

# health club management

SEPTEMBER 2018

No 261

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# health club

## management

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### Mark Verstegen

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### AGGREGATORS

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## Healthy planet

The World Health Organization has published a strategy aimed at fighting inactivity globally. This extraordinary milestone for the health and fitness industry sees our work being recognised at the highest level

**T**he health and fitness industry is a young sector by any measure and although we've made the most incredible progress since things kicked off in the 70s and 80s, there's still a huge journey ahead if we're to realise our full potential as leaders in the world of health and prevention.

In this context, the arrival of the World Health Organization (WHO) on the health and fitness scene is a huge milestone for the entire sector. It not only recognises the work already being done, but also lays out a supporting strategy which will embrace all areas of activity, and draw the health and fitness market into the wider world of activity and health prescription.

The new strategy is called *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA) for 2018–2030*, and on page 70 we talk to Dr Fiona Bull, programme manager at the Department of Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases at the WHO, who's one of the architects of the strategy and responsible for driving its delivery.

Bull is one of the world's foremost experts in prevention and has built a global reputation working in academia, government and workplace health promotion. Her career has spanned many aspects of activity, with time at the Department of Health in the US and National Centre for Physical Activity in the UK.

The new strategy she's tasked with delivering started life as part of a wider initiative launched in 2013, called *Global Action Plan on Prevention and Treatment of Non-Communicable Disease*.

This document identified tobacco, alcohol, diet/obesity and physical inactivity as the four main risk factors for health and spelled out in broad terms what should be done to tackle each.

Since then, inactivity has been at the back of the queue, as guidelines have been produced to address issues around tobacco, alcohol and diet/obesity. However, our time has now come.

The plan's ultimate targets have been set as a 15 per cent reduction in the global prevalence of physical inactivity among adults and adolescents by 2030, with the measure being at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a week and also a focus on encouraging regular strength training.



The activity industry now has WHO backing

**“We've got the opportunity to build a partnership with the World Health Organization – the body responsible for the health of everyone on the planet”**

So now we're on the WHO's radar as a global industry, which is a huge step forward, and we have the opportunity to build a partnership with the organisation responsible for the health and wellbeing of everyone on the planet.

There's much to be done to develop the collaboration and figure out how we can contribute to this global target, but it's clear that exciting times lie ahead.

**Liz Terry, editor**  
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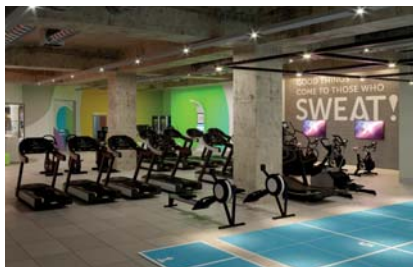
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# health club management

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# Write to reply

Fuel the debate about issues and opportunities across the industry.

We'd love to hear from you – email: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)



Everyone Active has pledged to get 1 million 4-11 year olds engaged in gymnastics by 2022

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## Collaborations with athletes, sporting bodies and local clubs is the way to engage kids

**Duncan Jefford**, south east regional director, Everyone Active

I read with interest about the Sport and Recreation Alliance #RightToBeActive campaign to make physical activity a 'fundamental right' for children. I'm pleased to see action being taken, and have signed the petition.

"Our experience shows there's a wealth of opportunity out there to engage kids in activity. Health clubs alone can't turn the tide of inactivity, but working with inspirational individuals, local athletes, community bodies and schools can work wonders. To reach kids you need to fire up their teachers and parents too, with accessible, affordable opportunities.



**Duncan Jefford**

"The leisure industry has a responsibility to do this: we're at the forefront of facilities provision and must open our doors, pools, pitches and sports courts. Collaborations are the way forward. Our Alex

**"It's all about reaching out to your community, finding people who share your passion, joining forces and creating engaging activities for children"**

Danson Hockey Academy and Max Whitlock Gymnastics courses are going down a storm as are our junior netball coaching sessions, delivered in partnership with national league Benecos Mavericks.

Local clubs and athletes can also make great partners. It's all about reaching out to your community, finding people who share your passion, joining forces and creating engaging activities.

"At the most basic level, simply hooking up with people like iDEA – providers of children's virtual activity classes – can quickly bring junior martial arts, street dance, juggling, and hula-hooping into your studio. Like our inactive kids, we need to move now. There's plenty to work with out there and leisure facilities are in a prime position to kick things off. ●



## PEOPLE

## FRANK REED

CEO, SWEAT!



We're offering members the convenience of having a workout and a chance to shop in a lively, welcoming environment



**R**etailer Debenhams and fitness operator Sweat! have unveiled the opening date for the first of a chain of in-store gyms.

The first club to be operated by the partnership will launch on 10 September 2018 at the Debenhams Sutton store in south west London.

The concept is the brainchild of Frank Reed, fitness industry veteran and one of the original co-founders of the Virgin Active health and fitness business.

Reed says the 17,575sq ft site will offer a "friendly, group-oriented and performance-driven gym experience".

Facilities will include a large gym floor kitted with Technogym equipment, an immersive cinematic exercise activity area and a number of digital health check points.

The development of the Sutton Sweat! club will be followed by two further sites in Manchester and Bristol, which are earmarked to open in 2019.



Frank Reed is rolling out the Sweat! gym concept in standalone locations and also within Debenhams

convenience of having a workout and a chance to shop, as well as the opportunity to meet friends in a lively and welcoming environment," he continued.

"We're excited to be taking the initiative to key urban cities such as Manchester and Bristol."

#### EARNING RETAIL CREDITS TO SPEND

The partnership will see gym customers offered shopping incentives, which build up the more they visit the gym and which can then be redeemed in Debenhams against purchases via pre-loaded cards.

Other retail-related benefits for Sweat! members will include automatic enrolment into Debenhams' Beauty Club.

Debenhams' link up with Sweat! follows the retailer's agreement with Blow to provide beauty services and with Maisons du Monde and Swoon to retail homeware.

#### SWEAT! FUNDING

Sweat's growth is being funded by an injection of £3.75m from equity house Puma Investments in late 2017.

The deal includes an option for a further investment of up to £2.5m (US\$3.4m, €2.8m) after 12 months.

Reed says, "We set-up Sweat! because we felt the budget gym sector lacked a fresh, fun and safe environment for women, plus Sweat! appeals to both men and women who want to feel more comfortable about going to the gym."

Find out more: [www.sweatunion.com](http://www.sweatunion.com)

#### THE SWEAT FORMULA

Each in-store club will follow the Sweat! format, which is focused on attracting a predominately 18-33 year-old female membership base – Sweat! reports its customer base is 55 per cent female.

The initiative is part of Debenhams' strategy to compete with online shopping by delivering in-store experiences.

"Adding a highly innovative leisure facility to our stores is an integral part of our Debenhams Redesigned initiative,"

said Sergio Bucher, CEO of Debenhams.

"Our aim is to deliver 'social shopping' to customers and I'm keen to see their reactions to the Sweat! initiative."

#### A FIRST FOR SWEAT!

Reed added: "The Sutton gym in Debenhams will be the sixth in the Sweat! portfolio and our first that is located within a retail environment."

"Through partnering with Debenhams we're able to offer members the





Sweat! is taking space in three Debenhams stores, with the option to extend the agreement. Puma Investments is backing the growth plan and roll out with £3.75m worth of investment



Devane: The downside of staying fit and active is that you do get injured



## SIMON DEVANE

CEO, PURE SPORTS MEDICINE

“ The drive behind everything we do is to help our patients get better. Whether that means climbing Everest, or climbing the stairs ”

### ► What is Pure Sports Medicine?

We're experts in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal (MSK) and sports injuries – we run seven clinics in London offering a range of services to restore people to full function after injury and to improve their general health, fitness and wellbeing.

Our expert team includes sport and exercise medicine consultants, physiotherapists, osteopaths, chiropractors, podiatrists and dieticians. We also have strength and conditioning coaches and pilates instructors.

As well as one-to-one appointments with our team of experts, we also host small group classes and offer exercise physiology testing. In addition, we run a concussion clinic, as well as a tendon clinic, addressing very specialist needs.

The drive behind everything we do is to help our patients get better and recover their function. Whether that means climbing Everest, or climbing the stairs.

### When and why was it founded?

It was the idea of Andrew Willett, an ex-professional rugby player from Australia, who came to Oxford University to do an MBA in 2002.

When he tore his Achilles tendon playing rugby, he found there was a gap in provision, compared to the multidisciplinary clinics he was used to having access to in Australia, which offer fast, efficient access to specialists.

There and then, it was decided to set up a sports medicine clinic, following the same model used in elite and professional sport and like those being delivered

to the general public in a number of countries, including North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

### What were the main challenges in setting it up?

Despite the importance of sport in the UK, there was no coordinated, comprehensive model of sports medicine and rehab. We had to look at why that was.

We weren't sure if the NHS was a barrier, or if there were other cultural and systemic barriers to the model working. Did people value privately-provided healthcare or did the NHS create a mindset that all of your healthcare needs are covered?

It was therefore important to work through a proof of concept period to ensure the model would be successful.



Pure Sports Medicine has a 50/50 partnership with David Lloyd Leisure Raynes Park and is considering tie-ups with other operators

Building the team and a reputation for excellence was another challenge: it took time to find and recruit the right people around which we could build a successful multi-disciplinary team. At the time there were very few consultants in sport and exercise medicine, so we had to bring them in from overseas. We also had to educate the market about what sports medicine was – a lot of people thought we were selling supplements!

#### When did you open the first clinic and how did you market it?

The first clinic was opened in Kensington in 2003, with just three rooms. In the early days we ran lots of evenings for both clinicians and the public, with guest speakers including surgeons and clinicians. It was about education and professional development, and it was well received.

We also spent a lot of time engaging with local GPs to educate and help them understand how we could help and what might be appropriate to refer on, given

that up to a third of patients they see present with musculoskeletal problems.

As we worked with some professional sports teams from the outset, including WASPS and Fulham Football Club, this gave the public reassurance.

#### How has the concept evolved?

Following the proof of concept at the Kensington site, we found that we didn't need to change the service offering, although we've improved the technology.

Since then we've opened six more sites in Finsbury Square, Chancery Lane, Bank and Canary Wharf. The most recent launch was at St Paul's in August this year.

Also, in 2009, we launched a 50/50 partnership with David Lloyd Leisure Raynes Park, where we set up an integrated clinic within the club.

#### Who are your target customers?

They tend to be engaged with their health and prepared to pay to get back to full health quickly, or have private health

insurance. At the City sites, the average age is 25-50, and slightly more male at 55/45.

About one third of our customers come to us with non-sports related issues: mainly back or neck pain from sitting at a desk all day. Some are serious athletes, doing triathlons, marathons or Ironman, and some are active on a weekly basis and just want to be fully functioning for a round of golf at the weekend.

Out of all our services, physiotherapy is the one that is used most often. The downside of staying fit and active is that you do get injured, so we do tend to get the majority of our customers returning.

#### What are your future plans?

The business is set up for growth. Our strategy from the outset was to develop a strong footprint in London, which we have now done. London still presents opportunities, but we're also actively looking outside the capital, which may include further expansion of our integrated health club model. ●

## Olympic champion's Eat The Frog chain enters Canada

**E**at the Frog Fitness, co-founded by Olympic champion Bryan Clay, will enter the Canadian wellness market after signing a franchise deal for 11 locations in the province of British Columbia.

"Our intent since inception was to take Eat the Frog Fitness worldwide," said Clay, who won the decathlon gold medal at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"We have more than 150 franchise licenses under contract throughout North America and continue to grow at a rapid rate." He added that the first Canadian studio is likely to open in Vancouver.

Eat the Frog Fitness is based on providing a HIIT studio environment that "eliminates

gym-intimidation", encourages social interaction between members and integrates adaptive technology.

One of its USPs is to provide workouts on IMAX-style monitors and to have



**Our intent since inception was to take Eat the Frog worldwide**

Bryan Clay



The company is aiming to have 40 studios open this year

customised fitness equipment that allows class participants to move at the same pace – regardless of fitness level.

The focus is on allowing each member to perform customised low-impact, high intensity workouts.

