLE IN THE EMS MARKET

The rapid development of the EMS market being observed today was anything but obvious at the very beginning. This was mainly due to the fact that the new technology was largely unknown. Therefore, it was not surprising that many customers were initially sceptical about the idea of having their muscles stimulated by electric impulses being wired during the training. These reservations had to be reduced by positive experiences when the product was first introduced into the market.

As a result, miha bodytec has always had a special responsibility that goes far beyond production, delivery and customer service. For as long as there was no customer-experience with the new product category of 'EMS-Training' as well as no quality and safety standards, miha bodytec adapted the role to help determine these in the first instance.



THOMAS OTT

As a sports scientist and former rehab and athletic coach at Müller-Wohlfahrt Orthopedic Center in Munich, Ott is a globally known specialist in the field of whole-body EMS training. Numerous athletes have profited from his experience including Olympic gold medalists and world champions. As a long-time expert in the industry he is now head of operations at miha bodytec in the UK.



Over 2000 German and Austrian suppliers use the device



EMS technology recently has seen rapid growth

COOPERATION IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The training programmes which were offered could not be based solely on individual exercise experiences and training successes.

For a 'made in Germany' product that should not only be a short-term trend, but should also change the worldwide fitness landscape, a quality was required that was sufficiently justified by scientific facts and studies as well. Therefore cooperation with a number of recognised scientific institutions was essential.

For this reason, miha bodytec now maintains numerous research cooperation projects over a period of years, with institutions such as the Cologne Sports College, the University of Erlangen / Nuremberg, and the Heart and Diabetes Center in Nordrheinwestfalen, Bad Oeynhausen. In order to ensure a standardised and high-quality education on the part of the trainer, miha bodytec has also worked with the prestigious training institution, Glueckerkolleg, which now offers a comprehensive education for professional EMS trainers.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The company was able to meet these challenges, and has also significantly contributed in increasing the awareness for EMS training. Based on this work, the spread of whole body EMS training took its course. The great success of the first miha bodytec device release, which sold around 4500 devices after market introduction in 2007, was only surpassed by the popularity of its successor model.

The miha bodytec II was presented in April 2013 for the first time at the FIBO trade fair in Cologne. Further technical developments like a mobile solution have been introduced that improved the quality and flexibility that make EMS training a successful solution for many trainers and coaches. Currently, more than 2,000 commercial suppliers in Germany and Austria are already using miha bodytec.

EXPANSION TO THE UK

Today these beginnings are already a decade in the past. The company, which started in 2007 with two employees, has become a global player. Miha bodytec

now has a sales structure in more than 30 countries, with an export share of around 75 per cent of the sales volume. The miha bodytec is still produced in Germany and meets the highest quality requirements. The 6000 sq m of the

new company headquarters in Gersthofen serve as a worldwide export centre for equipment and accessories.

Due to the international spread of EMS training, the expansion of the company abroad is now a logical step.

As Jürgen Decker, managing director of miha bodytec, explains: "Along with the rapid growth of EMS in Germany, we observe a growing international demand. Great Britain is one of the most important European fitness markets. Thus, as a world market leader, our own presence here is overdue. This allows us to offer the fastest delivery possible as well as the same high-quality support as in Germany."

In the year 2017, on the occasion of the company's 10th anniversary, miha bodytec is opening a wholly-owned subsidiary in the United Kingdom. The attractive office space located in the heart of London will from now onwards serve as the British sales centre of the company.

The company's local contact is miha bodytec newcomer and globally-recognised athletic coach, Thomas Ott. As a long-time expert in the industry with a degree in sports science, he is very well acquainted with miha bodytec and the services in the context of EMS training.



RAINER BECK

Rainer Beck is director of sales at miha bodytec GmbH. The sports-economist graduate is an outspoken insider in the health and fitness industry, and is widely regarded as a proven sales force with the very best connections in the industry.

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GENERATION INACTIVE

Technology use grows as everyday activity diminishes, resulting in the fattest and least active generation of children ever. An intervention is needed: is the health and fitness sector ready to step in? **Kath Hudson** reports

Whereas in previous years there might have been the incentive to get on your bike after school to go and meet your mates in the park, now children can use their devices and interact with friends via a headset.

This alluring but sedentary entertainment is having disastrous results on obesity and activity levels

among children – with poorer areas of the country faring the worst. A report from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health revealed that 40 per cent of children in the country's most deprived areas were diagnosed as overweight or obese in 2016, compared to 27 per cent of children in more affluent areas.

There's a huge opportunity for the fitness industry to step in, making its facilities and knowledge available to help alleviate this crisis. And with the sugar tax levy promising to double the amount of funding for school sport in the UK next year, now is the time to act.

We ask our panel for their thoughts on how the sector can achieve success.



Sarah Philp
Xercise4Kids co-ordinator,
Xercise4Less

Our founder and chair Jon Wright is passionate about tackling childhood obesity, which is why we introduced a programme for three- to five-year-olds last year. I devised a character-based programme with themes, such as an underwater adventure or going through the forest, which develops motor skills, stimulates imagination, works major muscle groups and is a lot of fun.

Each of our clubs run four classes a week during off-peak hours. Free to

The free clubs for three- to five-year-olds run at 80-90 per cent capacity



members and non-members alike, they run at 80–90 per cent capacity. As we want to promote active families, carers must stay and are encouraged to join in. Clubs have said this translates into members, as it brings people through the door and they can see what's on offer for just £10 a month.

Xercise4Less has invested £1m into this concept, which has come right off the bottom line, but we believe that it's important to provide opportunities for children and families to be more active, and to engage them in a healthy, active lifestyle when young.

We've invested £1m in our kids' concept. It's come right off the bottom line, but we believe it's important to provide opportunities for children and families to be active – Sarah Philp, Xercise4Less



Mark Bremner

Founding director, 3d Leisure

If the government is serious about making an impact on improving the health of the nation, it's essential for healthy living habits to be embedded in children before they leave school. Parental guidance is most important, but schools can also play a major role. With this in mind, we're gearing up to launch a new programme for schools, called Energise and Educate.

A book called *Spark*, by Dr John Ratey, motivated me to do a fact-finding mission to the US, visiting schools that had introduced daily fitness workouts. I saw children sitting in classrooms on Swiss balls and kids the age of seven with a full understanding of heart rate zones and aerobic thresholds. Not surprisingly, the schools found that the kids got fitter, and both academic results and social behaviour improved.

When we launch our programme, we will test children at the beginning of the year and again at the end to assess fitness level improvements, as well as working with the school to benchmark academic performance and any evidence of changes in general behaviour.

Going forward, we plan to make Energise and Educate easily adaptable according to the time, resources and equipment that each individual school has, and we're currently investigating funding opportunities.

In some US schools, children sit on Swiss balls and kids the age of seven have a full understanding of heart rate zones and aerobic thresholds – Mark Bremner, 3d Leisure



Coaching All Stars offers structured tennis and swimming coaching



Sinead Johnson

Group family manager, David Lloyd Leisure

Our programmes for children are split into two parts. We run daily programmes – all included in the membership – which are focused around having fun while being active. Children are grouped according to their age and session times correspond with adult classes, so children can be active while parents are working out.

In addition, our Coaching All Stars programme offers structured coaching in swimming and tennis, at an additional cost. Swimming and tennis are fantastic sports and can provide children with valuable life skills and a lifelong love of exercise.

In every 30 children, there'll be 10 children who love sport and are easy to engage, but we need ways to inspire the other 20 who maybe don't want to be there. We challenge and train our coaches to think like these children and make the sessions as engaging as possible. Exercise for children should always be fun, and in response to member feedback, we'll be introducing more programmes for families to train and have fun together.



Water polo is a fun activity for kids

Mark Talley

Group fitness development, Everyone Active

Swimming is our most popular programme, and we've developed it to offer further activities like water polo, synchronised swimming and rookie lifeguarding. These sessions help engage youngsters who don't want to go down the competitive swimming route. Swimming managers are employed on all of our leisure sites to ensure that the schemes offer as much variety to children as possible, as well as to work at developing links with local schools and community clubs.

Many areas have an active communities manager who is briefed to liaise directly with the community. They're out and about looking at how to tackle the barriers faced in that area, which can mean adapting the leisure provision by changing times, costs or location.

A common barrier we've identified in getting children active is the parents not having time to bring them to the centre and swim with them: providing after-school activities overcomes this and gives parents some extra time for themselves.

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► **John Halls**
Managing director,
Physical Company

We've noticed a growing demand from operators wanting to run sessions for children and adolescents, but they're frequently put off by the minefield of safeguarding issues, adapting programmes to be suitable for children, as well as training instructors and putting them through the necessary DBS checks.

Our new programme, Apex Kids, overcomes all of these barriers, including the instructor training, and is an easy way of installing a kids' programme. A four-point circuit is used to build children's agility and co-ordination, with an emphasis on games and teamwork.



Apex Kids offers a four-point circuit to help build agility and co-ordination



Less mainstream sports activities can often increase youngsters' engagement

Luke Miles

Co-founder and director, Premier Sport

In our experience of running holiday clubs and before and after school clubs, it's important to offer a wide variety of activities. For example, Premier Performing Arts uses dance and drama to appeal to children who are less enthusiastic about traditional sports – clubs and leisure centres could do similar. We've also found less mainstream sports, like archery and fencing, increase engagement. ●





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I think will be my 5th year at SIBEC and from both a business and personal perspective there are a number of reasons why I continue to attend yearly-

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3. It gives me the opportunity to meet up and socialise with other Industry leaders within their field.



**Michelle Dand, Group Health & Fitness Manager,
David Lloyd Leisure Ltd**

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SCHOOLS ON THE MOVE

Childhood obesity is a global issue. Could the answer to curbing it be found in western Finland, where a city's holistic approach to wellness has caught the attention of the World Health Organization? **Tom Walker** reports

This isn't your average maths class. A group of seven-year-olds are taking part in an impromptu race around the school gym, while other groups play basketball and bounce on trampolines. All around the place, children are being active, burning energy – until a teacher blows her whistle. At the sound of it, the pupils stop and head back to the classroom where they settle down to their work stations – consisting of a gym ball and a desk – and get on with the matter in hand, times tables.

This is what an active classroom looks like in Seinäjoki, a city in western Finland, which has adopted a holistic plan for tackling childhood obesity.

The programme, entitled 'Lihavuus Laskuun' (which roughly translates as "Overcoming Obesity"), incorporates all aspects of public services: child care, nutrition, recreation, urban planning – and education. As part of Lihavuus Laskuun, most of the schools in the city have signed up to a scheme called Schools on the Move.

ACTIVE SCHOOLS

Now a nationwide programme of Schools on the Move aims to ensure that Finnish children remain physically active throughout the school day. It has introduced an entirely new model for learning to Finland's schools – one in



which studying is regularly interrupted, not by restless students, but by approved bouts of physical activity.

"The idea is to mix education with movement and avoid children having to sit down for long periods of time," says Antti Blom, national programme director for Schools on the Move.