According to co-founder Jo Culver – who previously set up the Thrive Community Fitness business – Eat The Frog plans to have 40 studios open by the end of 2019.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=T5u7N\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=T5u7N_H)

## Athletic Republic targets 100 new openings in the US

**Athletic Republic** has announced aggressive expansion plans for the US market.

The company, which specialises in fitness and sports performance training, is looking to add 100 locations nationwide by 2021 and is targeting southern US cities such as Dallas and Miami,

as well as areas throughout California. It has grown rapidly since it began offering franchise licenses in 2006.

"Our mission is to help athletes improve their skills to make winning possible," said CEO Charlie Graves.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=H6h3p\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=H6h3p_H)



**Our mission is to help athletes improve their skills to make winning possible**

Charlie Graves



## Horizon keeps growing in Oman



Horizon is Oman's largest health club chain

**Oman-based** fitness operator Horizon has revealed plans to increase the number of clubs in its portfolio from 23 to 37 over the next four years.

Founded in 1997, Horizon has gradually grown to become Oman's largest health club chain and supplier of fitness equipment and corporate wellness solutions.

As part of its expansion plans, it has appointed gym designer zynk to create a new brand identity and "interior personality" that will form a blueprint for all its new clubs over the next 10 years. First to adopt the new look will be a 30,000sq ft site in Muscat.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=h7m3X\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=h7m3X_H)

## Xponential adds sixth brand to portfolio – acquires Yoga Six

**Xponential Fitness** has acquired US-based boutique chain Yoga Six for an undisclosed sum – making it the sixth business in Xponential's rapidly growing portfolio of fitness brands.

Yoga Six currently operates 12 studios in five US cities – San Diego, Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee and Columbus. Seven of the sites will be operated by Xponential, with the other five being under franchise deals.

Founded in 2012, Yoga Six offers a broad range of heated and non-heated yoga classes, boot camp style fitness classes and meditation. Class formats include Stretch and Restore,

Slow Flow, Hot Yoga, Vinyasa, Power Yoga and Performance. Yoga Six will join Xponential's five other fitness brands – Club



**What we're creating at Xponential Fitness hasn't been done before**

John Kersh



Yoga Six becomes Xponential's first yoga brand

Pilates, CycleBar, StretchLab, Row House and AKT.

Xponential is led by a team of industry veterans who have experience in building fitness brands internationally.

CEO Anthony Geisler developed LA Boxing into a successful boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts fitness concept, before selling it on.

John Kersh – who helped grow Anytime Fitness into

a global business – has also joined the Xponential team as chief international development officer.

"What we're creating at Xponential Fitness hasn't been done before and there's enormous consumer interest in boutique fitness across the globe that we intend to capitalise on," said Kersh.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=J5H9e\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=J5H9e_H)

## Blink accelerates expansion with multi-site property trust deal

**B**udget operator Blink Fitness has signed a multi-unit lease deal with real estate investment trust (REIT) Seritage Growth Properties.

The deal will see 17 corporate and franchisee-owned gyms being launched

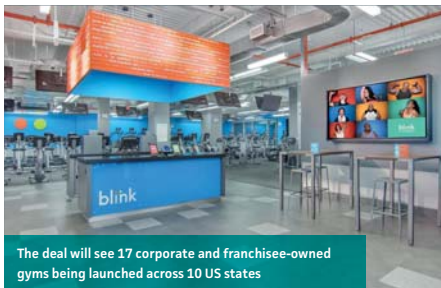
at major metropolitan areas across 10 US states and is a part of Blink Fitness' aggressive strategic growth strategy.

"At a time when many retailers are shutting their doors, Blink is thriving," said Todd Magazine, CEO of Blink Fitness.

"Seritage recognised our strengths and was eager to find real estate opportunities for us across the country as we continue to grow our footprint. Our partnership is one of the many exciting real estate initiatives driving our rapid expansion."



Todd Magazine



The deal will see 17 corporate and franchisee-owned gyms being launched across 10 US states

Launched in 2011, Blink currently operates 70 company-owned locations across New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and California, and has a number of additional corporate- and

franchisee-owned locations in development in US markets. The company will have more than 85 locations open and operating by the end of 2018.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=N2v5H\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=N2v5H_H)



## Is Google planning a wellness revolution with AI fitness coach?

**T**he fitness sector could soon have a huge disruptor on its hands, if rumours of Google's plans prove correct.

A number of unconfirmed reports suggest that the tech giant is working on an artificial intelligence-based fitness and wellbeing coach.

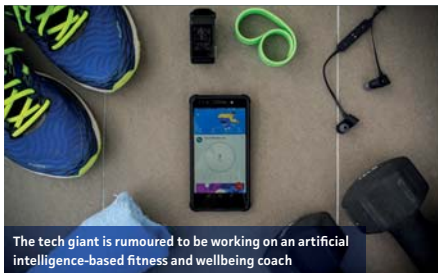
If true, the new service would have a head start in providing personalised wellness services – simply due to the data it holds for a huge number of people who already use its services, from Gmail and search histories to a plethora of other products.

It is understood that the new 'Google Coach' wellness

service would be able to compile users' personal data to recommend workout routines, meal plans and other wellness-related advice.

Used in tandem with its location services, Google would also be able to offer a holistic, interactive wellness experience by suggesting healthy meals or places of exercise based on the user's location.

Google already has a health-tracking platform – called Google Fit – which uses sensors in a user's activity tracker or mobile device to record physical fitness activities. The new coach service is likely



The tech giant is rumoured to be working on an artificial intelligence-based fitness and wellbeing coach

to live on the same Wear OS platform as Google Fit, which is designed for smartwatches and other wearables. It has even been suggested that 'Google

Coach' could be introduced as part of a new piece of hardware: a Google-branded smartwatch.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=E8e9p\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=E8e9p_H)

## Debenhams and Sweat! reveal roll-out plan for in-store gyms

**Retailer Debenhams** has teamed up with industry veteran Frank Reed and his new fitness brand Sweat! in order to roll out an in-store gym concept.

The first club to be operated by the partnership will launch on 10 September 2018 at the Debenhams Sutton store in

south west London.

The 17,575sq ft site will offer a "friendly, group-oriented and performance driven gym experience". Facilities will include a large gym floor kitted with Technogym equipment, immersive cinematic exercise activity areas and digital health checkpoints.



**Adding an innovative leisure facility to our stores is an integral part of our strategy**  
Sergio Bucher



The Sutton Sweat! club will be followed by two further sites in Manchester and Bristol – which are earmarked to open in 2019. Each in-store club will follow the Sweat! format, which is focused on attracting a predominately 18-33 year-old female membership base.

The initiative is part of Debenhams' strategy to deliver 'social shopping' at its stores. "Adding a highly innovative leisure facility to our stores

is an integral part of our Debenhams Redesigned strategy, aimed at delivering 'social shopping'. I'm keen to see customer reactions to the initiative," said Sergio Bucher, Debenhams CEO.

Frank Reed, CEO of Sweat!, added: "The Sutton gym will be the sixth in Sweat!'s portfolio and our first located within a shopping environment."

More: [http://lei.sr?a=z6t4c\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=z6t4c_H)

### Each Debenhams gym will follow the Sweat! format



## F45 opens London office to help drive European expansion

**A**ustralian fitness franchise F45 has opened European headquarters in Central London, as it looks to gather the pace of its expansion across the old continent.

Located in Oxford Circus, the office will be tasked with supporting existing European and UK franchises, as well as helping the brand's growth plans. The company has been busy on

the European market over the past 12 months and has recently opened its first sites in Switzerland, Finland, the Czech Republic, Lebanon and Israel – with plans in place to launch in Germany by the end of the year.

Speaking to *Health Club Management*, Luke Armstrong, F45's global sales director, said the expansion plans will result in a further 120 studios being sold in Europe by the end of 2018,



F45 looks to sell 120 studios in Europe by the end of 2018

with a further 185 in 2019 and another 350 in 2020.

He added that the UK is seen by the company as a particularly strong market. "The UK is a strategic

target for F45 as the fitness market here continues to grow in both size and value," Armstrong said.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=D2v7p\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=D2v7p_H)

## The Climbing Hangar secures £3m private equity investment

**N**VM Private Equity has invested £3m of growth capital into indoor climbing business The Climbing Hangar (TCH).

Launched with a single location in Liverpool in 2011, TCH has since expanded to two further sites in London and Plymouth.

The investment from NVM will allow the company to continue the roll-out of the brand, which targets climbers and non-climbers looking for a sociable way to keep fit. TCH will use the funding from NVM to expand its reach across the UK, as well as diversifying the scope of its facilities by introducing gyms, yoga and other specialist classes.

According to TCH founder, Ged Macdonnail, the company is looking to cater to a new generation of

climbers by offering first class climbing coaching, mixed with "an alternative leisure experience".

"The NVM funding will help us deliver our vision of social climbing," Macdonnail said.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=G2X3M\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=G2X3M_H)



This funding will help us deliver our vision of social climbing  
Ged Macdonnail



TCH will use the funding from NVM to expand its reach across the UK

## Snap picks up pace of expansion with Norfolk club

**T**wenty-four-hour gym franchise Snap Fitness has continued its UK expansion by securing its first club in Norfolk.

The US-based brand has signed a deal for a 4,850sq ft space at the mixed-use Thetford Riverside scheme.

Snap's UK master franchisee MSG Life will operate the gym, which is due to open by mid-October this year.

Facilities will include a gym floor kitted out with cardio

and resistance equipment from Technogym, a large free weights space and spacious functional training area, offering a range of classes from core strength to HIIT.

"We're excited to add Thetford to our portfolio," said Ian Gosling, co-MD of MSG Life.

Snap is expanding rapidly in the UK and more than doubled its presence in 2017, going from 21 to 44 locations.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=N2F5D\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=N2F5D_H)



Snap Fitness is in the midst of an ambitious expansion across the UK



**We're excited to add Thetford to our portfolio and can't wait to welcome our new members**

Ian Gosling



Wright joins Xercise4Less from Turkish chain Mars Sportif

## Xercise4Less appoints industry veteran Peter Wright as CEO

**B**udget operator Xercise4Less has named fitness industry veteran Peter Wright as its new CEO.

Wright – who replaces the outgoing Simon Tutt – joins Xercise4Less from Turkish health club chain Mars Sportif, where, since 2013, he has helped to grow the business from six to 86 clubs. During his 25-year career in fitness, Wright has also held the roles of CEO at Body Masters fitness

chain in Saudi Arabia and COO at Virgin Active.

"Peter joins at a very exciting time and I'm fully confident he can take Xercise4Less to the next level of growth and deliver on our aggressive expansion plans," said Jon Wright, Xercise4Less founder.

Xercise4Less currently operates 52 clubs nationwide.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=E6Y6N\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=E6Y6N_H)

## Ray Algar takes up advisory role at AI-driven Pendex

### Fitness industry analyst

Ray Algar has taken up a non-executive strategic advisory role at fitness equipment start-up Pendex.

Algar has been tasked with advising the company as it begins the roll-out of its range of connected exercise equipment, which uses artificial intelligence to "find new ways to attract, engage and support people" looking to get fit. The company's training machines offer real-time diagnostics and augmented feedback.

According to Algar, the tech appeals to those who aren't attracted to traditional gyms.

"The fitness industry needs to transcend new markets and attract people that have previously rejected its services," Algar said.



Algar will advise Pendex as it begins its roll-out

More: <http://lei.sr?a=W3c6D>

## Orangetheory reveals plans for first UK studio outside London

**O**rangetheory Fitness will open its first out-of-London UK studio in Altrincham, Greater Manchester in December.

The US-based operator is looking to strengthen its foothold on the UK market and the Altrincham opening will kickstart the brand's

expansion across the Midlands and Northern England.

In February, Orangetheory signed a deal with Wellcomm Health and Fitness, which will see 40 studios open by 2028.

The regional master franchise deal covers an area from Buckinghamshire to Northumberland. The



**The intention is to build brand presence in the markets we enter and then build from there**

Alistair Firth



Orangetheory expects to reach 1,150 studios in 2018

studios will be operated by Wellcomm, a company set up for the venture by a group of entrepreneurs led by chair Mike Dixon and CEO Alistair Firth.

Speaking to *Health Club Management* in February, Firth said the company's strategy will be to open in clusters.

"We'll be looking to build additional sites within a 15-20 mile radius of our first couple of sites," he said. "The intention is to build brand

presence in the markets we enter and then build from there – rather than have the first three sites in, say, Liverpool, Newcastle and Birmingham."

Described as one of the world's fastest-growing franchise businesses, Orangetheory launched its first studio in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 2010.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=j4c5t\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=j4c5t_H)

### The Oxford club is the fourth in Buzz's portfolio



## Buzz club brings 'outside inside'

### Budget club operator

Buzz Gym has opened its fourth club in Oxford.

The 18,000sq ft club is the first Buzz Gym to feature the chain's new Track & Field Zone concept – an area where the "outside is brought inside" with an artificial turf floor, training rig, sleds, tyres

and HIIT equipment. A grass scent is pumped throughout to mimic an outdoor training environment and the area utilises a heart rate tracking system for members to compete against others and track their own progress.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=c6E4Q\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=c6E4Q_H)

## Westfield Health appoints CEO, sets target of becoming 'market leader'

**C**orporate health and wellbeing services provider Westfield Health has appointed David Capper as its CEO.

The move comes as the company is introducing a new brand proposition and strategy, offering its clients wellness programmes focusing on physical activity, mental health, nutrition and sleep.

Westfield has increasingly looked to pivot towards offering preventative healthcare for corporations – with a focus on getting people physically active.

"We continue our journey to becoming a leading health and wellbeing organisation in the UK and beyond," Capper said.



**We continue our journey to becoming a leading health and wellbeing organisation in the UK and beyond**

David Capper

More: [http://lei.sr?a=W2T7Q\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=W2T7Q_H)

## Exercise reduces risk of atrial fibrillation in severely obese

**A** new study has shown that severely obese people can reduce the risk of atrial fibrillation with exercise.

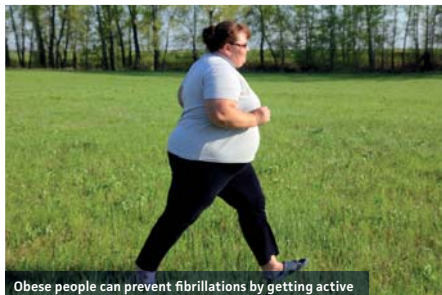
Atrial fibrillation is an irregular and often rapid heart rate that can increase the risk of stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications.

A study by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NUST) examined data from 43,602 men and

women – of which around 1,500 had developed atrial fibrillation. Obesity is a well-known risk factor for atrial fibrillation and the study showed that people with a BMI greater than 30 have a significantly higher risk than those under that number.

The new finding in the study was that the activity level of obese participants plays an important role.

"The risk of atrial fibrillation was lower the more physically



**Obese people can prevent fibrillations by getting active**

active a person was and this turned out to be especially true for people with obesity," said Lars Elnan Garnvik from NUST's Cardiac Exercise Research Group, who led the research.

"People who reported that they didn't exercise at all had about double the risk of developing fibrillations."

More: [http://lei.sr?a=k2r2F\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=k2r2F_H)

## Could resistance training increase exercise motivation?

**A new study** has claimed that resistance training improves exercise motivation and positively contributes to older adults planning their next activity sessions.

Research conducted by the University of Jyväskylä in Finland investigated the effects of a nine-month supervised resistance training intervention on exercise motivation, exercise planning and exercise self-efficacy.

The study involved 104 healthy 65-75-year-olds who did not meet physical activity guidelines for endurance exercise at baseline and did not have previous resistance training experience.

It found that nine months of regular resistance training increased the intrinsic motivation for both training and physical activity in general – the subjects

started to enjoy exercising. Additionally, exercise planning increased, indicating that the subjects began considering ways to start and maintain a physically active lifestyle.

After completing the supervised resistance training intervention, nearly half of the participants (46 per cent) continued resistance training independently.

Approximately half of those people participated in resistance training on average once-a-week during the following year and the other half twice-a-week.

In addition, participants who increased their intrinsic motivation for exercise during the intervention were more likely to continue resistance training twice a week.

"The results suggest that finding intrinsic motivation for exercise and increasing confidence to maintain a physically active lifestyle contribute to continuing resistance training independently," said Tiia Kekäläinen, one of the authors of the study.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=M7E7z\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=M7E7z_H)



**Nine months of resistance training increased the intrinsic motivation for both training and physical activity**





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# MARK VERSTEGEN

The founder and CEO of human performance specialist EXOS talks to

Liz Terry about building one of the world's most respected wellness brands

While fitness operators focus on selling their services to the public, Mark Verstegen has taken a different approach in building performance company EXOS, by doing business in the lucrative corporate and professional sports markets.

With clients such as major tech giants, the US military and the German National Soccer Team, EXOS has built a reputation for improving the health and performance of everyone from executives and blue collar workers to world class sports people.

From its inception in 1999 as Athletes' Performance, EXOS has grown to the

point where it now operates 400 facilities in 30 countries, reaching 1.2 million consumers each year. The company's services include corporate wellness, sports team training and one-to-one consultations in areas such as nutrition, performance testing and physical therapy.

"In the game of life, we need to make sure we stay healthy and full of vitality, so we can perform at our optimum," says Verstegen. "EXOS focuses on delivering health proactively through enhanced performance, employing scientific research and rigour to create individualised interventions for each individual.

"Our aim is to improve people's health in order to improve their performance in their job – whether that be in the corporate world, or the world of professional sport," he explains.

"We see human performance as the practice of optimising the brain and body for personal and professional growth. By learning about individuals, designing personalised plans at scale, and delivering solutions to win each day, our work is changing the way people care for body and mind to realise their potential.

"People's time and energy, from the moment they wake up, to the moment



EXOS works with athletes such as the German National Football Team, while corporate clients include US tech giants and companies such as insurer Humana



*Performance is about how you truly ignite a human being, so they want to eat well, have self-discipline and exercise and can find the motivation by focusing on the outcomes they want*



they go to bed, needs to be deeply valued, respected and supported," he continues. "We believe performance is for everyone. Why is it that elite athletes have groups of experts supporting their wellbeing and ability to perform, while many of us have limited access to the support we need to stay on top of our game?"

"We're working to change that by helping individuals take control of their personal health and performance in all areas of their lives," he says. "Providing them with access to the same methodology used by top performers."

#### FIND THE SWEET SPOT

Verstegen explains that although our physical ability and vitality decline with age, this process can be delayed with the right lifestyle interventions.

"The aim is to find the sweet spot between performance and wellbeing," he says. "And then to extend it."

"People aren't as effective in the early years of their career – they're learning the ropes – but after a decade or so, they figure things out and become very useful."

"In business that time traditionally comes between 30- and 50-years-of-age – we

have the knowledge and still have the energy and the drive to back it up. It's the same principle in sport, just with slightly different windows of time.

"Our aim at EXOS is to extend that window to enable people to stay at the top of their game longer. We take career windows in pro sports that were 3.3 years and extend them to 8-15 years, so people have this great mature knowledge and also the energy and fitness to act on it."

"It comes down to vitality, energy and drive – that doesn't have to go away if you look after yourself," he says.

"By 2020, 30 per cent of employees will be over 50, so this issue is only going to get more relevant and central to profitability. Employers have a 15-year window during which, if they invest in this group, they can be sharper, have more vitality and energy."

"This is why corporations work with us to keep their people in good shape. Basically, we're changing the conversation from talking about wellness and occupational health to talking about performance. Investing in employees makes a ton of financial sense for the employer."

"The alternative is employers just saying to staff 'Hey, I want you to work harder'."

#### WHAT'S THE PROCESS?

"We work with the leadership to establish goals," says Verstegen, "then run a performance check across the organisation, looking at mindset, nutrition, movement and recovery."

"The next stage is feeding back and making a winning game-plan for where we're going to be in five years' time, so the organisation can systematically upgrade the health of its team. We want to reduce absenteeism and increase people's ability to focus and concentrate."

"The solutions we design are backed by science to provide results, and are delivered through a mix of services, technology, people and facilities," he concludes.

I ask Verstegen if he thinks we should be inspiring people to be more ambitious about their own personal wellbeing.

"You can let life happen to you, or you can take charge," he replies. "Performance equals purpose and although there's a small percentage of people who unfortunately have issues with their health as a result of their genetics, for the rest, with the EXOS programmes, I can guarantee vitality. Our ultimate goal is to upgrade people's lives."



**Verstegen says he's a people person who gets his motivation from inspiring the success of others**

## COMMON CHALLENGES

"Roughly half of the population suffer from some form of bio-mechanical, muscular-skeletal pain and it's the underlying cause of a great deal of absenteeism, says Verstegen. "One healthcare provider told us it's costing his business US\$50m a year – it's one of those things no one has been able to fix.

"We're using methods for analysing movement which were developed for elite sport and taking them into corporate wellness, so we can prescribe exercises people can do as part of their daily routine to 'rewire' their movement patterns.

"Peer reviewed research shows we're able to decrease and prevent pain by teaching quality movement patterns and adjusting compensatory movement patterns that are the underlying cause of the pain and once the movement patterns have been adjusted, in the majority of cases, the pain goes away."

So has EXOS put a monetary value on its corporate wellness work?

"An independent actuarial report showed a return of US\$3 for every dollar invested," says Verstegen. "Internally, our performance innovation team takes data from all clients each quarter and does benchmarking. However, we don't just sell on these numbers. We sell on performance and our ability to create a way for people to be a little better tomorrow than today.



**EXOS corporate facilities bring science to bear on workplace wellness**

## ADIDAS PARTNERSHIP

"We've had a fully embedded and integrated 20-year partnership with Adidas, working in the deepest way possible on their corporate wellbeing programme," Verstegen tells me.

"Our job is to help their creators create by working on their mindset, nutrition, movement and recovery. You can see the results when you look at where the Adidas brand is now, compared with where it was even just a few years ago – there's a whole different energy and dynamic and I'm proud to say that we have played a part in that.

"Stock prices for Adidas have gone from US\$50 to US\$160+ because they're very clear on who they are and on their human capital optimisation."

## DEFINING PURPOSE

"Our goal is to help people define their true purpose," Verstegen says. "What's special about EXOS is our ability to do this, because sometimes you really have to pull it out of people and this can take time, but we have great tools to enable us to do this.

"These tools come from neuroscience and include a knowledge of areas such as behavioural upgrading. It won't just be about losing weight or changing body composition so they can fit into their jeans – that might be part of it, but you also have to identify their intrinsic motivators, for instance when people open their eyes in the morning and think: 'Why am I here? What am I getting up for?' That's the kind of thing we need to understand.

"Once that's established, we work with them to set intent towards that purpose,



**EXOS operates 400 facilities in 30 countries, reaching 1.2 million people each year with its programmes**

## EXOS TIMELINE

- 1999** - Athletes' Performance founded by Mark Verstegen providing integrated mindset nutrition movement and recovery training for athletes
- 2006** - Begins delivering solutions for US Special Operations and conventional military
- 2008** - Investment in technology to scale methodology and practitioners (trainers, nutritionists, physical therapists) to reach larger populations
- 2010** - Company launches corporate wellness service
- 2013** - Athletes' Performance is rebranded as EXOS
- 2013** - EXOS partners with Mayo Clinic and begins working with health systems as a proactive provider. Today, EXOS works with more than 20 health systems
- 2014** - EXOS acquires MediFit, a fitness centre management company for corporate wellness
- 2017** - EXOS acquires D1 Sports Medicine, a physical therapy business

**“With the EXOS programmes, I can guarantee vitality. Our goal is to upgrade people's lives by finding their true purpose**

so they have direction and can say to themselves: 'I want my pathway to take me there – I might not be able to control all of it because of external factors, but I can make a start on that path.'"

"That's what performance is all about, it's about how you truly ignite a human being, so they want to eat well, have self-discipline, and exercise and can find the motivation by focusing on the outcomes they want.

"Our view is that big wins can be made with prevention," he says. "Because at least 70 per cent of disease is caused by lifestyle and if we can help people get upstream of this, results can be spectacular."

### UK EXPANSION

"Our clients have pulled us to the UK to do this work and we're focused on providing EXOS performance solutions to key UK operators and providers in the health and wellbeing market," says Verstegen. "We're also excited to be announcing a number of new partnerships over the coming months and in addition, we're seeking the next tranche of potential partners."