"You could say that Schools on the Move introduces functional learning in all its forms. As well as scheduled exercise

breaks before and after lessons, many schools offer students the opportunity to stay active during learning.

"Teachers incorporate activities into learning, and chairs are being replaced by gym balls or standing desks to allow the children to strengthen their core muscles while they study," (see box, 'Active classrooms', on p78)

Schools on the Move is funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and operated by the Board of Education, in partnership with local government authorities and agencies. Local councils and city authorities can apply for funding from an annual pot of €7m, which is distributed evenly across the country. Any authority wishing to receive funding has to match the funding that it receives. Therefore, the annual cost of Schools on the Move to the taxpayer can be calculated as being around €14m a year.

In 2011, 16.1 per cent of Seinäjoki's 11-year-olds were overweight. By 2015, that had fallen to 8.2 per cent

NOTABLE IMPACT

The scheme was first launched as a two-year pilot in 2010, when 45 Finnish primary schools (for children aged seven to 12 years) and secondary schools (13- to 16-year-olds) took part. Early results were so encouraging that the programme was expanded for 2014.

By 2015, 31 per cent of all Finnish schools had adopted the programme. Today, more than 80 per cent of Finnish children under the age of 16 are part of the Schools on the Move network.

Research into the impact of the programme has shown that the approach works. A report in 2016 showed that 70 per cent of all primary school children now achieve the national target of one hour of physical activity in the school day.

The scheme has also had a positive effect on learning. Ninety per cent of teaching staff surveyed on the effects of Schools on the Move responded by saying that the increased physical activities during recesses contributed to a "peaceful learning environment".

The success of the scheme resulted in the government last year (2016) announcing that the programme would be further expanded to cover colleges and other upper secondary school institutions (for children aged 16+).

According to Blom, the programme's success is down to its bottom-up approach, where the schools are placed at the centre of the programme.



Standing desks allow pupils to strengthen core muscles while studying

Outdoor spaces have been made more accessible, to encourage activity beyond school too



"While we provide the framework, recommendations and targets, we don't directly tell schools what they should be doing," Blom explains. "It's the schools that come up with the ideas and innovations regarding how activities can best be mixed with learning in their own environment."

"We then collect examples of the actions that schools have implemented and share the knowledge centrally with other schools. That way, we're able to establish benchmarks and methods that actually work – and schools can learn and pick up ideas from each other."

CITY-WIDE APPROACH

The city of Seinäjoki embraced Schools on the Move as part of a city-wide adoption of *Lihavuusi Laskuun*. Its widespread action plan to improve public health and wellness was deemed necessary in 2009, when a study found that nearly one in five (17 per cent)

of the city's five-year-olds was either classed as overweight or obese.

"We realised we had to do something," says Ulla Frantti-Malinen, co-ordinator of health and welfare promotion for the City of Seinäjoki Council. "And what we did was get every department in the local



Frantti-Malinen: Council departments now work together against obesity

- authority together to get them working towards a common goal: tackling obesity."

Frantti-Malinen says that since then, the city's health department has worked together with the childcare, education, nutrition, recreation and urban planning departments – as well as outside agencies such as Schools on the Move – on a number of new initiatives.

"The urban planning department has improved school playgrounds and other outdoor leisure spaces to make access to physical activity easier, while the schools have adopted the Schools on the Move programme", she says. "The foundations for a healthy lifestyle are built in cooperation with the families. We begin at family planning and maternity clinics, where expectant mothers receive advice on diet and lifestyles, and continue it throughout children's school lives."

The measures introduced under the Lihavuus Laskuun programme have had a major impact. In 2011, a study showed 14 per cent of Seinäjoki's seven-year-olds and 16.1 per cent of 11-year-olds were overweight. By 2015, the figures had fallen to 8.7 per cent and 8.2 per cent respectively.

According to Frantti-Malinen, the success is very much down to all local authority departments pulling together. "We now have a strong commitment to the programme across the city," she says. "This isn't just a project – it's a new approach to doing things, from how we plan our environment to the way that we deliver education."

"By curbing childhood obesity early and introducing healthy lifestyles, we can help ensure that children grow up to be healthy adults – which will ultimately have



The Finnish programme has had a major impact on pupils' health

positive implications on healthcare costs and future planning decisions."

EXPORTING WELLNESS

As childhood obesity is increasingly a global problem, the results of the 'Seinäjoki experiment' haven't gone unnoticed outside Finland. In 2015, the World Health Organization hailed the programme as an example of how a "health in all policies" approach can deliver impressive results.

There's also a direct copy of the Lihavuus Laskuun programme currently in the works. A delegation from the South Korean capital, Seoul, visited Seinäjoki in 2016 with the aim of kickstarting a similar plan of action across the city's Gangdong district.

"Obesity is a growing problem in South Korea," says Eun Sook Moon, senior researcher from the Seoul Institute.

"When searching for ways to tackle the problem, we came across Seinäjoki and what the city has done – and we were impressed. It's the preventative aspect that interests us the most."

For Frantti-Malinen, the interest shown in what Seinäjoki is doing – by a city on the other side of the world nearly 20 times its size – is an example of how tackling inactivity is now a global issue.

"The network of people tackling the problem of obesity and improving wellness is no longer a local, regional or national one," she says. "It's a global problem. And we're proud that we're doing something that's getting such recognition." ●

ACTIVE CLASSROOMS



Juha-Matti Matilainen
Co-ordinator
of physical
education
and Schools on the
Move, Seinäjoki
City, Finland

"One of the main aims is to reduce the time pupils are sedentary. Short exercise breaks within lessons are very popular and can also be used as an educational device. For example, classrooms can be fitted with equipment that allows the quick setting up of impromptu games and activities to reward learning – such as

a table tennis net that can be attached to a desk. But it can also be something very simple, such as placing text books away from students – and then giving them tasks in which they have to retrieve the answers from the books by jumping or hopping to them.

"Longer recesses are also popular. Many schools now combine lessons to make space for one or two longer breaks during the day. This allows children to properly set up an outdoor game of sport or a play session.

"There are great ways to activate children outside the classroom too. Many schools place different markers around the hallways and pathways, to

persuade children to walk differently. For example, footprints that encourage children to take longer strides, jump sideways or take running steps – or lines that act as a kind of 'tightrope'.

"There are also signs you can hang from the ceiling, at different heights, encouraging children to see how high they can jump and whether they can make progress by reaching a higher one, say, next week.

"Horizontal climbing walls are also very popular. The placements and holds are located along the wall and low enough so that no cushioned flooring is needed."

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Introducing SKILLROW

Offering an innovative exercise experience that its maker describes as 'AQUAFEEL', Technogym's new SKILLROW is changing the indoor rowing workout and creating a new type of group class

SKILLROW is the second product to be launched into Technogym's SKILL LINE, a growing range of equipment developed in collaboration with Olympic athletes and academic research institutes, bringing athletic performance training to the traditional gym floor. SKILLROW is the first indoor rowing product capable of improving anaerobic power, aerobic capacity and neuromuscular abilities in a single self-powered solution. The product was developed with expert opinion and feedback from international Olympic rowers: 3-time Olympic medalist Rossano Galtarossa from Italy, and Great Britain's Scott Durant, who claimed the gold medal in the Men's Eight at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

AQUAFEEL – THE UNIQUE FEELING OF ROWING ON WATER

SKILLROW's resistance follows the natural curve of the stroke in the water, closely replicating the unique feel of rowing on water for the first time in the indoor rowing world. This innovative feature, coined AQUAFEEL, means that SKILLROW's resistance is gradual, creating an experience that is closer to the experience of rowing on water for professional athletes, but also significantly reduces the strain on the lower back, making it ideal for gym goers.

LEADING THE RACE IN A CONNECTED WORLD

Data, performance and stats continue to become increasingly important both in and outside the gym. SKILLROW's intuitive and clear console enables users to monitor their performance data including power (watts), strokes per minute (SPM), distance, time, heart rate and calories. However, the real beauty of SKILLROW comes from the dedicated SKILLROW App (available on smartphones). Users can place their smartphone in SKILLROW's integrated phone holder and enjoy a more motivating digital experience with four different ways to train:

■ RACE TO THE PACE

Set a pace boat target or compete against a friend's personal best in different challenges.

■ BIOFEEDBACK

Real-time feedback on performance metrics, helping to improve stroke force and length.



SKILLROW recreates the experience of rowing on open water

■ VIRTUAL TRAINER

Row like a champion with guidance from top coaches including Alexia Clark, Kenny Santucci, Scott Durant and Omri Rachmut.

■ TRAINING PROGRAMMES

A library of programmes from goal-oriented (time, distance, pace), to interval training and Technogym Neuromuscular Training (TNT) programmes developed by exercise professionals.

Beginners can access a library of videos from top coaches to assist them with the correct technique, whilst data-obsessed gym-goers will enjoy a detailed results summary through the app at the end of each session, enabling them to analyse and better understand their performance.

SKILLROWING CLASSES

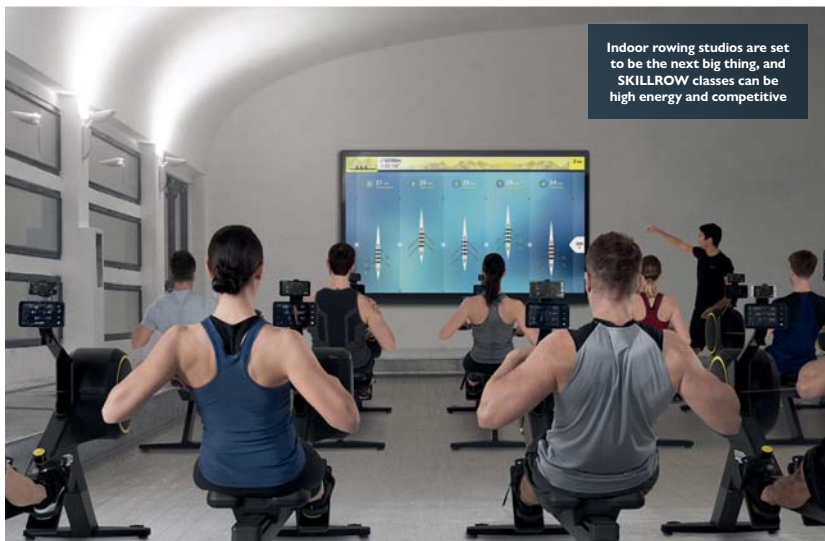
Indoor rowing studios are set to be the next big thing, and SKILLROW is ideal for this environment.

Facilities can use a large screen to run competitive team races, individual performance classes or intensity-



SKILLROW delivers real-time performance metrics

Indoor rowing studios are set to be the next big thing, and SKILLROW classes can be high energy and competitive



Competitive races can be set up between individuals or team boats in an immersive 3D environment to create a huge amount of energy in a class

based classes in a dedicated room or studio, or simply on the gym floor. This truly engaging experience motivates participants, whether they are driven by their individual performance feedback or competing with others thanks to the real time display of training data on a large screen.