### PRIORITIES

"As a brand, we're transparent and believe in the power of partnership," he says. "We set out to figure out how to scale the operation, while retaining high levels of quality and reliability. The key to this is our people.

"Our culture inspires me: every place I go, the first thing that comes out of client's mouths is praise for our people and I think the quality of people we attract is one of the great strengths of the organisation. We know technology alone is not the solution.

"EXOS has three priority areas: engagement and outcomes; operational excellence; and trust and financial success, because in business, finance is fuel and we want to make sure our clients have a very strong ROI, while EXOS also needs to have enough of an ROI so we can continuously improve and reinvest in what we do."

### DEMOCRATISATION

EXOS is known for its work with very high end organisations, but Verstegen stresses the company is also focused on 'democratising' its work, saying: "Our

intent – from when we first started – was to truly understand and upgrade lives.

"Although we began in elite sport, it's always been about the person living inside the body, what's important to them and how can we help them get where they want to go most efficiently. That's our promise and what we've always found fulfilling.

"I'm personally not that huge a sports junkie," he reveals. "I just enjoy the people and helping them to be better tomorrow.

"We've supported different levels in sport, from youth to elite. Some don't drive revenue, some do, but we always approached it with the attitude that everyone is created equal and treated all





High-end sports labs are integrated with gyms designed to enable top athletes to train to world-class levels



If you 'deficit spend' with your health in your younger years, you'll hit 50 and not be in great shape physically or psychologically

of them with our absolute best service, because they deserve that.

"We're now working to extend that democratisation so we can turn our reach from thousands of people to hundreds of thousands, then millions and ultimately to tens of millions," he continues.

"To drive this strategy we've been scaling our IP and technology, because achieving this degree of growth is a primary focus for the EXOS brand – we want to come in at many levels and support organisations in achieving higher levels of engagement.

"We also have 75+ people solely dedicated to product innovation, working across design, development, data-mining and research and analytics. We're also structured and organised for continuous improvement, in that our performance innovation team is at our centre."

#### TECH DEVELOPMENTS

EXOS is also working on equipment.

"We've got a partnership with Precor, so that every connected Precor cardio piece in the world has EXOS inside," says Verstegen. "It comes off the assembly line like that, so we can turn it on if we're working with clients with Precor kit.

"We use treadmills to do the kind of evaluations that used to be reserved for

cardiologists, but now we can do this at scale and also track every training session, every walk and every power beat.

"It's all stored in the cloud and then performance innovation team aggregate the data and it enables us to prescribe precise workouts for each user.

"We also have our journey platform, which gives each individual a prescription covering mindset, nutrition, movement and recovery. They can also get their exercise prescription when they hop on the Precor treadmill: they report how they're feeling and it automatically generates a workout in real-time and off they go. It literally responds to how they feel," he explains.

#### TEAM TRAINING

Driving EXOS are 4,500 exercise and nutrition professionals, as Verstegen explains: "We hire trained professionals and then in addition, we put them through the EXOS programme, which covers a wide range of aspects, including understanding behavioural upgrading, the latest in neuroscience and motivational interviewing.

"The programme was developed for us by our performance innovation team and consists of more than 10 hours of online training in 20 minute chunks," he says.

"After completing this, they're either XFS (EXOS-certified fitness specialist) or XPS (EXOS-certified performance specialist).

"We also share our knowledge with the outside world," he says. "And it has a 90 per cent excellence rating by our peers.

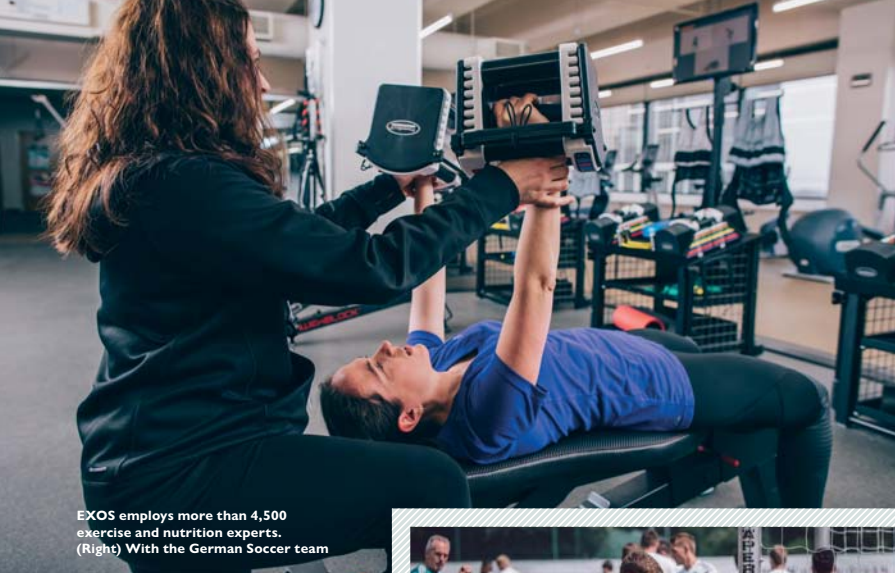
"If we keep sharing what we know, we can continue to elevate the field. We learn all the time from those collaborations."

#### WORKING WITH HEALTHCARE

Verstegen also has ambitions for EXOS to look for collaborations in the world of medicine and insurances, and the company already works with Humana. "We'll be looking to power health systems for both payers and providers," he says.

"We need to provide more proactive health for people who don't want to go to health clubs – this is one of the fastest growing segments of the market in the US and we already have clients like the Mayo Clinic. They're getting into prevention and not just waiting until people get sick.

"Reactive health services are not going away, because we have to use the expertise and technology to treat issues that will occur due to gene expression, regardless of whether we live a healthy lifestyle or not, but then we can look at how we get upstream of health issues for everyone else.



**EXOS employs more than 4,500 exercise and nutrition experts. (Right) With the German Soccer team**

"There's a great statement that says: 'you spend your life building your wealth and you spend your wealth chasing your health,'" he says. "I think that's really true – many people 'deficit spend' with their health to build their life and wealth and then have to find a way to claw back their vitality.

"So we need to look at the incentives that relate to prevention, but they have to be valid. We could buy everyone a health club membership; it doesn't mean they become more healthy," he concludes.

"I think there's a great opportunity to democratise performance and it doesn't have to be cost-prohibitive," he says. "I think consumers would be very interested in this option."

Would EXOS get involved if that was the scenario? "Yes," he says, "although we wouldn't do it by ourselves, we'd do it on a partnership basis. "We're in the UK looking for partners who are best in class and who are pushing innovation and solutions. It could be health club chains."

## EDUCATED BUT INACTIVE

The UK continues to battle with a public health crisis – how much of this is down to ignorance about health and exercise?

"It depends on the population," he says. "Some people are educated in wellbeing but are still inactive – healthcare partners [doctors and medics] are a good example. Sometimes they're the least healthy populations, and they really know about health from their professional training.



"The reason is that caregivers, by definition, normally put themselves last. They're caring for people at home; they're caring for people at work. They're so generous, so driven that they'll put themselves at the end of the line and say: 'If there's energy left over, maybe I'll invest in myself'. But usually, they're so exhausted by helping others that it never happens.

"At EXOS, we work a lot with caregivers and have to teach them to stay healthy, otherwise, ultimately, they won't be able to support others.

"Another group that struggles is people whose behaviour is driven by the latest fitness crazes or fad. We find that they often really lack direction.

"We believe that while exercise has to be fun, engaging, sustainable and useful, people also need a purpose for why they're doing it – they may love to take the family skiing, or perhaps have a personal goal.

"Our job is to tie this back to an intrinsic motivator: how moving well, sleeping well, eating well and recovering well, all drive that desire. Then suddenly we're talking about something truly meaningful and sustainable.

"Secondly, we ask who's helping people define their goals and create a frictionless environment to help them on that journey."

## THE HEALTH CLUB MARKET

So what does he think of the state of the health and fitness market? "Just because



EXOS exercise professionals deliver wellness services for corporates



## We need to create intelligent fitness centres, with structured offerings across mindset, nutrition, movement and recovery

you go to a health club, doesn't mean that you're going to become healthier," says Verstegen. "Because – as we said – most people don't have a game plan.

"Gym operators need to realise the landscape is changing and be open and growth-minded. For too long the industry has been fixed, as though everyone is going to keep coming. A lot of the models are still based on maximising membership and then hoping they don't show up, because if they did, they couldn't service them. That's already a broken model.

"They also need to reposition how they're viewed and focus on delivering health pro-actively through enhanced performance, by engaging members and getting outcomes for them. Not just selling memberships and managing the churn.

"There are also challenges for gyms who keep hiring personal trainers; they build their client's health on membership and then they go across the street and start their own studio in competition, but then they in turn realise they can only do so much in their 400sq m and they struggle to keep their customers satisfied with such a limited offer and so the customer is ultimately still not satisfied, which is the key to this.

"I think consumers really could be satisfied with what's existing today if we took a different approach when it comes to prioritising the consumer and delivering for them," he says. "We need to create intelligent fitness centres – what we call performance centres – to create structured offerings across the areas of mindset, nutrition, movement and recovery.

"If we don't eat well, or hydrate well or sleep well, then the overall benefits are reduced. It has to be a very balanced approach: we have to get all the cylinders in the engine firing to create sustainable performance and unless we can do this, people will work really hard but get demoralised. That's why some gyms and health clubs have to get more than 70 per cent new members every year.

"Think about the people who don't stay members, for whatever reason. You've lost trust and every time you lose trust, it's like a small scar. You scar people enough times and they're not coming back. That's the discouraging part – how we, as a global industry – haven't fulfilled our promise but instead have fulfilled fads.

"When you look at the connected devices, from watches to patches, people

know their metrics, they know their resting heart rate, their exercise output – talk about democratisation of information.

"Some consumers are getting really educated, about their health but they still need expert interventions," he concludes.

### FUTURE TRENDS

With his overview of the market over so many years, what does he see coming down the track for the industry?

"The consumer will become so empowered and knowledgeable, with their individual plans and their cool equipment, that a greater percentage of people will be putting it into their homes," he says. "If you look at the success of Peloton it's hard to beat – it saves on commute time, it's easy, people can shower more easily and can work out more and get better results and motivation – it's been a great success.

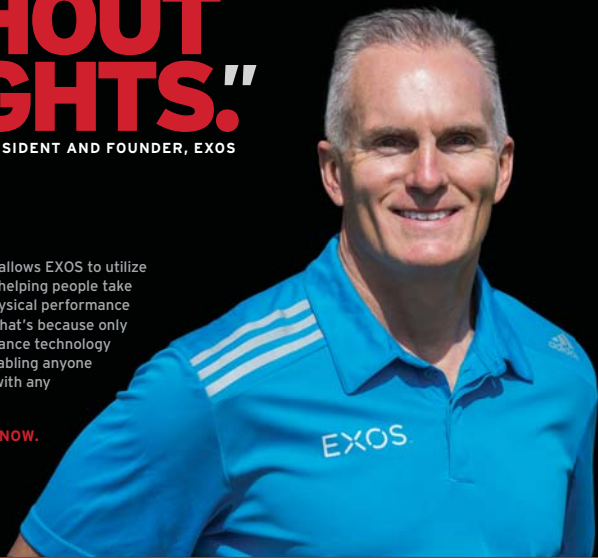
"Peloton has started to own the home cardiovascular market, but there's a gap in the market for an equivalent resistance product and there will be many more great at-home workout and wellness solutions developed over the next few years." ●

# "THE DAY IS COMING WHERE YOU WILL HAVE A WEIGHT ROOM, WITHOUT WEIGHTS."

- MARK VERSTEGEN, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, EXOS

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BECAUSE...

# CROSSING *the* CHASM

■ By Jak Phillips

**A**re we on the cusp of glory as a sector? It's a question I've been asking myself a lot lately.

Every time I see a gym ad on TV in place of a promo for a burger joint, notice an ailing chain restaurant has been supplanted by a gym in a prime high street location or read a social media trends piece that talks about how today's youth prefer to sweat pints rather than sink them.