Competitive races can be set up between individuals or team boats in an immersive 3D environment to create a huge amount of energy in a class. For team-based races, participants must attempt to row in total synchronicity as a real crew, or they will slow down.

For individual performance classes – designed to appeal to participants looking to improve or simply track their own performance – the trainer sets a focus for the class, such as SPM, power, heart rate, or calories. Individuals' results are displayed in real-time, providing motivation for participants.

Intensity-based classes are based around a predefined class profile set by the trainer. After the class, participants can look at their compliance index as part of their performance data in the mywellness app to compare their performance with the expected class intensity. This is a really powerful way for participants to measure progress over time.

POWER WITH MULTIDRIVE

Incorporating technology from SKILLMILL, SKILLROW also has MULTIDRIVE technology (patent pending) allowing

users to add further resistance in addition to the typical air resistance. This ground-breaking innovation makes it possible for users and trainers alike to change the equipment mode from cardiovascular training to power training, simply by adjusting the resistance level. Three power modes – low, medium and high – allow users to perform a traditional rowing movement with additional load, or execute power exercises based instead on repetitions.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAIL

Beyond the impressive performance features, SKILLROW was also designed, like all Technogym equipment, with the comfort of the user at its heart. This human-centric approach means that all settings on SKILLROW, including the handlebar and MULTIDRIVE knob to control the resistance and power settings, are within comfortable reach from the seated position. SKILLROW's comfortable seat, inspired by boat design, also allows long workouts to be performed in comfort.

SKILLROW is truly innovative, offering a resistance more closely aligned to the natural feel of an oar stroke in water; the addition of magnetic resistance to enable power training; and connectivity to engage and motivate members: It will revolutionise indoor rowing as we know it.



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KIWIS VS POMS

When it comes to Net Promoter Scores – the measure that indicates how likely a customer is to recommend your business – New Zealand health clubs are light years ahead of UK operators. Leisure-net's **Mike Hill** investigates

It's been said that Apple reigns supreme when it comes to customer service, having elevated the art of looking after its customers into a science. So I felt it was worth some digging when I discovered that, in New Zealand, health clubs' Net Promoter Scores (NPS) are soaring above

those of operators in other markets, on a par with the likes of Apple and Amazon.

NPS forms an integral part of the Exercise Association of New Zealand's Awards process – one of the most rigorous award processes I've seen across the globe. Leisure-net carries out online NPS surveys with each club that enters and their NPS contributes a significant part of their overall score.

The average New Zealand NPS score is 70 per cent – more than double that of the average UK health club or leisure centre at just 34 per cent. It's also significantly higher than other countries around the world, including the US, where the average is around 43 per cent.

Across the 80 clubs that took part in the 2016 awards process, the NPS scores ranged from 32 per cent to a staggering 100 per cent (see Figure 1).

So why do New Zealand health clubs regularly achieve an NPS more than double their UK counterparts? It's a question I continually ask – and I think we finally have some answers.

FIGURE 1: NZ AWARDS 2016 – NPS RESULTS

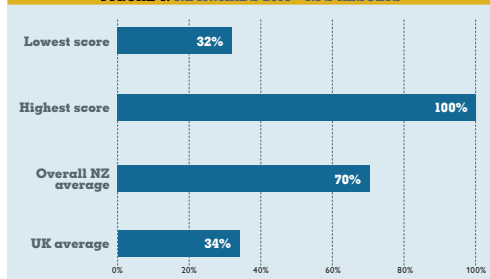
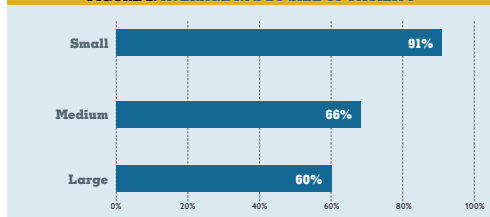


FIGURE 2: AVERAGE NPS BY SIZE OF FACILITY



ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Further analysis of the New Zealand scores shows a significant difference between small, medium and large clubs, with smaller clubs (fewer than 500 members) scoring an average of 92 per cent – probably due to the service being more personal and individual, and the staff having a closer and more direct relationship with customers. Medium clubs score 66 per cent and large clubs achieve 60 per cent (see Figure 2) – still a lot better than for equivalent sized clubs in the UK.

It's a phenomenon we've also witnessed in the UK market. A research project for Places for People Leisure, which manages more than 100 centres across the UK – within which it has small, medium and large membership bases – demonstrated that the smaller the centre, the easier it is to achieve a higher NPS.

So the relatively small size of health clubs in New Zealand – where there are very few clubs with more than 1,500 members and only one or two large chains – no doubt plays an important role when it comes to favourable NPS scores.

A classic example of a small, personal studio with less than 500 members – typical of the New Zealand market – is award winner Imagine Fitness, which scored the highest NPS in the New Zealand 2016 awards: an impressive 100 per cent.

Imagine Fitness Personal Training Studio is a small exercise facility where members train by appointment only. Most clients receive one-to-one attention from a REP-registered trainer, as owner James Davies explains: "This enables us to develop a great relationship with our members and to motivate them to keep attending. Our group training sessions are limited to six people, so we get to speak to members individually and to look after any specific needs they may have. All our trainers know all of our clients' names and many of our clients know each other too, making visiting the studio a very personal experience."

GETTING PERSONAL

But are there other differences between the two countries' clubs that could explain the gaps in the average NPS? And what can the UK learn from New Zealand operators?

One winner at the New Zealand Exercise Association Awards 2016 was ABSolute Health and Fitness. The club, which scored an impressive 91 per cent NPS, has 700 members and is a community gym in a poorer part of Dunedin – a city in the South Island of New Zealand.

Generally, personal training is a more significant part of the member experience in New Zealand than in the UK. In addition, the standard of personal trainers in New Zealand is exceptionally high, and compared to the UK the trainers are much more valued, with



Imagine Fitness, a small NZ studio, had the highest NPS score in 2016 at 100 per cent



Our group training sessions are limited to six people, so we get to speak to members individually and to look after any specific needs they may have

James Davies, Imagine Fitness

many having a real sense of belonging and standing within their local communities.

ABSolute Health and Fitness director Richard McKinley therefore keeps a close eye on the number of members training with PTs at least once a week: "More than a third of our members (35 per cent) currently train with PTs at least once a week. We work tirelessly to grow this number, because members who stop coming or drop out are the ones who aren't engaged with a trainer – the people who aren't accountable and aren't seeing results. Hiring the right people – those who aren't shy to start a conversation with anyone, despite differences in age, gender and goals – is the key to engagement in my gym."

This focus on personal training across most clubs in New Zealand could be part of the reason their NPS scores are so high, along with the importance and quality of group exercise. Being the home of Les Mills, the entire marketplace has a strong understanding of the role that a good, balanced group exercise programme, led by motivational and technically strong instructors, can have on member retention.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

One final example of best practice comes from Les Mills in Christchurch, New Zealand – a large club with 4,600 members, which scored 83 per cent in its NPS evaluation. The circumstances surrounding its high NPS are unusual and not replicable by other operators, but there are still valuable lessons to learn from its approach to staffing, community-building and member relations.

Club manager Nic Theaker explains: "The connection we have with many of our members, who have been with us since before the earthquakes in 2011, is unique. ▶



Hiring the right people – those who aren't shy to start a conversation with anyone, despite differences in age, gender and goals – is the key to engagement in my gym

Richard McKinley, ABSolute Health and Fitness



Les Mills Christchurch: The group fitness offering scores over 90 per cent satisfaction

- ▶ The way the city pulled together, and the part the club played in this, gives us a special relationship with our customers."

Being located in the 'red zone' of the central city that was cordoned off, the club was forced to close post-quake, but was able to open a temporary site to offer members the chance to continue training. When the red zone re-opened, Les Mills was the first business to get going again and staff worked right up to opening time to ensure the gym was clean and tidy. The building was even given a Maori blessing before members came back for the first time post-quake.

"The work the staff put in – and the fact that we continued to provide some stability and normality in what was a very disjointed and distressing time for so many members – has enabled us to form a really strong sense of community and belonging," continues Theaker.

Les Mills is in an area of the city that's only now returning to business as usual, and as such is effectively still a destination club. The management team are conscious of the fact that members inevitably have to go out of their way, and often endure roadworks and detours, to visit.



The staff do an excellent job of making everyone feel a part of the club. Our facilities are second to none, but it's the attitude, friendliness and positivity of the staff that makes the real difference – Nic Theaker, Les Mills

"We've worked hard to offer the wow factor every time members come in," says Theaker. "The staff do an excellent job of making everyone feel a part of the club. Our facilities are second to none in the city, but it's the attitude, friendliness and positivity of the staff that makes the real difference."

"Our own satisfaction survey tells us we have the most highly rated gym floor team and group fitness team of all the Les Mills clubs: our Group Fit scores over 90 per cent satisfaction. Our experienced and knowledgeable team of instructors play a key role in keeping participants working hard and engaged with the club."

In addition, to keep that relationship with members strong, the team at Les Mills Christchurch organise community-building events ranging from a members-only party at year end, to sharing cake and bubbles when the club hits certain milestones.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

One person with a unique perspective is Kris Tynan, head judge of the New Zealand Exercise Association Awards and an industry veteran in both the UK and New Zealand.

"It isn't rocket science," she says. "Many clubs in the UK talk a lot about how they communicate with their customers, and write it up in their manual, but then do an ostrich impression around whether member engagement is actually happening or not. Sadly, many times it's not."

"It all starts with who you hire for your front line. If you don't get that right, you're behind from the outset."

While the UK is arguably a more mature market, nevertheless operators could learn much from their colleagues 'down under' in terms of employment and training of key staff, and the use of PTs and group exercise to engage members. ●



Les Mills instructors offered crucial support for members after the earthquake

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Hill is MD of customer insight and business intelligence provider Leisure-net, and a leading authority on NPS in the active leisure sector.

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MIND & BODY IN CONCERT

Health clubs are ultimately all about human performance – and the key to success is a sound mind and body connection, says **Bert Stemarthe**

There isn't a sportsperson anywhere in the world, whether at elite level or even just good club standard, who will not attest to their mind being absolutely key to their performance in both training and competition. And yet this most critical aspect of human performance is ignored by the vast majority of health clubs and personal trainers – not only the way that mindset can positively impact performance, but also how mental health issues can negatively impact the way that members progress.

Over the next 20 years or so, health clubs could find themselves playing a leading role in addressing issues associated with mental health. Indeed, taking a broader perspective on the overall health of members could be the defining characteristic that separates health clubs from just gyms.

But in order for this to happen, health club owners and managers need to be aware of the mental health issues that affect their facilities and their bottom line today: not the serious mental health problems that require specialist treatment, but the everyday issues such as stress, low self-esteem, anxiety and the like.

Those with low self-esteem may undermine their own good behaviour, believing they don't deserve to lose weight



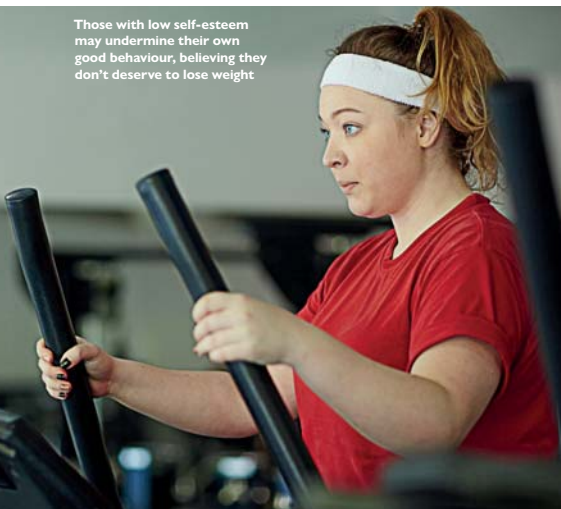
I recently did a presentation for a group of personal trainers entitled 'When a client exceeds our expertise'. It set out to explain the implications for a trainer when a client has low self-esteem or is suffering from stress or anxiety and other issues unrelated to, but having a direct impact on, physical training. The following is by no means an exhaustive list of issues, but here are the key themes from that presentation.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

The power of low self-esteem is often under-estimated. Its meaning is also often misunderstood, and it isn't easily detected by the untrained eye.

Self-esteem is literally our internal validation of our value or worth. It will largely determine what standard of relationship we want, promotion we seek and generally the life we 'deserve' to have.

Now consider if a member has low self-esteem and doesn't believe they 'deserve' to lose, or are 'worthy of' losing, weight. In this scenario, any





Some people will find it easier to maintain good habits if their friends look after themselves too

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

conscious action undertaken by them – such as working out or eating an apple instead of a doughnut – will be unconsciously undone by some other means, such as excessive alcohol or reduced adherence to the programme.

They may outwardly seek something such as weight loss, job promotion or a relationship, but inwardly they don't believe they deserve it. In this instance, exercise and/or dietary advice flies in the face of one of the most fundamental aspects of human nature: what we think we are worth.

The thing to remember is: people with low self-esteem join health clubs all the time.

FOOD CONNECTIONS

Nutritionists will tell people what to eat; good nutritionists educate people in how to eat; but few nutritionists are equipped to resolve the issues of why people eat the way they do. Understanding why people make the food choices they do is critical.

The more someone turns to a particular food at a particular time, the more this indicates an emotional

connection to that food – for example, cheese when they are bored or sweets when they become stressed.

LOCUS OF CONTROL

Locus of control is a topic I find very interesting. Someone who is in ILOC (internal locus of control) is internally driven and will make the changes to their lives that they deem necessary, when they deem them to be necessary. However, if someone is in ELOC (external locus of control), they tend to wait for changes in their environment before they can make changes in themselves.

Outside of the gym, someone in an ILOC position will likely take care of their diet and adhere to a programme they've set themselves, perhaps in consultation with a gym instructor or PT. However,

if they're in ELOC, it's less certain what their habits outside the gym will be – even if they're an active gym-goer. If they're surrounded by friends and loved ones who look after themselves, that's great – but if their environment is less conducive to good health, this is what will prevail.

STRESS & ANXIETY

PTs, gym instructors and anyone working in a health club who has a relationship with a member may be able to detect those suffering from stress or anxiety. Indeed, a member may confess to these issues.

However, although stress and anxiety are often brought together in the same sentence as if they're the same thing, they aren't the same thing at all. The reason they're together here is simply because they're both common mental

Stress and anxiety will not only affect how well someone performs in the gym, but whether they will turn up at all



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

If a trainer can understand an anxious member's mindset, they can better serve their needs

Everyone can benefit from expert guidance in getting their mind to work in concert with, rather than against, their bodies

- ▶ health issues that will not only affect how well someone performs in the gym, but whether they will turn up at all.

Time – or lack thereof – is often a huge contributing factor in the build-up of stress. A recent survey published in the *London Evening Standard* cited more than a quarter of those giving up their gym membership did so because of a lack of time; when someone is busy and stressed, one of the first things to go will be the health club visit – even though this could actually help reduce their stress. If this situation persists, their question will become: 'What's the point of keeping my membership at all?'

Anxiety is the anticipation of an event that's outside our consciousness, and is characterised by feelings such as foreboding and excessive worry. Anxiety comes in many forms, and many levels of severity, but at its heart it's a fear response. As human beings, we have three responses to a fearful situation: fight, flight or freeze. And none of these are conducive to regular attendance in the health club, because at the time of an anxiety episode, very little else matters to that individual.

MEANING

The significance of the word 'mean' is often lost in normal language. Not so in therapy. Meaning underpins and drives goals, so understanding what it means to a client to, say, lose weight is critical. Does it mean my husband/wife will stop calling me fat? Or that I won't die of a

heart attack soon, or I'll look great on my wedding day? So understanding what it means to members to be there in the club helps trainers to engage at that level. This has to be in the forefront of the minds of instructors and PTs, so they can better focus their services.

However, be aware of further hurdles even if you establish why the member is at the club. One of my clients once described her fat as a carapace. It's difficult to not be categorical about something like this, so I won't try: it really doesn't matter what you know about exercise and nutrition if faced with such a client. They absolutely will not shed that fat until the idea that the fat is there to protect them is shifted.

FOCUS ON EXPERTISE

But what, as an owner or manager, can you do about it? I believe there are a number of opportunities for health club operators that want to begin to understand their members.

The first thing would be to get a therapist in your building – if there's someone on-site who has the expertise to deal with the issues outlined in this article, it paints the entire club in a favourable light.

The stigma of mental health is in decline and therapy in this country is booming in terms of numbers of people seeking treatment. There's far more openness around this topic than was the case just a few years ago, so

referring a member to a therapist working within the club is no longer as hard a conversation as it might once have been.

Then make sure you ask your members 'why?' – why do, or did, they want to join and what do they want to get out of their membership? Membership sales should focus as much on individuals' health needs as on showing off the clubs' facilities. Focus on the expertise within the club: nutritionists, therapists and so on.

The average health club member may not seek to compete at the next Olympics, but nevertheless everyone can benefit from expert guidance in getting their mind to work in concert with, rather than against, their bodies. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bert Stemarthe

is a cognitive hypnotherapist who also had a 21-year career as a personal trainer, starting out in Holmes Place in 1995. In 2016, he was invited to present on 'Treating anxiety without medication' to the BMA (British Medical Association). He has clinics in Harley Street and the City of London.
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SMARTER TESTING & PERFORMANCE

Measuring over 40 different performance parameters with a high degree of accuracy, Wattbike has proved to be a powerful testing and fitness tool for top athletes and regular gym-goers alike

Testing is fundamental to improving performance. And the team at Wattbike are obsessed with both. Without a reliable start point to benchmark against, there can be no reliable results. Testing on a Wattbike gives accurate, comparable and repeatable data which you can trust.

There are always new claims and trends within the industry, but there's only one training tool that does it all; the Wattbike. It measures over 40 different performance parameters with unerring accuracy. To improve fitness and health, it's the most effective piece of equipment you'll find in the gym environment.

WHAT IS FTP AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This is one of the key metrics for anyone interested in performance measures. Functional Threshold Power (FTP) represents your ability to sustain the highest possible power output over an hour. Regular assessment of your FTP will give you an indication of whether your performance is improving, and gives you a benchmark on which to base specific training zones.

The best way to measure your FTP is with a 20-minute test on the Wattbike. But by performance, we aren't just referring to elite athletes. Anyone who has a goal to improve their health and fitness will be looking at performance measures. And the Wattbike is a highly adaptable training tool for all abilities.

To mirror this range of performer, the Wattbike is now the chosen testing tool across several sectors; from the uniform services, healthcare, the private and public fitness sector as well as within elite sport.



Wattbike measures the key metric of Functional Threshold Power (FTP)

WATTBIKE AND THE ARMY

The 'A3 Test' was designed by Wattbike in partnership with the British Army to help evolve their testing and physical assessments. It is a three-part assessment on the Wattbike that allows accurate testing of individuals' aerobic fitness.

The aim was to increase resilience and reduce the incidence of further injury whilst making a positive contribution to recovery times and long term exercise adherence. The test still provides a challenge, but an impact-free one for soldiers.

There are now over 2000 Wattbikes within Army units and now over 100 specially trained Master Trainers who deliver the training throughout the Army. The A3 Test has now been officially written into the MATT2 Fitness document (*Military Annual Training Tests and Workplace*

Induction Programme) which maps out the mandatory fitness tests.

WATTBIKE & NUFFIELD HEALTH

Nuffield Health recognised the benefits of the Wattbike early on and now have them in most of their gym facilities, medical centres and hospitals. The Nuffield health and wellbeing experts, including their personal trainers, physiologists and physiotherapists, have all collaborated with Wattbike to create a set of protocols that have been incorporated across their service lines.

Wattbikes are used by the physiotherapy teams as a rehab and recovery tool, and to test and identify muscle imbalances. A Wattbike test has also been incorporated into the 360+ Health Assessments as a test of current fitness performance and an indicator of future cardiovascular health.

“Having welcomed over 1,000 athletes, the centre is truly unique in developing world class talent and has no less than 34 World Championship titles and three Olympic Champions to its credit”
The UCI World Cycling Centre, Aigle, Switzerland



The three-minute aerobic test is a perfect start to a training plan

THE MOST POPULAR METRICS MEASURED ON THE WATTBIKE

Watts: the main measurement of the Wattbike is power in Watts.

Cadence: cadence is displayed in real-time on the performance monitor. Finding your ideal cadence will help make you more efficient.

Heart rate: by linking up your heart rate monitor, the Wattbike will display this in real time, helping you to measure the physiological intensity of your workout.

Maximum heart rate (MHR): if you undertake a test on a Wattbike, you can output your MHR, which can be used to set personal heart rate training zones.

Left/Right leg balance: the Wattbike is the only indoor trainers to measure right/left leg balance. A balanced

power output between each leg will improve performance.

Peddalling technique: with data collected 100 times per second, the Wattbike creates a graph shown on the Polar View screen which represents pedalling technique.

Maximum Minute Power (MMP): when you undertake a test on the Wattbike, you'll often be looking for the Max Minute Power. The MMP is used to set your personalised training zones, ensuring sessions are at the right intensity for you.

Power/Kg: if you set up a user profile, or input your weight information into the Wattbike, the performance monitor will calculate your power to weight ratio.

THE WATTBIKE TESTS

Six-second peak power test: designed to find the highest peak power and rpm. Use this to test sporadically and measure improvement.

Submaximal ramp test: designed to provide a safe method to benchmark fitness levels and also to estimate MMP and MHR.

Three-minute aerobic test: designed to estimate MMP and MHR. The perfect test to start a training plan.