It gets me thinking – how far is the health club industry from completing its evolution from a niche sector to a mass mainstream movement?

How much longer will it be before the 'big, bad, scary gym', as it was once considered by many people, becomes widely known as that space everyone visits three times a week when they're not at work or at home?

Fitness industry analysts such as David Minton have hailed this as 'the golden age of fitness', with membership numbers and market values at all-time highs, driven by a decade of continuous growth. Minton's most recent *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report* put the sector's penetration rate at 14.9 per cent of the UK population, meaning almost as many adults now visit the gym as buy newspapers. Which begs the question, are we there yet? And if not, how much further is the Promised Land?

## MASS MARKET SUCCESS

According to renowned author and business consultant Simon Sinek, we might be a lot closer than we think.

In his famous TED talk, *How great leaders inspire action*, Sinek discusses the Law of Diffusion of Innovation and cites 15-18 per cent penetration as the tipping point that must be reached to achieve mass market success and acceptance of an idea.

By 'crossing this chasm' as Sinek puts it, you reach a large enough number of people that the majority of the population are then ready to follow suit and fully embrace your services.

Assuming he's right, our sector's 14.9 per cent puts it within touching distance of mass adoption.



So, what are clubs doing to make the leap past that magic 18 per cent mark?

As we've seen from the recent acquisitions of Soho Gyms and EasyGym by Pure Gym and The Gym Group respectively, low cost sector operators are seeking to maintain the growth of the past decade by evolving their business models. This means looking at ways to expand their offerings – by occupying prime locations and through additions such as group exercise and premium benefits for members – while maintaining their competitive prices.

## END OF THE BEGINNING

Meanwhile, necessity continues to prove the mother of invention in the leisure trust market. As outlined by the latest ukactive *Moving Communities* report, operators are responding to swingeing council cuts through

innovative approaches to their marketing and available activities to attract an increasingly diverse range of customers through their doors.

Elsewhere, we're seeing boutiques jostling for headway and headlines as that segment's expansion continues, while mainstream clubs are placing renewed emphasis on personalised member experiences that underline the full extent of their value proposition.

But of course, the real question will not be 'how can we cross the chasm and edge towards 18 per cent adoption?' It will be 'how can we use this small but significant step as a springboard towards major mass-market adoption?' – because that's where the real glory awaits.

For an industry that remains largely in its infancy, such a milestone should represent not the beginning of the end, but merely the end of the beginning. ●

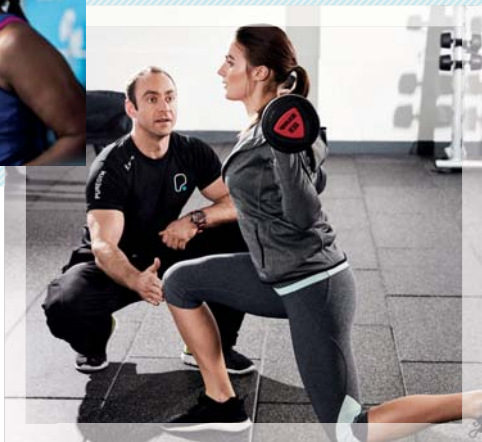




Above: Young people are more likely to want to sweat pints than drink them. Left: The Gym Group is driving growth. Below: Pure Gym has been on the acquisition trail



Simon Sinek cites '15-18 per cent market penetration' as the tipping point that must be reached to achieve mass market success and acceptance of an idea



Randy Hetrick invented the TRX training system by hacking a jiu-jitsu belt and parachute webbing

This US\$50m training phenomenon was all started by a Navy Seal who had no access to exercise. HCM reports on the success of TRX

# WORKING WITH GRAVITY



“**T**he development of TRX was an accident,” explains Olivier Ciaravino, VP of international business at TRX. “In 1997,

Squadron Commander Randy Hetrick and his team were stuck in South East Asia waiting to deploy. They had no access to exercise and couldn’t even go outside, but needed to stay strong. Randy found a jiu-jitsu belt in his bag, which he combined with parachute webbing, tied in a knot and threw over the door to do bodyweight exercises such as pull-ups.”

Four years later, Hetrick graduated from Stanford University with an MBA and plans to take the business forward. Now, 21 years on, TRX enjoys enviable brand recognition and is used by 40,000 gyms, one million people in the military and 250,000 sports people worldwide.

A simple, versatile product, it uses a suspended strap to allow users to leverage gravity and their body weight, to complete hundreds of exercises that develop strength, balance, flexibility and core stability. As well as burning fat and improving heart health, it can be used to blast specific parts of the body.

“By using bodyweight, rather than weights, TRX marked a new approach to exercise,” says Ciaravino. “It’s a fantastically simple product: completely portable, you can put in a backpack and use it in a hotel room, or hang off a tree. Because it was such a game changer there have been many copy cat products but we are protected by 24 patents.”

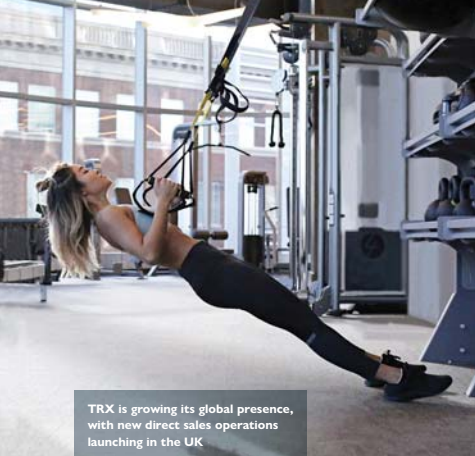
During the last two years, the company has enjoyed double digit growth and this trend has kept going in 2018. “The brand has become synonymous with good movement and education,” says

Ciaravino. “The key to our success has been our education programme; we now run 2,000 instructor courses every year.”

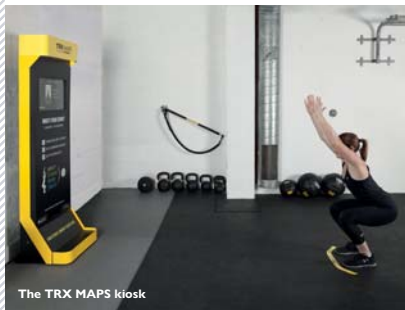
## INNOVATION – TRX ZONES

As well as promoting the concept through the instructor training programmes, the company is constantly looking for ways to innovate and use TRX to drive customer engagement and revenue for clubs. One way is through the TRX zones.

“Last year we started offering the concept of our ‘TRX Training Zone Solution’ to health clubs,” explains Ciaravino. “This is a zone where we offer frames – our Studio Line range – with monkey bars, dip bars and pull bars, on which we display straps and functional equipment, such as kettlebells and medicine balls. All this gear being offered with world-class education and programming. It is perfect for group



TRX is growing its global presence, with new direct sales operations launching in the UK



The TRX MAPS kiosk

exercise and PT sessions, offering a better way of generating revenue than the traditional CV and weight areas."

Completely integrated in this TRX Zone concept, TRX MAPS, which was launched earlier this year, is designed to improve inefficiencies in mobility, activation, posture and symmetry. "It's a very user-friendly tool allowing club members and PTs to perform a complete body movement scan in less than 30 seconds," says Ciaravino. They can then identify any weaknesses or imbalances and set exercises to address this. It can be used on an ongoing basis to monitor improvements, which offers a great opportunity to upsell PT services."

Now a global business, TRX only distributes directly into three markets: the US, where it was created, Japan and, as of this year, the UK. "There are three strands to the business that together



*"The TRX brand has become synonymous with good movement and education. The key to our success has been our education programme; we now run 2,000 instructor courses every year."*

Olivier Ciaravino, TRX

lead to our TRX Training Zone Solution: gear, technology and activation," says Ciaravino. "Gear covers the straps, the functional training accessories and our Studio Line frames; technology is TRX MAPS and activation is about education and programming elements."

"We can't separate them and it leads to us being unique in the market. Now we're going to deploy this solution globally to replicate the success we've had in the US throughout the world."



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## THE TRX TIMELINE

**1997** Randy Hetrick creates first TRX out of a martial arts belt

**2001** Hetrick graduates with an MBA from Stanford University

**2004** TRX prototype is launched

**2005** Launch of the first suspension training course

**2006** TRX enters the international market

**2007** TRX FORCE launches as a military training programme and is incorporated by the US Marine Corps

**2009** TRX reaches more than one million users in 60 countries

**2010** Launch of the flagship training centre in San Francisco

**2011** Acquisition of RipCore FX to form TRX Rip Training. The Pro Pack suspension trainer design is unveiled, along with Rip Training and sports medicine Suspension Training Courses

**2012** Two innovations launched for the commercial market: TRX Commercial Suspension Trainer and Rip Training education course

**2013** First online suspension training course

**2017** The TRX Training Zone is created

**2018** The TRX MAPS kiosk is launched





# To aggregate or not to aggregate, that is the question

**The health and fitness industry has been slow to adopt aggregators. Are clubs right to be cautious, or are they missing out on business?**

**Kath Hudson finds out more...**

If you've ever used an aggregator service, such as Expedia or lastminute.com, to book a flight or find a holiday, you'll know from a consumer's point of view how useful they can be to both find what you want and get a good deal: they make the information transparent and give the benefit of customer reviews, special offers and consolidated services.

However, the health and fitness industry is very different from travel. One's global, while the other is local. People are motivated to go on holiday, but can be resistant to exercise. Health clubs want to build day-to-day loyalty and relationships, while the travel industry is less concerned with this.

There are a number of other reasons to be cautious, including the fear of losing control of data and the customer base, and concerns about paying a commission to get the same customers or being forced into discounting.

However, if you always do what you've always did, you always get what you've always had, so if the industry wants to increase penetration rates, it needs to start looking for different ways to mobilise new audiences.

Aggregators bring extra marketing budgets and new technology to the table, which can translate into different customers being brought into the industry, so they're definitely worth consideration.

If you're thinking about giving aggregators a go, shop around first. There are a number of different choices in terms of business model and you need to know whether they focus on B2C or B2B.

Choose one that cares about growing the market and as Nishal Desai, co-founder of imin says: "Go forward with your eyes open and hands on the steering wheel. Choose to work with those companies in a way that puts you firmly in control and keeps you there."

**Aggregators can bring new audiences into the fitness industry**



**“If aggregators can successfully grow the market, it will be a win-win, but they need to be more creative to make this happen”**

**Peter Fitzboydon MD Parkwood Leisure**



► I have experience on both sides: being involved with the set up of OpenActive while I was chief executive of London Sport, as well as now running one of the UK's largest leisure operators. I'm a massive fan of open data, but that doesn't mean to say that all of its uses are going to be positive immediately. At the moment I think it's too early to say what impact aggregators will have on the health and fitness industry, as they still need to show more innovation to really get operators interested.

Health and fitness is a low margin business, so it isn't viable for aggregators to follow the model of the travel industry by simply offering price comparison websites. Neither will it work if they just appeal to the people who are already active. For aggregators to gain a foothold they will either need to add value to the customer experience, or start mobilising the inactive population and grow the market for health clubs. If they successfully do this it will be a win-win, but they need to be more creative to make this happen.

**T**he consumer experience always improves in markets where aggregators exist because customers love the transparency and independence they provide through the reviews they carry.

We're seeing real momentum in this area at the moment: we even had one of the board members of one of our largest operators logging in daily, so he knew exactly what was going on in the clubs and could make sure the GMs knew what they needed to improve.

Operators need to take the time to understand the variations before deciding which model is right for their business.

Since the fitness sector is late to adopt aggregators there are lots of reference points in other industries, making it easier to compare models. As the first company, globally, to attempt to aggregate fitness, PayAsUGym benefitted

from being able to study models in other sectors to understand best practise. We believe it's important to always focus on developing a fair, collaborative and sustainable version of aggregation, which grows the market and builds trust with our operator partners.

Going forward, a split of opinion regarding aggregators is likely to remain. Operators who embrace consumer choice, recognise the desire for increased flexibility and are confident their services will stand up to public scrutiny will proactively engage with aggregators, which will result in them reaching new customers and growing their business. Opponents of aggregators will spread fear, uncertainty and doubt into the market, in the hope of maintaining the status quo. Ultimately the customer will decide how they wish to engage with fitness and we can see evidence of this within our own sector.