10-minute progress test: a sub-maximal test used throughout a training plan to monitor progress. This

test is less stressful on the body than others so good to use regularly.

Twenty-minute threshold test: for experienced athletes, it measures improvement functional threshold power (FTP).

Thirty-second test: for experienced athletes, it's a maximal test where you ride as fast as possible for 30-seconds.

Maximal ramp test: for experienced athletes under supervision, it is considered the 'gold standard' test to find your maximum minute power and maximum heart rate.

WATTBIKE AND THE UCI

The UCI World Cycling Centre is an elite coaching and training centre based in Aigle, Switzerland. Their mission is to identify talented cyclists from around the world to help them realise their potential. The coaches have been integrating Wattbike into their global programme since 2014 and following this, they have been able to create a universal testing protocol in partnership with Wattbike to find future cycling stars.

Having welcomed over 1,000 athletes, the centre is unique in developing world class talent and has 34 World Championship titles and three Olympic Champions to its credit. Because of the ground-breaking testing protocols, they have been given the accolade of 'Olympic Training Centre'.

Wattbike created a specific UCI WCC test to help identify riders. This is now delivered at the HQ and the satellite centres in Korea, Japan, South Africa, India and Argentina and at pop-up camps worldwide.

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ACTIVELAB: THE MOVEMENT REVOLUTION

With the conclusion of ukactive's Active Lab programme, we take a look at the 12 finalists and the innovative products they've designed to boost activity levels and change the way we exercise



Teachers lead dance classes

imovesdance

Imogen Buxton-Pickles and Ian Pickles, founders

imovesdance is a solution for schools, giving teaching staff everything they need to deliver outstanding PE and more. It's the no-stress, no-sweat way to bring PE and dance into classrooms.

The online activity package provides the teacher with all the tools they need to lead various physical activities. The packages are based around interactive demonstration videos, curriculum-based lesson plans, music and flashcards, plus a range of assessment tools. This provides teachers with all the resources they need to teach activity in a fun, exciting way.

Package licenses are bought on a school-by-school basis, with all teaching staff able to access the resources through an online portal.



Amaven

PK Vaish and Sam Wyatt, founders



We built Amaven

as an online platform developed for teachers, fitness professionals and sports coaches to deliver personalised lifestyle, fitness and athletic programmes.

The platform assesses an individual's strengths and weaknesses across several movement skills and fitness components. Based on the assessments, the system generates a personalised home activity plan to develop any weaker areas and build on a person's strengths.

Individuals can access their plan, as well as vital fitness reports and statistics, through their Online Locker. This gives everyone the power to measure, track and improve their performance in just a few simple clicks.

CustomFit App

David Langridge, MD, Connected Fitness Labs



Connected Fitness Labs uses fit-tech to help consumers see, feel and understand progress in their fitness plan, driving increased confidence.

The CustomFit App breaks down the four walls of the gym by offering digital training memberships to the wider public, not just gym members.

CustomFit allows users to create personalised and progressive workouts, all designed around what the user is trying to achieve: losing weight, toning up, gaining strength or boosting athleticism. It's already live in eight countries across the globe, delivering 3.5 million workout sessions a year to around 300,000 users.



Plans can be checked anywhere





VRGo

Joe Ryan, CEO and founder

The VRGo chair started out as a virtual reality chair aimed at the gaming community but, as its potential for inspiring movement became clear, it has quickly evolved. Unique in both design and application, the possibilities for the VRGo chair are endless.

We aim to develop an application alongside the VRGo that actively promotes movement for our consumers throughout their use of the chair. An analysis by Goldman Sachs in April 2016 validated this goal, noting that there will be broad and exciting potential for VRGo as our product develops over time.



The chair encourages movement

Shapelog

Brian Hayden, founder

Strength training is the second most popular form of exercise – right behind walking. Shapelog aims to offer consumers a better strength training experience through tracking technology.

Our patent-pending devices can be retrofitted onto any piece of equipment, from any manufacturer – even a rusty old Smith Machine. Once fitted, our devices will collect thousands of items of data.

This allows us to do easy stuff – like recommend weight and reps for all workouts – but also some much harder stuff, such as offering practical tips for each exercise to help gym-goers improve their form, so they don't get hurt.



Tips are user-specific

StepJockey

Ben Hartley, head of revenue

StepJockey set out to lead the charge against sedentary office lifestyles, by encouraging greater use of the stairs.

Ours is a system for labelling corporate staircases with calorie burn, and then incentivising stair use with team challenges, hosted on a free mobile app. It's an easy and inexpensive way for employers to help their team become healthier and much more active.

We sell via subscription, providing our clients with a package of signs and software.



OpenPlay

**Sam Parton, CEO & co-founder
& Ian Pridham, CTO & co-founder**

OpenPlay is a sports marketplace that connects individuals with local sports facilities or activity providers, allowing consumers to easily find and book the facilities suited to them.

OpenPlay has a monthly subscription for its online booking system, and takes a commission on bookings taken by venues and activity providers.

It's available to view on the web and via an app, with over 100,000 monthly visitors clicking through and getting active at more than 100 different venues across the UK.



iPrescribe Exercise

Carron Manning and Lewis Manning, founders



iPrescribe Exercise is a free, medically-endorsed and evidence-based app that produces a personalised 12-week exercise prescription plan, based on an individual's unique health profile.

Drawing on the latest academic evidence, the app uses an algorithm to provide the user with an automated yet individualised activity programme that will gradually lead the person to their optimal but safe level of activity.

Our years of experience as physiotherapists taught us that the best type of activity for a person is the one they enjoy the most. Our app helps people find their ideal active pursuit. ▶



Activities are fun and social

► Silverfit Eddie Brocklesby, founder

Silverfit aims to encourage wellbeing and fitness in people over 45 years old – promoting happier, healthier ageing through local activities, classes and events for people of all abilities.

Our charity helps keep the older population fit, as well as battling social exclusion. We also host a range of fun, social organised events in various locations around London, which are listed on our website.

I founded Silverfit in 2013 and I suppose you could say I was a late bloomer when it comes to fitness. I only began running at age 50 and in 2015, when I was 72, I became the oldest British woman to complete an Ironman Triathlon. If I can do it, anyone can!



EveryMatch Shahar Vigder, head of UK & Ireland

Researchers have found that exercising with other people is much more effective than exercising alone. EveryMatch's overriding mission is to help people find that perfect partner to share any activity – anytime, anywhere – in person. It matches individuals with others who want to do the same activity, at the same time, in the same place.

EveryMatch is an app designed for fitness operators, allowing them to offer their members a platform to find others who share their passion and to join and create events or groups.

The goal is to get more people active and keep them active, and help fitness operators retain members and build loyalty.



GYMetrix Rory McGown, founder

The global fitness industry spends almost £10bn every year on fitness equipment. GYMetrix is a tool that helps operators to make the most of their gym space, ensuring the capacity of the equipment matches customer demand.

We temporarily attach discrete wireless sensors to all the equipment in a gym. We analyse the data to help operators better understand their customers' equipment requirements and to make more informed gym equipment purchases.

GYMetrix is used across the world, including by the UK's Pure Gym and The Gym Group, Equinox and Blink in the US, as well as Basic-Fit in Europe.



LiveSmart Alex Heaton, CEO

LiveSmart is a new health assessment solution for communities, groups and organisations of any size.

Our six-month digital health programme brings together everything consumers need to reduce health risks and make long-lasting lifestyle changes. It offers an initial 50-point health assessment, then remote contact with a personal health coach, plus an interactive curriculum and technology that closely monitors the individual's progress. Regular interventions are key to ensuring continued adherence.



CALLING ALL ENTRANTS FOR 2017

The ActiveLab programme will return next year and ukactive is already looking for prospective applicants. If you're an ambitious product- or service-based start-up with the potential to shape the future of the health and physical activity sector, email activelab@ukactive.org.uk or visit the ActiveLab website: <http://activelab.co/>





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LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Flooring solutions specialist TVS Group pulled out all the stops to transform the free weights area at Huddersfield Leisure Centre and leave the gym in great shape for the new year gym rush and beyond

With the crucial January gym sales period just weeks away, Huddersfield Leisure Centre urgently needed a speedy yet sustainable flooring solution if the gym was to start 2017 with a bang.

Luckily for site operator Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL), TVS Group was on hand with a fast and highly effective solution to the challenge of resurfacing the 400sq m free weights area in just seven days, preparing it to attract a raft of new year members.

"TVS came highly recommended and were very quick to set the wheels in motion with a series of meetings and thorough consultations," says KAL business development manager Barry Turnbull.

"Time was of the essence, and TVS worked with us to find the most cost-effective solution for our needs and then quickly got to work to complete a complex project in just a week."

REDUCING NOISE

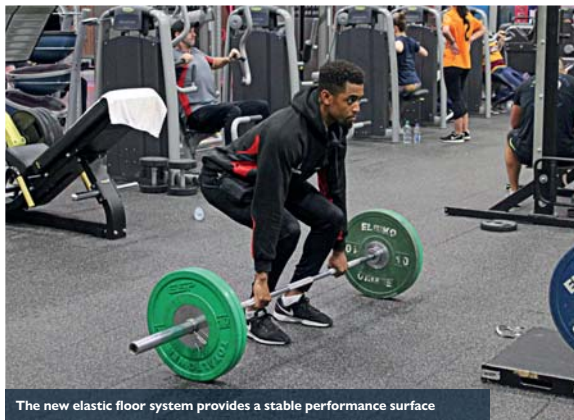
With January the busiest time of the year for gym operators, it's no surprise that December is the time when TVS is most in demand to get sites looking their best. Having started in 2009, the company has developed a slick operation that meant it was able to meet the unique challenges of the project despite the tight deadline in the middle of a busy period.

"It was a case of making sure we were really shrewd with our logistics and ensuring we had adequate labour on the job to meet the requirements," explains TVS group sales manager Andy Roberts.

"We know from experience that it's vital to co-ordinate phased deliveries in the correct sequence and quantities, to ensure a continuous and efficient process."

Roberts adds: "Staff at the gym have said that the new flooring solution has helped reduce noise and vibration throughout the building, which is an additional benefit of the specialist rubber compound."

"Our background is in acoustic solutions and that helps us. It's a factor that's often overlooked, but with property at a premium, many gyms are only viable because they have specialist



The new elastic floor system provides a stable performance surface



acoustic solutions in their free weights and functional areas that minimise disruption to the rest of the building. It's a very technical area, but gym owners certainly can't afford to get it wrong."

THE CLIENT'S VIEW

Turnball says: "TVS worked with us to find the most cost effective solution and after discussing various pricing options, we settled on the solution we installed."

"We needed the new flooring ahead of the busy new year period and were highly impressed with TVS' speed and efficiency."

"We found the sales support from Andy very responsive and we're delighted with the finished product. I can see why TVS came so highly recommended."

SECTOR ANALYSIS

Roberts adds: "The fitness environment has traditionally been our heartland and we're seeing a notable increase in the size of free weight and functional areas, as in Huddersfield Leisure Centre. We also supply custom-designed sprint tracks and we're putting a lot of prowler lanes into functional training spaces right now. Obviously that's a wider industry trend that has been taking shape for a while, but in terms of our work pipeline, it's showing no sign of relenting in the UK market."

"We're also seeing huge demand for our sports flooring solutions, so we've recently appointed an outdoor surfacing specialist whose key role is to service our clients in the outdoor sector."

"Right now, this covers EPDM rubber surfacing solutions (a synthetic rubber) for outdoor multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and there's also a growing appetite for our indoor sports hall systems."

"Additionally, our unique expertise in the technical market of 3G and artificial turf systems means we're supplying shock attenuating elastic layers for a range of sports, as well as cork infill materials. It's safe to say we've started 2017 in the same busy vein we ended 2016 and we can't wait to help more people get active."

"The fitness environment has traditionally been our heartland and we're seeing a notable increase in the size of free weight and functional areas"

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THE IHRSA FOUNDATION

IHRSA's **Kristen Walsh** speaks to **Amy Bantham**, IHRSA's vice president of health promotion and health policy, to gain an insight into the IHRSA Foundation

What is the IHRSA Foundation?

The IHRSA Foundation is a charitable organisation established in 2012 to promote health through exercise. The purpose of the IHRSA Foundation is to support IHRSA's charitable and educational functions.

The mission of the IHRSA Foundation is focused in three key areas:

- Conducting research on health outcomes associated with the practice of physical activity
- Providing educational and training resources and support to health clubs
- Promoting evidence-based health and wellness programmes that result in individuals embracing a healthier lifestyle through exercise

What is the long-term goal of the IHRSA Foundation?

We want to increase the visibility of our industry's success stories and the amazing work that clubs are doing to improve people's lives. We believe that there's no better vehicle than the IHRSA Foundation to do this.

The foundation is young, but it has big, long-term goals. Ideally, IHRSA would like to have a scientifically proven study showing the benefits of exercise on every chronic disease. It's both a challenge and an opportunity, but it has great potential to expand the reach and credibility of our industry.



Amy Bantham, vice president of health promotion and policy

What activities will the IHRSA Foundation support in 2017?

This year we will launch five ACCESS Health pilot programmes in IHRSA clubs, from California to New York. The ACCESS Health initiative is the IHRSA Foundation's five-year strategic effort to remove the barriers to physical activity for people with chronic conditions through participant-focused, multi-dimensional wellness programmes.

One such programme, funded by the IHRSA Foundation and the American Council on Exercise (ACE), is a pilot programme to serve cancer patients in San Diego area health clubs.

In addition, the IHRSA Foundation is also addressing the needs of people with disabilities. Four pilot programmes will be conducted at Newtown Athletic Club, Pennsylvania; ACAC Timonium, Maryland; ACAC Charlottesville, Virginia; and Clubfit Briarcliff, New York with the support of the IHRSA Foundation, ACE, and the Universal Fitness Innovation and Transformation (UFIT) team. UFIT is a global social change movement whose goal is to increase fitness opportunities for all, but particularly those with disabilities.

What does the ACCESS Health initiative consist of?

The ACCESS Health initiative is a collection of programmes: Cancer Wellness; Diabetes; Chronic Disease; and Inclusive Fitness. Through the ACCESS Health initiative, the IHRSA Foundation is helping clubs open their doors to people with disabilities, and those with or who are at risk of developing chronic conditions. These are the segments of the population that are most in need of the health and wellness programmes and services offered by our industry.

Ideally, IHRSA would have a study showing the benefits of exercise on every chronic disease, as it has great potential to expand the reach and credibility of our industry



Health clubs offer a solution to the global problem of obesity

Will there be pilot programmes outside the United States?

The initial pilot programmes are in the United States, but in the long term the IHRSA Foundation will be global in reach. Physical inactivity and obesity are global problems, and health clubs offer a solution. The IHRSA Foundation will,

therefore, support the global network of IHRSA clubs in providing that important solution.

How will the IHRSA Foundation help to grow the industry?

The IHRSA Foundation is a tremendous benefit of IHRSA membership because it gives club operators something to present to their members or prospects, and say "Here's what we can do to help you." Doing so is likely to help bring in new members, and prompt current members to be more active in the club.

The foundation's research will also be used to forge important relationships with physicians and medical professionals. Again, the benefit is credibility. IHRSA has published several resource publications over the past year to help its member clubs create referral relationships with doctors and other medical professionals. All operators have noted that solid data is essential when attempting to persuade doctors that it is beneficial for them to refer patients to a club wellness programme or personal trainer.

The IHRSA Foundation will also work directly with doctors and medical professionals to educate them about lifestyle medicine, including how to incorporate it into their practice and how to discuss the importance of physical activity with their patients. ●

HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE IHRSA FOUNDATION

There are three ways to get involved with the IHRSA Foundation:

- 1 Pilot a wellness programme in your club
- 2 Donate directly to support pilot programmes
- 3 Use AmazonSmile and select the IHRSA Foundation as your charity of choice.

Log on to www.ihrsafoundation.org to learn more and to support the IHRSA Foundation.

ABOUT IHRSA

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

Locate an IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

To learn how IHRSA can help your business thrive, visit www.ihrsa.org



The ACCESS Health initiative is aimed at people with disabilities



THE FAST TRAIN

EMS is a training method that claims you don't have to be active every day – all you need is 20 minutes a week. Is this too good to be true?

Kath Hudson reports

Already popular in Germany and embraced by many of its country's Olympic athletes, a survey in that market showed that 40 per cent of respondents cite EMS (electronic muscle stimulation) as a fitness trend they'd like to try in 2017, at one of the country's 1,300 studios.

Similar studios are already popping up in larger cities across the UK, but there's still much education to be done before this market gets to the penetration levels of Germany. Nevertheless, suppliers believe that, once people start to see the benefits, the trend will take off, thanks to its appeal across the whole fitness spectrum. Serious athletes will use it to improve performance, while those who hate exercise will use it as an easy way to shape up.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Simply put, a finely tuned electrical impulse is sent to the muscle telling it to contract; it feels like a vibration, not a shock. As a result, the muscles gain muscle mass, which leads to an increase in strength and power.

Specific muscle groups can be worked on, which means it can also be used as a rehab tool. "It's a method that started its life in medical therapy," explains Daniel Bambach, spokesperson for EMS supplier miha.

In this context, EMS has been used to keep bodies alive after accidents, and has even been used on people in comas. Another supplier, Easy Motion Skin, is keen to target the disabled market and has just signed high-profile skier Heather Mills as an ambassador. "Heather finds it hard to train her left leg, which



is partially amputated, but EMS can address the imbalance," explains Jan Ising, EMS professional at Easy Motion Skin. EMS is used more on her left leg than her right to build strength and strike a better balance in her body.

But EMS has also moved out of the medical and rehab environment and into elite sports, with athletes such as Usain Bolt and Bayern Munich FC recognising the impact the technology can have on power, strength and speed.

Studies have shown improvements across a wide range of measures among professional sports people, including a 4.8 per cent improvement in the sprint time of ice hockey players over 10m (*Brocherie et al*). Meanwhile, in freestyle swimming, a 1.3 per cent improvement in 25m times and

1.45 per cent for 50m have been recorded following EMS training (Pichon et al).

HIGH SPEED WORKOUT

And now the technology is moving into health clubs, as Bambach explains: "We're seeing year-on-year growth in the private fitness market – and that's because it works, as well as adding differentiation to a health club's offering." To back up his claims, he references a study that found untrained people using EMS combined with isokinetic training increased muscle size by 10 per cent over eight weeks.

Meanwhile, Ising points to research that highlights the efficacy of an EMS workout: "If you do an intense 30 minutes on the cross-trainer, wearing the device, it's the equivalent of a four-hour strength workout."

EMS is not more effective than conventional exercise...

but it is appealing to those who don't like sport – Simon von Stengel



German EMS studio brand
Bodystreet launched in
the UK in July 2016

THE SCIENCE

Simon von Stengel, CEO of the training centre at the Institute of Medical Physics, Erlangen University, has conducted research into EMS and rates the technique as a way to increase muscle mass without loading the joints, as well as reducing body fat – especially in the abdominal region – and gaining strength and power.

"One study showed it can increase strength by 30 per cent in 12 weeks," he says. "It can also activate the fast-twitch muscle fibres, which are difficult to activate, especially at lower intensity."

But it doesn't necessarily beat other forms of exercise – even in its heartland of strength training. One study compared EMS to HIIT in 30- to 50-year-old males. Over 16 weeks, one group did EMS for 30 minutes a week and another group did one hour of HIIT a week. Both saw significant improvements in strength, but the results were fairly even: a 10.5 per cent improvement in back strength for HIIT, and 12 per cent for EMS; and 14 per cent versus 8 per cent improvements in leg extension strength.

"This suggests that EMS is effective, but not more effective than conventional

exercise. And it doesn't have the other benefits exercise can have, such as improving stamina or co-ordination," observes von Stengel.

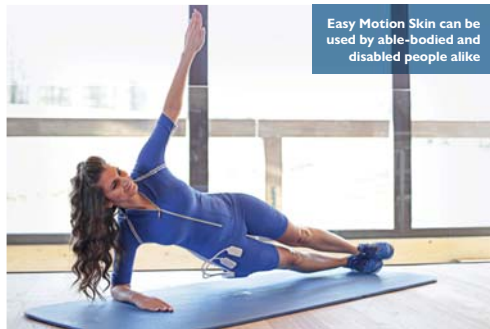
TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

So is the claim – that one 20-minute session a week is all people need to do to improve their health – confusing?

It's certainly a far cry from the 5 x 30 minutes currently recommended in the UK – and while EMS suppliers have a large body of research to show that the technology can be effective in helping people lose weight and build muscle and strength, there are many other benefits of physical exercise that EMS can't rival: improvements in co-ordination, stamina and cardiovascular among them.

But as von Stengel explains: "EMS is appealing to those who don't like sport, especially older people."

And this is perhaps the point: EMS isn't only for elite athletes and the highly motivated who want to use it to boost their results. If you're a sedentary individual who isn't particularly interested in exercising, EMS – with its quick and comparatively pain-free results – might just appeal to you where other forms of activity won't. That arguably makes it a good starting point for those not yet engaged with the gym – a way of getting new people through the doors of your club or leisure centre. ●



Easy Motion Skin can be
used by able-bodied and
disabled people alike

PERFECT PERFORMANCE

FOR VIRGIN ACTIVE WITH GERFLOR

From group training to HIIT sessions on the gym floor, Taraflex® flooring from Gerflor has been able to meet the exercise demands of Virgin Active clubs in the City of London with ease

Keeping fit and going to the gym remain hugely popular, with the number of people exercising every week now breaking the seven million mark for the first time. Exercise classes continue to attract large numbers of people, especially women. International flooring and interiors specialist Gerflor are well-placed to assist clubs with this growth.