**“We believe it's important to always focus on developing a fair, collaborative and sustainable version of aggregation”**

**Neil Harmsworth PayAsUGym**

Aggregators can create value for the industry, so long as operators find ways to retain control



**W**hen compared with other industries, the health and fitness sector is being cautious with its adoption of aggregators, especially on the public side.

This caution is understandable: operators want to avoid becoming powerless and being reduced to only being the supply side of a marketing partnership.

They're concerned about the cannibalisation of their user base and being moved further away from direct digital interaction with the consumer.

We understand why they feel this way, because the hospitality industry hasn't necessarily had a good time at the hands of aggregators. Among a few things, the price transparency has hurt undifferentiated hotels. While undifferentiated health clubs could potentially be hurt in the same way, the fact that fitness searches are generally

**"We're only at the very early stages of finding out what aggregators could do for the industry"**

**Nishal Desai** co-founder imin



hyper local, as opposed to global, means there is possibly less of a threat.

One advantage of aggregators is that they are thinking creatively about the end user, and how to create engagement tools and active online communities. They should be seen as another marketing channel, to be controlled and measured in the same way as all other marketing channels. They can help operators to find those people who never go to gyms.

To this end, Public Health England is doing some innovative work around the Change4Life campaign, having just launched an activity finder powered by open data and ditching static databases.

We're only at the very early stages of finding out what aggregators could do for the industry and I believe that, when used correctly, they have so much potential to create value, as long as operators find ways of staying in control. ►



**Aggregators are more likely to succeed if they can find a win-win-win between their business, operators and consumers**

IMAGE COURTESY OF CLASSPASS

**T**he advantage of aggregators is that they can bring new people to your front door. The disadvantage is that they weaken the relationship between club and customer and, through aggressive discounting to acquire customers, dilute the yield, which leads to lower profitability, service and re-investment levels.

Aggregators fit more comfortably with PAYG type models, where customers are more likely to shop around. In this case they can add value by offering convenience and value to customers, by providing a single buying/booking platform.

There's much talk in our industry about improving retention. At the heart of this lies giving people great value for money and building a relationship with them, not making one-off sales, as with an airline.

As long as the plane goes from A to B, I'm happy to choose the option that best



**"Net-net, I do not think aggregators are a positive thing for the industry"**

**Colin Waggett**

**CEO The Third Space**

suits me from a price, quality or timing point of view. In this scenario aggregators add genuine value, by making a complex choice simpler. This isn't the case with health clubs, so the long-term added value of aggregators to the customers in our sector is less clear to me.

The jury is also out on whether they'll be profitable in the long term. As a generalisation, they're trying to build scale and market share by discounting. In doing so, they're distorting the market in what's essentially a fixed-cost business.

I doubt many will invest in the fabric of clubs, or the people and talent needed to sustain great experiences for members.

My view on this might change, if and when market leaders emerge who charge a consistent level of pricing that reflects the cost of delivery of good service, but net-net, I don't think aggregators are a positive thing for the industry.

**W**e all accept and use aggregators to book restaurants, flights and hotels so why not also use them for fitness and sports activities?

Sports, particularly, and fitness – until the low cost brands arrived – were not very transparent to the consumer, so it was only natural that entrepreneurs looked at what was being achieved in other leisure sectors and tried to emulate it.

Most came up with business plans that put them between the consumer and operators, but it's difficult for the relationship to flourish in an industry where operators don't often have live inventory feeds or the ability to connect the aggregator into their booking system.



**"There needs to be a win-win-win for the consumer, operators and aggregators and you don't get that by deep discounting"**

**David Minton** director Leisuredb

We're currently tracking around 20 aggregators and most will either fail or need to change their business plan.

It's difficult to find the sweet spot, so consumer, operator and aggregator are all happy. Some will find the magic formula, and will help drive new business and in return they'll survive and thrive. There needs to be a win-win-win and you don't get that by deep discounting. ●

“Loyal members  
without  
cannibalisation,  
it works!”



CHRIS RINDER  
SALES DIRECTOR, PARKWOOD LEISURE

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# [ Outlining the options ]

We navigate the complex world of aggregators, looking at some of the options available if you want to take the plunge

## Gympass

**Currently partnering with** more than 1,500 fitness facilities in the UK, Gympass is a corporate wellness company that targets inactive people, by engaging with companies who are willing to subsidise fitness activities for their employees to improve their health.

As 80 per cent of Gympass users were not enrolled at a gym or a

sports centre up to 12 months before joining, and their visit is subsidised by their employers, this is a good way of attracting new members.

Gympass works with organisations to build wellness programmes that are widely communicated to employees and have been successful in mobilising 30 to 40 per cent of employees.

## ClassPass

**ClassPass has more** than 10,000 partners in 50 cities worldwide and a 96 per cent retention rate among partners. It leverages proprietary technology to enable the booking of fitness classes, so clubs can monetise unsold time, at a discount on the usual rate.

Customers pay a monthly subscription fee, so there's no charge to clubs.

ClassPass says its customers like variety, and are willing to take their chances with not being able to get into a class in return for the option of trying many workouts at a lower rate. The company says it unlocks new markets, as more than half its members are either new, or not regular users of clubs.



MoveGB offers 35,000 activities across 5,500 venues, including everything from climbing to African drumming





**GymPass works with employees to build wellness programmes for staff using local facilities**

## PayAsUGym

**PayAsUGym works** with more than 2,700 gyms in the UK. It offers customers the variety of going to lots of different gyms – ideal if they move around with work, or like to have a choice.

The advantage for gyms is access to high volumes of incremental customers who would not otherwise visit.

There's no fee for clubs to be listed, it works on a success basis via a 20 per cent commission. Prices paid by customers are controlled by the clubs, with membership rates set at a premium. PayAsUGym says clubs typically see a 5 to 10 per cent EBITDA growth through using its service.

## Incorporate

**Incorporate runs** a programme called GymFlex, working with operators who are willing to provide low corporate annual membership rates. Employees can then buy a membership via a salary sacrifice scheme, and make savings on their National Insurance payments.

Established in 2001, Incorporate serves more than two million employees from 1,000 companies. Clubs benefit from a different type of clientele, employers get a healthier workforce and employees a cheap gym membership.

## MoveGB

**Offering 35,000 activities** across 5,500 venues, MoveGB offers a wide choice, including activities like climbing, dance, aerial yoga and African drumming.

Founded by Alister Rollins, the mission was to create new audiences and generate leads. MoveGB has a 99 per cent partner retention rate.

Clubs set their own commercial

terms when they list on the MoveGB platform, and retain complete control over how they engage with the service.

Listing services on MoveGB is free for operators and the price for customers varies according to location.

By using technology to nudge users to join clubs they've tried, MoveGB also encourages its customers to become health club members.

## Urban Sports Club

**Working with 2,000 venues** in 24 cities across Germany, as well as more than 300 in Paris, Urban Sports Club offers consumers a wide range of activities without a long-term commitment. The company works with its operator partners to set an appropriate pricing structure in order to create a win-win-win situation

for all parties – the aggregator, the club and the member.

It offers visibility, and reaches new customers through its sales and marketing initiatives, which are targeted at smaller clubs with limited marketing budgets. It also promotes clubs to companies via a corporate offer.

## imin

**The imin service sits** between operators and aggregators, enabling operators find the right aggregator partner.

A real time database, imin plugs into booking systems and extracts a live view, which is shared with aggregators.

Operators can see the impact of the aggregators they're working with

and have the control to manage and monitor them.

imin is working with around 250 operators, which are offering 1.3m activities a year. Operators include leisure centres, smaller private clubs, The Good Gym and Our Parks. The service is free to clubs, as aggregators are charged.

# REDEFINE YOUR IMPOSSIBLE

**Calisthenics: is it just for hardmen, or is it an alternative activity that could appeal to your crossfitters or those in your free weights area? Kath Hudson reports**

**W**ith its handstands and human flagpoles, calisthenics is an intriguing discipline, which makes

for some stunning and arresting photography. However, while it looks impressive, is it beyond the scope of the average gym goer? Or is it an activity that could help operators engage with a different type of audience or offer something new to existing members?

From the Greek 'kallos' for beauty and 'sthenos' for strength, the name accurately sums up an activity that is a poetic mix of gymnastics, parkour and bodyweight training.

It's a pared back exercise, which requires little more than the floor and gravity, according to David Jackson,

who co-founded with Tim Stevenson the Nottingham-based School of Calisthenics, one of the few places currently offering tuition in the UK.

Both Jackson and Stevenson are former rugby players turned coaches, who've previously specialised at coaching Paralympians. Having been enthused by calisthenics, but unable to find anyone who could teach them, they started to break down the exercises themselves. This led to lots of comments in the gym from people wanting to be taught the moves as well, so they launched the school.

"After retiring from rugby with a head injury, I was looking for a sport that would cause fewer injuries and be more enjoyable and fun than weight lifting," says Jackson. "I wanted to learn a new



Calisthenics star Simone Ming (above). The sport attracts women who want to work on their strength and balance



*I wanted to learn a skill  
– as an adult you don't  
often get the chance to  
master something new.  
We called it a school,  
because we're all  
learning all the time*

David Jackson



David Jackson (above) runs  
the School of Calisthenics  
with Tim Stevenson

- skill – as an adult you don't often get the chance to master something new. We called it a school, because the philosophy is that we're all learning all the time."

### BREAKING BARRIERS

Jackson and Stevenson's background in training Paralympians has come in useful, as they're adept at breaking down exercises and modifying them to meet different needs. "It was exciting to go back to basics and figure out how to do a movement," says Jackson. "Our strapline is to 'redefine your impossible', as you have to approach calisthenics with an open mindset. So often people see a position, like a flagpole, and think there's no way they'll be able to do it, but it's amazing when you help someone to break through that barrier."

As well as working out of a Nottingham gym, the School of Calisthenics runs workshops around the UK and is now starting to venture overseas, as well as offering coached video tutorials online. "We have around 100,000 people using our online resources in countries all around the world," says Jackson, "as well as using makeshift equipment and just doing it in the street. It's fantastic."

### SIX PACKS

According to Kristoph Thompson, co-founder of Calisthenics UK, interest in the sport is growing all the time: "It has been growing for a number of years and is continuing to grow, but in the UK we're behind the curve in relation to Europe, the US and Australia," he says. "That's because the modern reinvention of calisthenics happened in inner city parks in New York City, central Europe has a culture of gymnastics and Australia has the outdoors lifestyle."

A number of factors are driving this interest. "With youngsters doing

flagpoles off lamp posts, it's a sport made for social media," says Thompson. "On many levels it's free fitness, which people really like. In addition, it's massively aspirational, with iconic moves, which are a badge of honour and more rewarding than lifting progressively heavier weights. Added to this, you get into ridiculously good shape – a byproduct is that you get a six pack. It creates skills-based real-world strength, which enables you to do loads of impressive stuff."

### THE CALI BUG

There are a few barriers though. One obvious one is that it's difficult. Doing a move like a flagpole doesn't happen overnight. "It requires work and dedication to master the moves, which means some people try it and drop out. However, others get addicted – we call it the cali bug," says Claudio Narciso, speaking for Barsparta, which runs park-based sessions in London.

"It generally takes three months to do a muscle up and six months to do a handstand. But the upside is that you get very ripped while you're practising!"

Also, it does currently come across as a masculine and, perhaps slightly intimidating, sport. Both Narciso and

The World  
Federation of Street  
Workout & Calisthenics  
(WSWCF) promotes the sport  
on an international level and  
organises the world championships.  
Its aim is to have calisthenics  
represented at the Olympic  
Games and Summer X  
Games.





The sport can be learned by breaking down moves and then building them back up

Jackson say they tend to attract more men than women to their sessions. However, Johnson thinks it can be just as successfully sold to women: "There are some fantastic female role models and in lots of ways calisthenics has got fewer barriers for some women than going into the free weights area. As women are often shorter, that can help progress."

For clubs wanting to offer this edgy, on-trend activity to their members, the first thing to do is get an enthusiastic instructor trained up. Calisthenics UK offers training to PTs and fitness professionals either at their venue in London, or at the operator's site.