At the Virgin Active Health Club, 97 Aldersgate Street in the City of London, they don't do things by half measures. They believe in adding membership value all the way down the line. It's a philosophy that's made the brand what it is today. In 2015 they made the decision to install a sports flooring solution that would tick all the

boxes on performance, durability, comfort and safety. They chose Taraflex® vinyl sports flooring from international interiors and flooring specialist Gerflor.

A spokesperson from Virgin Active said: "We specified Taraflex® from Gerflor as we needed a product that would stand up to the rigours of our functional concept area and would also deliver a high degree of safety".

FLOORING QUALITY

With the very latest exercise equipment on the most extensive gym floor in the City of London, Virgin Active at The Barbican has some of the best cutting-edge equipment available. It's a shrine to getting fit and staying healthy in a safe and comfortable

environment that oozes quality. Ensuring that their highly-valued members could enjoy every aspect of the club's facilities the type of flooring was going to be key in their overall offer to new and existing members and their guests. The 324 sq m of Taraflex® Sport M Evolution has now, after three years, delivered everything that the tight specification demanded at the time.

Taraflex® is versatile enough to be used in various multi-specialist applications and affordable for all new projects and refurbishments. It's a sports flooring solution that is ideal for the education, community, leisure, health and fitness sectors.

Taraflex® vinyl sports flooring from Gerflor has been used in many



Taraflex® from Gerflor needed to withstand the rigours of Virgin Active's functional fitness area



Three years on, our members and staff still love the Taraflex® flooring. It's really delivered in terms of durability and performance
Spokesperson for Virgin Active at The Barbican, City of London

international and local sporting events and is available in a range of 17 colours and three wood-effect designs.

HIGH SPECIFICATION

It is available in various solutions that meet the different levels of the EN 14904 Standard, delivering the full scope of indoor sports surfaces from P1 to P3 shock absorption solutions. Taraflex® is recognised for providing durability, safety and comfort without impairing performance.

A unique value proposition, the Comfort range offers greater than 45 per cent force reduction, making it unrivalled in the marketplace in terms of offering comfort for users lowering the risk of long term injuries. Taraflex® meets the EN Standard of 22196 for anti-bacterial activity (E. coli - S. aureus - MRSA) (3) returning >99

CASE STUDY NOTES

CLIENT:	Virgin Active
LOCATION:	London
PRODUCT:	Taraflex® Sport M Evolution
SQM 2:	324
INSTALLATION:	2015

per cent levels of growth inhibition. The product is also treated with Protocolsol®, which renders polish redundant and is triple-action, meaning that no polish is ever required, it's easy to maintain and is anti-friction burn and slide/grip.

Taraflex® has a double-density foam backing and as another bonus, it's

environmentally-friendly. The spokesperson from Virgin Active concluded by saying: "Three years on from the initial installation of the Gerflor flooring, our members and staff still love the Taraflex® flooring. It's really delivered both in terms of durability and performance."

To learn more about Gerflor solutions, ask for a free sample or to speak to a specialist, call us on 01926 622 600, email contractuk@gerflor.com, or visit gerflor.co.uk

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Championing sporting excellence

Life Fitness kits out Scotland's new Oriam sports performance centre

Oriam, Scotland's sports performance centre, officially opened in August 2016 and involved a partnership between Life Fitness and Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University to kit out the world-class sports facility with premium fitness equipment to benefit both students and the local community.

The university worked alongside sportscotland and the City of Edinburgh Council to create the £33m development, and the centre is now firmly established as the performance home of Scottish football and Scottish rugby, as well as basketball, netball and handball.

Life Fitness was briefed to provide top-of-the-line equipment for Oriam's fitness centre, facilitating the preparation and development of performance athletes, coaches and sports teams, while inspiring local residents through the superior facilities available on their doorstep.

Life Fitness installed 85 pieces of premium fitness equipment including 64 cardiovascular stations and 19 strength stations. To meet the demand for

“Despite the sometimes wet and cold weather, our members have fully embraced the outdoor classes – Catriona McAllister, Oriam”



functional group training, Oriam chose to install SYNRGY360 and the first SYNRGY BlueSky outdoor training station in Scotland. The custom-built gym was developed in partnership with the Gym Rental Company. Oriam also worked with Leeds-based company Showoff Media to design all internal graphics for different areas within the centre.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

The centre is focused on growing sport from grassroots to elite levels, promoting the benefits of regular physical activity with an inclusive and accessible message.

Catriona McAllister, CEO of Oriam, explains: “When developing our offering, we were mindful of the emergence of growing trends. With the rise of technology, members now require gym equipment to connect with their devices to collate data and track performance. Functional and HIIT training methods have also become essential elements.

“The majority of the classes at Oriam are based on functional fitness. We understand that muscles should work together and create a stable and strong body. This applies to elite athletes, individuals undergoing rehab or simply individuals who are looking to get stronger and fitter.

“The installation of SYNRGY BlueSky, our outdoor training station, gives our sports centre members something completely new and challenging: it's not a feature that many other gyms or sports centres offer.

“Despite the sometimes wet and cold weather, our members have fully embraced the outdoor classes and our BlueSky circuit gives them the room to move, run and jump in an invigorating outdoor setting.”

KEEPING IT FRESH

In addition to SYNRGY BlueSky, the SYNRGY360 training system has proven to be the most popular piece of equipment in the fitness suite. This is due to the variety of exercises it offers, with its punch bags, kettlebells, battle ropes and TRX suspension trainers.

www.lifefitness.co.uk



The key focus at the Oriam centre is on developing functional fitness



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Growing in strength

Spirit Fitness installs cardio equipment and a new strength range at New Body Fitness' second site in Weymouth, UK

Following a successful first three years in business, New Body Fitness in Weymouth is to open a second site, enabling more clients to benefit from the gym's expertise and inclusive offering.

Established in 2014, New Body Fitness aims to provide a health and fitness solution for all – where all ages and abilities can train together without compromise. Now nearing capacity at Weymouth, New Body Fitness is opening a secondary site at Bridport, offering the same inclusive fitness model and quality of service.

New Body Fitness director Nick Bell said: "Following the success of Weymouth, we felt the need to expand our facilities to offer even more people the opportunity to improve their health and wellbeing. "The goal has always been to expand the business and we're very excited to be at a point where we can do that."

A STRONG OFFERING

Due to open in April, New Body Fitness will be installing a range of Spirit Fitness

"Spirit Fitness is an ethically-sound company, with values that marry with our own. We're really looking forward to installing the new strength products – Nick Bell, New Body Fitness"



plate-loaded strength and state-of-the-art cardio equipment at the new site. The gym also offers Spirit Fitness cardio machines at the Weymouth site.

Bell added: "We have an excellent long-term relationship with our account manager, Dan Hodge. Not just that, Spirit Fitness is an ethically-sound company, with values that marry with our own."

"The equipment is good and reliable, so we're really looking forward to installing the new strength products at our Bridport site."

New Body Fitness attracts a wide range of members, young and old. Some are new to fitness, whereas others are experienced in weight training or are competitive athletes. As well as gym membership, New Body Fitness also offers personal training, a wide range of exercise classes and nutritional advice.

A SHARED SPIRIT

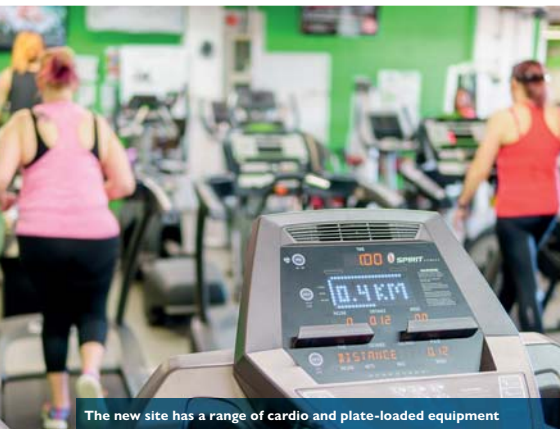
Account manager and commercial development manager for Spirit Fitness, Dan Hodge, said: "We're delighted that our existing relationship has led to repeat business with New Body Fitness. This alone is testament to our excellent products and superior customer service and we really can't wait to install our latest fitness machines from our new flagship series."

"The New Body Fitness business model is a credit to them and we hope the new Bridport site echoes the success of Weymouth. This gym really is going places and we are extremely pleased to be part of their journey."

Marketing manager at Spirit Fitness Janine Heath said: "We've been making some substantial behind-the-scenes changes to our offering, including a re-brand, new logo and of course, new product development."

"The new series has been a long time coming and given our long-standing relationship with Nick and the team at New Body Fitness, it seems only fitting that they are one of the first to have the new equipment installed."

www.spiritfitnessuk.co.uk



The new site has a range of cardio and plate-loaded equipment

ELEVATE 2017

Taking place at ExCeL London on 10–11 May, Elevate will explore the ways in which physical activity, health and performance connect. We look at what's in store at the show

The UK's largest cross-sector event focused on tackling inactivity, Elevate brings together experts from a wide range of backgrounds to focus on this increasingly important and complex societal challenge.

This year's attendees will have the opportunity to hear from over 200 speakers from the physical activity sector, academia, healthcare, government, commercial industry, local authorities and human performance. Speakers will share perspectives, ideas and the latest innovations to get people more active.

In addition to the free presentations and workshops running throughout the two days, attendees can also visit the expanded exhibition space which will include nine feature areas, three attractions, a dedicated stage and over 150 stands – all with a focus on physical activity, health and performance.

Explaining the need for a conference like Elevate, Dr Justin Varney of Public Health England – a speaker at this year's event – says: "If it were as simple as a single barrier, or even just a couple of barriers, we might have tackled physical inactivity years ago. However, much like obesity, inactivity is a complex problem requiring action across the whole system to change the

environments in which we live, as well as the cultural norms relating to physical activity."

THE BUSINESS OF ACTIVITY

Alongside the existing three seminars streams – Future Performance, Inclusivity: Creating an Active Nation, and Physical Activity for Health and Wellbeing – this year's event sees the launch of a new seminar stream: The Business of Physical Activity. The wide range of seminars in this stream will consider how marketing, finance, policy, digital and facilities management are transforming the physical activity business to meet the needs of consumer.

Opening this stream will be a discussion entitled 'The changing shape of the industry', which will consider how the fitness sector is evolving and segmenting. With contributions from companies such as Tough Mudder, David Lloyd Leisure,

Heartcore, activbod and Fitbug, it will look at the new competition, what this means for traditional operators, and how the sector can evolve and adapt.

Meanwhile Nick Perchard, head of communities at the Premier League, will join a session looking at the relationships between big brands and physical activity promotion. Perchard says: "As an industry, sport has so much to offer, but can do more to engage with health professionals in particular. To do that, we need to learn to communicate using their language."

"At the Premier League, we really focus on making sure activity is enjoyable first and foremost. There's a tendency to forget that if it's not fun, young people in particular will choose to do other things."

ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH

Physical activity for improved health is another key element of the event and

Inactivity is a complex problem that requires action across the whole system, to change environments and cultural norms relating to physical activity

– Justin Varney, PHE

Speakers will include (l-r) Dr Benjamin Ellis of Arthritis Research UK, Dr Joe Piggin of Loughborough University, and Sarah Broad of Greater Manchester Leisure and Cultural Trusts. Below right: Max Quintenton, Elevate



Dr Benjamin Ellis, senior clinical policy advisor at Arthritis Research UK, says that anyone interested in learning about the benefits of physical activity for the millions of people suffering with arthritis should really attend his session.

"I'll be discussing how we can collectively support people with arthritis to become physically active, so they can enjoy the benefits of reduced pain and disability. Working with the Department of Health, Public Health England and NHS England, Arthritis Research UK has developed a tiered framework for what should be provided to deliver this support.

"We'd like to discuss how physical activity and fitness communities can support making this widely available," he explains.

Asked how we can best promote physical activity in the UK, Dr Joe Piggott – programme director at Loughborough University and another of the Elevate event's speakers – says: "For me, an important aspect to develop is opportunities for older adults.

"Sport and physical activities often focus on young people. Of course, young people are important, but this emphasis on youth can leave older adults marginalised from marketing, facilities, services and funding."

Meanwhile, with her personal experience of working across Greater Manchester Leisure and Cultural Trust with its workforce of over 4,000 people, Sarah Broad will join a panel exploring how to create more productive, sustainable and responsive workforces.

Broad says: "Nurturing our workforce is the most important asset we have in tackling inactivity."



The exhibition space has been expanded for this year's event at ExCeL

SUPPORTERS

With backing from many key organisations in the physical activity sector, this year's lead supporters for Elevate include Public Health England, ukactive, London Sport, The Institute of Sport, Exercise & Health (ISEH) and The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA).

EXPLORE THE FLOOR

With more exhibition space available at this year's new venue, Elevate 2017 will feature several new attractions.

- The Stage will host a programme of demonstrations that focus on group exercise, active ageing, inclusivity and functional training.
- The Tech Lab will include presentations on a wide range of fitness, sports and health promotion technology.
- The Evidence Base will return for 2017 to consider the latest research to support the health benefits of physical activity.

Max Quittenton, director of Elevate, says: "As physical activity continues its bold ascent up all manner of social, political and commercial agendas, we're delighted to announce that Elevate will grow by 65 per cent in 2017.

"Remaining completely free to attend and now moving to ExCeL; Elevate 2017 will host more brilliant exhibitors and expert speakers, who'll be presenting a huge variety of carefully selected content, alongside the very latest innovations designed to get people moving more." ●



PHE's Justin Varney (left) believes Elevate's cross-sector approach is the best way to tackle inactivity

WANT TO ATTEND ELEVATE 2017?

Date: 10–11 May 2017
Venue: ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL, UK
Website: www.elevatearena.com
Registration: This event is free to attend
Twitter: @elevatearena
Facebook: Elevate
LinkedIn: Elevate 2017

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More to offer

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest news on secondary spend products

For more information, log onto www.fitness-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'



COOL AND SUPPORTIVE

Specialist swim and underwear company Anita Active has launched an innovative new sports bra. The Air Control sports bra features patented air control technology, including Delta Foam Pads that are designed to offer optimal support and ventilation.

The pads are covered with mesh to provide airflow, and are anchored in three places to provide firm support during exercise. They are also air permeable and are lined with terry cloth to wick moisture away from the skin. Tiny holes in the centre of each pad transport moisture to the outside.

The sports bra also features a wide under-band with tiny holes that allow moisture and heat to escape from the body, keeping the wearer cool, dry and comfortable throughout training.

The sports bra is available in cup sizes AA to H and was designed to be visually appealing, as well as high performing. It is finished in metallic grey and anthracite, for a modern, dynamic look.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **ANITA ACTIVE**

GREEN BOTTLES

Water filtration company Brita has released two refillable water filter bottles, the fill&go Active and the fill&go Vital, designed to offer hydration solutions for gyms and health clubs.

The bottles feature new MicroDisc and ActivSelect technology designed to filter out chlorine and other taste-impairing impurities from tap water, while leaving in healthy minerals such as magnesium and calcium.

MicroDisc has been designed to provide 50 per cent faster water flow than the original disc, for easier hydration. Each disc provides 150 litres, or four weeks' worth, of freshly filtered water. Both bottles are also made with durable BPA-free plastic.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **BRITA**



FASHIONABLE FITNESS

Sports and active wear company Boudavida has released a 12 piece collection of women's gym attire. Each piece has been designed to flatter real women, to motivate wearers to be the 'best and most active versions of themselves.'

The collection features a range of t-shirts, leggings, hoodies and crop tops. Made from soft-touch, stretchy fabrics designed to wick moisture from the skin and dry quickly, the collection is designed to be comfortable and high-performance.

Anabel Sexton, founder and CEO of Boudavida, said: "We've been increasingly frustrated with the lack of active wear aimed at, and designed for, real women in sport, so we decided to do something about it. We want our clothing to help inspire and motivate women to achieve their personal fitness or sporting goals."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **BOUDAVIDA**



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FACILITIES*

Discover new management software, flooring solutions, audio, access control, hygiene, energy management and more by talking direct to the suppliers



EVIDENCE BASE

A selection of research will be shared over the two days via the Evidence Base.

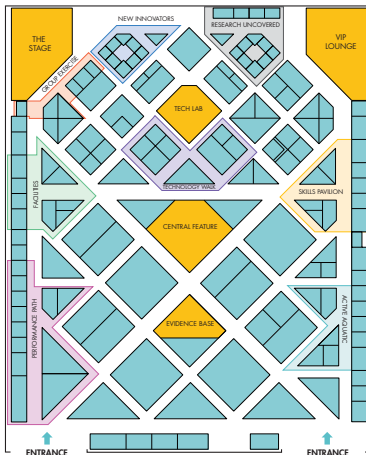
Sponsored by Renew Health
Supported by ukactive Research Institute



PERFORMANCE PATH

Performance Path will focus on the solutions which have helped athletes and sports people achieve their goals.

Sponsored by ESS



RESEARCH UNCOVERED
Research Uncovered will host leading academic institutions and organisations.

Sponsored by NCSEM England



TECH LAB*

TechLab has been curated to highlight some of the very latest technologies to make a positive impact on physical activity levels.



TECHNOLOGY WALK

Technology Walk presents the latest developments in fitness technology including wearable devices, data management and other software.



CENTRAL HUB

Lead supporters of Elevate will host the central meeting place during Elevate, this area is designed to encourage cross-sector pollination.



ACTIVE AQUATIC

Active Aquatic will present the latest in pool and open water swimming, equipment, research, monitoring and performance.



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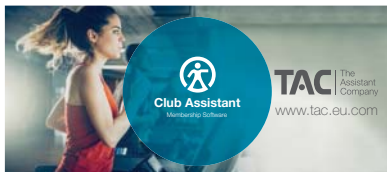
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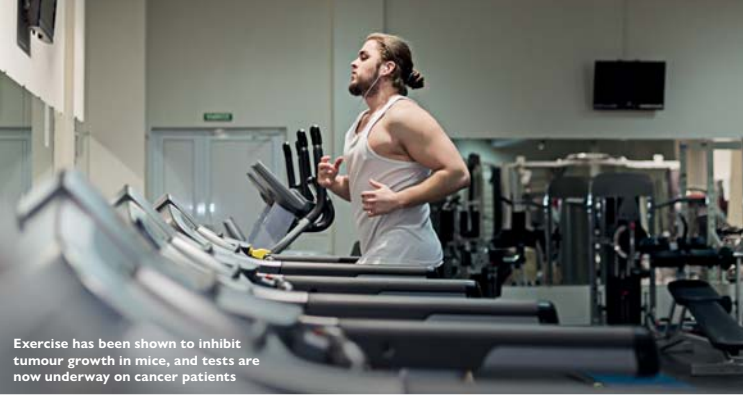


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Exercise has been shown to inhibit tumour growth in mice, and tests are now underway on cancer patients

PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Adrenalin boost

Recent research from Copenhagen has discovered why exercise has a beneficial effect on cancer, contributing to better treatment for patients

Researchers have long known that regular exercise reduces the risk of cancer and lessens the risk of its return. What wasn't known was the mechanism behind this effect. If researchers could pinpoint the action that was triggered by exercise, this could be used to better treat cancer patients.

A team led by Dr Pernille Hojman at Copenhagen University Hospital took up the challenge, testing the effect on mice. The study had several stages. In the first stage, the team split the mice into two groups: the active group, who had running wheels in their cages, and the inactive group, who had no running wheels. All mice were injected with cancer-causing substances.

The results confirmed the premise of the study. "We found that tumour growth in the running mice was reduced by more than 50 per cent compared to the inactive mice," says Dr Hojman. "I was surprised by the effect – it was so dramatic and convincing."

NATURAL KILLERS

The next step was to test the mechanisms behind this dramatic effect.

The team analysed the tumours from the mice and found that those from the active mice contained more immune cells than those from inactive mice. Specifically, there were double the number of cytotoxic T-cells, which attack cancerous cells, and five times the number of natural killer (NK) cells, which attract immune cells to a damaged area of the body.

Having discovered the presence of these cells, Dr Hojman and team embarked on the third stage of the study, in which they engineered the mice to lack either NK cells or T-cells. A lack of T-cells had little impact, but without NK cells, both active and inactive mice developed tumours of the same size. This indicated that NK cells, not T-cells, were responsible for the beneficial effect.

Finally, in an effort to explain how exercise triggers an increase in NK cells, Dr Hojman tested the hormone commonly associated with exercise – adrenalin, also known as epinephrine. When this hormone was injected into inactive mice, tumour growth was reduced by 61 per cent. However, the active mice, also given epinephrine,

showed an even more impressive reduction of 74 per cent. There was clearly something else involved.

After further testing, it was found that the molecule interleukin-6, which also increases with exercise and assists immune cells, was the missing link. When the researchers injected inactive mice with both epinephrine and interleukin-6, tumour growth was slowed to the same rate as those of the active mice.

THE EXERCISE DRUG

Dr Hojman explains why these findings are so important. "We are now testing cancer patients, and our preliminary data suggest that the mechanism is the same in humans as it was in mice.

"I think our results will help to precisely prescribe what type and amount of exercise should be performed to obtain this beneficial effect on tumour growth. We are still in the early phases, but currently we are recommending that all cancer patients perform high-intensity but short sessions of endurance training."

It is also possible that epinephrine and interleukin-6 could be given as drugs to treat cancer patients who are too ill to be sufficiently active. ●

*Pedersen, L et al. Voluntary running suppresses tumor growth through epinephrine- and IL-6-dependent NK cell mobilization and redistribution. *Cell Metabolism*. Volume 23, Issue 3.

Our results will help to precisely prescribe what type and amount of exercise should be performed to obtain this beneficial effect on tumour growth

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