## ■ STEEL WARRIORS

Steel Warriors (see HCM June 2018) is planning to build open air calisthenics gyms around the UK out of knives confiscated from street crime.

The first site, designed by Barsparta, launched this year in London's Tower Hamlets.

The aim of the project is to enable young people who carry knives to flex real muscle, rather than feeling the need to carry weapons.





**Calisthenics suits exercisers who are prepared to commit and train hard to achieve goals**



*You get into ridiculously good shape – a byproduct is that you get a six pack. It's skills-based, real-world strength, where you can do loads of impressive stuff*

- ▶ Thompson says ideally instructors will have a background in gymnastics and be able to do a handstand. "Although they don't need to do all the moves in order to teach them, there needs to be an element of being able to demonstrate things people can aspire to," he says.

Gyms are an ideal place to offer calisthenics, because they usually have some type of functional rig for people to learn pull ups, as well as the floor space. Little else is needed beyond the determination and enthusiasm of those people who are learning the moves.

And while many of us might think that we'd never be able to do a human flagpole, the experts agree that practice and an open mindset does pay off.

Jackson says believing you can do it is half the battle, while Thompson says exercises can be broken down and then built back up again while people learn and get stronger. For example, by firstly doing a side plank, and then lifting the top leg for longer each time, until one amazing day the magic happens. ●

## ■ ABOUT SIMONE MING

### World Champion

Ming won the Urban Fitness League World Championship in 2017, making her the top female calisthenics athlete in the world.

### Gymnastics

She came to calisthenics in 2014 after having trained and competed in gymnastics for 13 years from the age of three.

### Master trainer

Ming trained as a PT with Premier Global International before working for operators Virgin Active and GymBox. She is now a master trainer with Calisthenics UK.

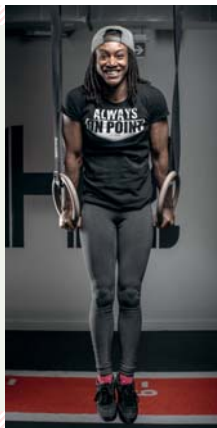


PHOTO: MARCEL GRABOWSKI



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**SAFE SPACE**

THE CHANGING ROOM EXPERTS

# GROWTH DRIVER

**With the right partner, changing your software systems should be a smooth process that can energise the business and lead to unexpected benefits**

**C**hanging your software provider can be daunting. After all, didn't it really hurt last time? Perhaps, but last time was probably over ten years ago... The human psyche is hard-wired to resist change, especially when it comes to changing IT systems, as those most affected may not have participated in the decision.

Overcoming inertia is up to the software company that is taking over the contract. They must drive the process and deliver a project plan that results in complete confidence and assurance to all the staff involved. After all, we humans are resilient, and change – once embraced – can bring about a wide range of invigorating benefits.

## AVOID FEATURE-CHASING

The secret to a good project starts with smart planning. Firstly, delay looking at the market – instead, draw up a list of the things you feel are holding your business back and aim to engage as many of your team as possible in the process.

Define the gap and describe it in terms of problems you wish to solve with a new system and then list these as simple sentences – after that rank them in order of priority, based on business benefit.

To get the creative process flowing, think about your customers' experiences when compared with your own consumer experiences. What good things stand out? Make a list of these.

Don't hold back in your brainstorming – be energetic and creative.

Avoid falling into the trap of listing a 'superset' of features from a market review, as this dilutes your focus and doesn't ultimately help the accuracy of your procurement. Having a new computer

system will turn out to be a bad investment if it doesn't solve your problems.

Luckily, a quality software vendor understands this and will help you avoid engaging in a feature-chasing project.

## MAKE LIFE EASY

Ensure your software supplier impresses you with the quality of their project plan for your business and establish how they will help you guarantee success.

Legend's project management process is an outstanding feature of its ISO 9001 certification. By sharing advice and best practice from similar projects, Legend can help unlock opportunities inherent in a modern system that aren't necessarily obvious at first.

The limitations of an old system can be a barrier. Legend's experts will guide your team smoothly through the transition.

We even guarantee that the transition from your old system to Legend will happen on time, within budget, and will incur zero downtime.

Another way we make life easy is by reducing the scope of our customers' exposure to regulation. Legend is the only UK vendor that is accredited for ISO 27001 (Information Security Management), with data backup and off-site disaster recovery included in the package.

Our customers found GDPR easier and cheaper to deal with as a result.

## SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY

We pride ourselves on going the extra mile, as William Thrower of Bridport Leisure Centre explains, saying: "Legend is the best supplier I've worked with to date. The knowledge of the project manager and engineers was excellent, as was communication, and there's always been someone available to assist with our queries at any time of the day or night."

## OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Project success depends on how well we prepare, equip and support each individual using the system to drive organisation success and outcomes.

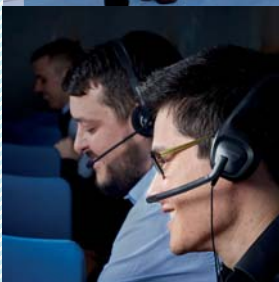
Legend trainers are recognised by customers for their excellent service, as our customer satisfaction surveys show (see table on opposite page).

## IT'S PERSONAL TO US!

Post installation, Legend's key account managers continue the highly personal customer service. They engage customers in their use of the system – optimising configuration and uncovering knowledge



**"80 per cent of our new business comes from referrals from existing customers who are delighted with the service. This shows the ongoing value that is delivered to Legend customers"**  
Sean Maguire, Legend



**Legend scores highly on customer service and support and has a strong track record of transitioning customers from other systems**

gaps, increasing awareness of features that are released in the free upgrades.

Day-to-day, Legend's industry-leading help desk runs 24/7. Customer feedback reveals 84 per cent of customers find Legend help desk staff professional, courteous, polite and friendly.

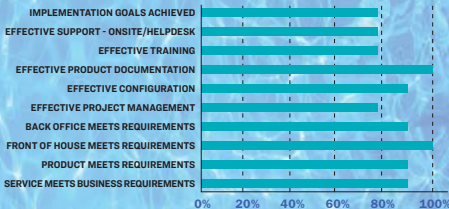
Graham Roberts-Phelps, MD at Brilliant Customer Service, says: "As a business skills trainer, specialising in software helpdesks, I've had the pleasure of spending time working with the Legend team. I found them to be an extremely positive, engaged and open-minded group of technical experts, keen to provide client satisfaction.

"The team is committed to continuous improvement – working together to identify ways of interacting with customers and solving problems faster."

#### **LEGEND MEANS CHANGE (BUT IT NEEDN'T HURT)**

To move a business forward requires change. Successful adoption of that change

#### **LEGEND CUSTOMERS STRONGLY AGREE**



drives organisational outcomes. Effective change management means individuals and organisations can adopt the changes more swiftly to drive business growth.

Sean Maguire, MD of Legend, comments: "We listen carefully to our clients in order to deliver advantage to them through our innovative service.

"Our R&D success is unrivalled – what's most pleasing is how we're helping operators by making it easy to switch to Legend and how that service trend continues post-installation.

"As a result, over 80 per cent of our new business comes from referrals

from existing customers who are delighted with the service, showing the ongoing value Legend delivers."

Speak to the Legend team today to see how easy a transition can be and how we can enable improvements to your business.



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# Should we be helping people develop their stress resilience?



**Stress levels increase for each generation, so should stress resilience training be something health clubs offer as standard? Kath Hudson asks the experts**

**M**ental ill health frequently leads to physical ill health and stress is the root cause of many potentially fatal illnesses, such as depression, obesity, cardiac disease and diabetes.

Since the overall health of our clients is what the health and fitness industry is all about, should we be doing more to help and support people in building their stress resilience?

Research shows that millennials are now more stressed than the 'silent generation', who lived through the world wars.

There are a number of reasons, including the fact that, having been raised with technology, they communicate more comfortably via social media and text than face to face. Social media also brings its own pressures and expectations.

Highly educated, ambitious and confident, millennials have

high expectations, but then have to cope with the reality of student loans and few high-paying job prospects.

According to women's business organisation, One of Many, women are 60 per cent more likely to suffer from stress or burnout than men. They're also less happy than they were 40 years ago, regardless of income, health, job, marital status, age, race and whether or not they have children. Dr Joanna Martin, founder of One of Many, attributes this to women finding themselves running on adrenalin and cortisol – the stress hormones – to fulfil their many roles, and this is not sustainable.

Undoubtedly gyms could help support people to become less stressed. But since stress resilience is not part of PT training programmes, could gyms unwittingly be adding to the problem they're trying to solve? We ask the experts...

## Andy McGlynn

CEO of Squared Ventures

**A lot of education** is needed around the subject of stress and gyms are a great place to start. Every single senior executive I work with suffers from stress. To get them to train hard from the outset would stress an already adrenally fatigued body even further, causing more inflammation, which leads to a number of issues including sleep disruption, brain fog and IBS.



In extreme cases, it can lead to burnout, insulin resistance and hypothyroidism, as the prolonged high blood cortisol levels will begin to suppress the thyroid. One of the USPs of my PT company is offering stress-resilience programmes. Each of my clients is assessed for stress using a cortisol saliva test and an in-depth

**Each of my clients is assessed for stress using a cortisol saliva test and an in-depth questionnaire. We then start to unpick each stressor**

questionnaire. We then start to unpick each stressor: addressing deficiencies of key minerals and vitamins in their diet, and working on developing mental robustness to cope with stressors that can't be avoided.

People who are suffering from stress need to be introduced to exercise slowly, using parasympathetic exercise and programme design. We

don't let them train hard in the beginning, however, we use primal movement pattern exercise to improve their posture and core strength, and to build up strength throughout the kinetic chain while addressing any weak links which could lead to pain.

In extreme cases, it might take as long as eight weeks, before they are ready to exercise more aggressively.





**StreetGym encourages people to develop mental toughness**

## John Allison

Founder: StreetGym and Motion to Mind

**Twenty four years** in the army made me appreciate the value of physical exercise to sustain yourself mentally in a high pressure environment.

Exercise is a great way of relieving stress, and I think there's definitely the opportunity for gyms to become wellness hubs and for PTs to become wellness coaches, helping people to tackle stress and build resilience by building

their mental strength while they also build their physical strength.

Many PTs are already acting in this capacity, but the formal career path isn't there yet – we don't have either the education programme or the curriculum.

The Level 4, Physical Activity for Mental Health qualification is a good starting point, but there's much more work to be done.



It is important that we don't take a one-size-fits-all approach, as this can have a detrimental impact.

One client, who suffers from anxiety, confided that when he was doing a lot of HIIT sessions after work, it disrupted his sleep patterns and led to greater anxiety, by turning on his fight or flight response and flooding his body with stress hormones.

It's about the right exercise at the right time, for the right person. We need to remember that exercise itself can be a stressor, therefore, PTs need to ensure training is tailored to the client's mental as well as physical state.

Activities requiring concentration, like yoga or boxing, are good because they keep people in the moment and stop them from ruminating about the past or future, creating breathing space.

It's also important to restore balance and homeostasis, particularly after a high intensity workout – doing some relaxation and breath work, for example.

Visualisation and engaging the senses is also powerful: focusing on people and places that produce feelings of gratitude and appreciation is deeply restorative and something we should be encouraging our clients to do. ▶

**Exercise is a great way of relieving stress, and I think there's definitely the opportunity for gyms to become wellness hubs and for PTs to become wellness coaches**



**Yoga can be offered to members to aid recovery and reduce stress**

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

## ▶ **Oliver Patrick**

Viavi: co-founder

**It's true that** many people do need help in managing their stress and that it can get in the way of the results members are seeking to achieve from their gym membership.

A key symptom of overstress is a lack of energy. Stress can affect energy in many ways, but particularly through disrupted sleep cycles, and if people are tired they often don't have the energy to go to the gym, and

are more likely to crave, and overeat, carbs.



Excess stress over time can also lead to too much cortisol production, which leads to fat storage and, over time, a decrease

in the hormones that assist muscle growth and metabolism.

Despite this, I would be wary of operators offering stress resilience as a formal programme, unless they have a clinical background,

because there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to managing stress.

Without clinical training, instructors and PTs might fall into the trap of working experientially rather than clinically: using an approach that worked well for one individual on another when it's not appropriate.

At the moment there isn't a well-defined and consistent stress professional in

the industry and, in our experience, tackling stress requires a broad tool kit of knowledge and behaviours.

In light of this, I believe the safest way to progress is to be wary of launching specific stress or resilience diagnostic services. Instead operators should encourage highly pressurised members to add generic recovery strategies to their life, such as sleep routines, meditation and yoga.

**Operators should encourage highly pressurised members to add generic recovery strategies to their life, such as sleep routines, meditation and yoga**



Spending time in nature is a powerful way to rest and recharge

## Gavin Jennings

CHEK Europe: director

**Developed by Paul Chek,** based on 30 years of clinical practice of working with clients, CHEK Institute has come up with a series of training programmes that take a holistic view of the body, treating the mental, physical, hormonal, emotional and spiritual systems as inextricably linked.

We're in the grey area between the medical and fitness industries and have professionals from both sides



coming onto our courses: PTs, doctors, psychotherapists and osteopaths.

Demand for our courses has risen over the last 18 months, reflecting the shift in awareness of mental health, but also PTs not feeling confident about their PT qualification.

Stress comes in many forms, but typically most gym members will be experiencing moderate to high levels of

stress related to digestive health, poor sleep patterns and poor diet. A significant number will have ongoing musculoskeletal issues, which can be exacerbated through the wrong sort of exercise.

Often big improvements can be made through some easy fixes: going to bed and getting up at the same time, eating correctly in order to maintain even blood sugar, ensuring they have some

quiet time each day and spending restorative time in nature to rest and recharge.

Also important is knowing when and how to 'work-in' rather than 'work-out'. A common stress is people trying to fit too much into their lives, so we help them to prioritise what is important and their core values. Often it is simplistic changes that have the most benefit. ●

**We take a holistic view of the body, treating the mental, physical, hormonal, emotional and spiritual systems as inextricably linked**



**SPEEDFLEX**  
MyIntensity™ Training

## LICENCE A SPEEDFLEX STUDIO

A Speedflex studio delivers high intensity exercise to a much broader audience due to the low impact nature and inclusiveness of the machine.

The unique nature of Speedflex machines combined with a Personal Trainer, MYZONE heart rate monitoring and a great playlist to boot, transforms Speedflex into an exciting, efficient and enjoyable alternative to traditional HIIT.

## BUY A SPEEDFLEX MACHINE

Over 100 exercises can be performed on Speedflex machines, the concentric focus and free motion bar means there's little - and often no - post exercise pain, which means they can be used by anyone, whether they're new to exercise, recovering from injury or are at the top of their game.

Offering an incredibly safe way to achieve a high intensity training experience, Speedflex is user friendly and with a small footprint, can perfectly accompany more traditional equipment on the gym floor.

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**[headoffice@speedflex.com](mailto:headoffice@speedflex.com)**  
**0191 212 7450**



*"The Speedflex sessions have proven to be hugely successful, with members hooked from the first one and waiting lists building up quickly"*

Anthony Elliott, operations director, The Bannatyne Group



Bannatyne CEO Justin Musgrove (left) with Paul Ferris and Alan Shearer at Speedflex Mansfield

# A lasting partnership

Speedflex is working with Bannatyne to create the ultimate customer experience

**B**annatyne is the first national club chain to offer Speedflex's unique high-intensity interval training (HIIT) sessions, by installing dedicated Speedflex studios in its clubs.

Utilising the scientifically advanced Speedflex machines, sessions provide all the benefits of HIIT training, without the associated risk of injury. Machines provide isokinetic resistance, making them suitable for all abilities and ages.

In true Bannatyne fashion, the move to Speedflex provides an inclusive experience for members.

## THE CONCEPT

Speedflex was founded in 2011 by entrepreneur Graham Wylie CBE, CEO and former Newcastle United physio and player Paul Ferris and former Newcastle United and England captain Alan Shearer.

Speedflex offers HIIT training with a twist, allowing up to 16 people to train together, regardless of their fitness level.

A typical Speedflex studio houses a

combination of eight Speedflex machines and eight auxiliary stations. This sequence provides an ever-changing dynamic exercise experience.

During the session, participants can receive feedback through state-of-the-art heart rate monitoring by MyZone.

This enables members to optimise their training by ensuring they're working in the ideal heart rate zone and allows trainers to track progress and offer motivation through instant feedback, improving the effectiveness of coaching.

## THE PARTNERSHIP

Initially, Speedflex entered the partnership with Bannatyne to launch its training concept at its Darlington site.

"Understanding the needs of our members is fundamental to everything we do here at Bannatyne," says Anthony Elliott, operations director. "Our members have told us they want a rounded lifestyle, so we try to take a 360° approach to our offering. We do this

through a variety of options, ensuring there truly is something on offer for everyone, no matter what their ability.

"We're constantly looking at ways we can improve our offering with exciting experiences," he continues. "The addition of Speedflex is the perfect solution, providing members with a unique, challenging and adaptable workout."

"Speedflex sessions provide a high-intensity, low-impact workout, so every individual can train at their optimum level."

"The sessions have proven to be hugely successful, with members hooked from the first one and waiting lists building up quickly," he explains. "The Speedflex team also provides fantastic support."

## FUTURE PLANS

Since launching in January 2017, Bannatyne has rolled out the concept to Couliby Newham, Edinburgh, Dunfermline, Durham, Norwich, Manchester and Mansfield, with Belfast opening later this year.

Find out more at: [www.speedflex.com](http://www.speedflex.com)



# Don't let payments stop you

## Break free with flexible Direct Debit



Take monthly membership fees, pay as you go and one-off payments, any day of the month, with no hidden fees – all within your gym software.

[gocardless.com/gyms](https://gocardless.com/gyms)  
#BeforeAndAfterGoCardless

**GO**CARDLESS



*"Fitness Space is focused on member experience. At GoCardless, we strive to provide a payment solution that adds to this experience"*

Ross Pert, GoCardless



With GoCardless, operators can take Direct Debit payments for add-ons like classes and nutrition plans at any time

# Transforming payments

Fitness Space revolutionises its Direct Debit solution with help from GoCardless

One of Europe's fastest growing fitness and health club franchises, Fitness Space, has recently taken on GoCardless as its new Direct Debit solution, with the payments provider now handling up to 70 per cent of all membership payments.

Fitness Space has 23 sites in the UK, with another 16 in the works. Much of its success to date is down to offering a highly personalised and bespoke service. "With other gym and fitness operators members are paying for access to the facilities and equipment. With us, they're paying for a service that's bigger than the four walls of our studios," explains Fitness Space operations director John Pye.

With such a high proportion of monthly membership payments coming from Direct Debit, Fitness Space required a solution that could handle an ever-growing number of payments.

The franchise was also moving to a new CRM system, called ClubRight, meaning the existing integration between GoCardless and ClubRight was key.

Rather than targeting the volume of members, Fitness Space instead focuses on higher yields-per-head. This means its service needs to reflect this, and additional products and services, like hot yoga, nutritional programmes and DNA testing are available to accommodate even the most demanding of members.

## INSTANT PAYMENT VISIBILITY

This progressive approach carried over to its way of thinking across all areas of the business, including payments. "We saw GoCardless as the most forward-thinking option and a good fit for us," says Pye. "We like the fact that it integrates with ClubRight and gives us an instant view of the status of member payments and mandates."

The GoCardless reporting functionality means Fitness Space is much better equipped to communicate with members regarding payments and subscriptions.

With the new Direct Debit solution in place, the franchise was able to improve its effectiveness. Previously, it was limited to doing one Direct Debit run a month – to

the frustration of employees and members alike – however, with GoCardless, Fitness Space now has the flexibility to take payments at any time, removing a significant barrier in the joining process.

It's not just during the initial sale and sign-up process where payments became a key consideration for the franchise, but also for the benefit of existing members.

It can now tailor its payment to suit the needs of individual members, including splitting off pro-rata payments.

An unexpected, but very welcome side effect for Fitness Space is the option to take one-off payments via Direct Debit, rather than by card. This transition has helped the fitness franchise save costs, as transaction fees on Direct Debit are lower.

Ross Pert, payments specialist at GoCardless, says: "As Fitness Space continues to focus on offering a top-quality experience to members, GoCardless will be there to take care of payment processing, compliance and regulations on their behalf."

Find out more: [www.gocardless.com/gyms](http://www.gocardless.com/gyms)

# STAYING WELL



**Fitness and wellness are continuing to make their way out of the gym and spa and into hotel guestrooms and public spaces. Jane Kitchen takes a look at how some of the biggest hotel and resort operators are addressing the new trend**



**Wellness guestrooms are the new hotel standard, says Molloy**

Just six years ago, the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas and wellness real estate firm Delos partnered to create the first Stay Well rooms – designed as hotel rooms that “optimise and support the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of guests”.

Delos worked with doctors at Columbia University Medical School and the Cleveland Clinic, as well as architects and engineers, to develop the first 42 Stay Well rooms, which made their debut in 2012, offering features like circadian lighting, air purification,

aromatherapy and vitamin C-infused showers – all available at an upcharge of around US\$30 (£26, £23) a night.

Today, the idea has expanded, with both Marriott and Four Seasons collaborating with Delos and other hotel brands creating their own in-house versions of wellness rooms to cater to the growing demand.

Whether they’re offering fresh air, tools for a better night’s sleep, in-room fitness or a space to meditate, these rooms aim to help guests take their wellness lifestyles with them when they travel. Mark VanStekelenburg, managing director

Four Seasons LA has seen a 50 per cent increase in sales on its wellness rooms

## FOUR SEASONS

Four Seasons is the latest operator to launch wellness rooms, in a pilot programme with Delos at its Beverly Hills site. Five guestrooms and three suites, located on the fourth floor spa level, have been created to optimise physical and emotional wellbeing, with features such as circadian lighting and air and water purification systems.

Michael Newcombe, vice president of spa & wellness for Four Seasons, reports that just two



months into the programme, he's seen a 35 per cent increase on the suites and 50 per cent increase on regular rooms (see SB18/2 p22). On top of this, the hotel charges a premium for the rooms.

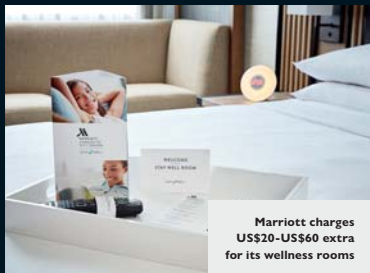
Guests in the wellness rooms have access to sleep and nutrition programmes developed by the Cleveland Clinic, guided meditation videos by Deepak Chopra, exercise equipment and yoga mats, as well as healthy in-room snack options.

Cost: around US\$50 (€43, £38) extra

at CBRE Hotels Advisory in New York says: "There's a global desire for access to wellness and fitness. Consumers want a choice. And while the implementation of this continues to evolve, access to wellness is here to stay, rather than being a fad."

Louise Molloy, head of consultancy for Dubai-based The Wellness, says wellness rooms can help create unique positioning, add to the guest experience and set a brand apart from its competition. "A better understanding of just what kind of reach wellness has beyond the spa is becoming more apparent than ever," says Molloy. "I think it will be inevitable that wellness rooms will become a standard part of any hotel brand's design guidelines."

Here then, we take a look at some of the ways in which hotel operators are taking wellness outside of the spa and into the guestroom - and beyond.



Marriott charges US\$20-US\$60 extra for its wellness rooms

## MARRIOTT

In 2016, Marriott added Stay Well rooms - created in partnership with Delos - to six US properties.

Features include advanced air purification, essential oil aromatherapy, circadian mood lighting, non-toxic cleaning products, dawn simulation, vitamin C-infused showers and a healthy mattress. Through the Stay Well Mobile App, guests also enjoy access to a jet lag tool, as well as sleep, nutrition and stress management programmes developed by Cleveland Clinic.

"Now more than ever, health and wellness are a top priority in nearly every facet of our lives," says Jim Connelly, senior president of operations and owner services at Marriott.

The rooms are popular with both business and leisure travellers and families alike. The company says Marriott Reward Members often request the Stay Well rooms as their room of choice.

Cost: US\$20 (€17, £15) to US\$60 (€51, £45) extra, depending on location

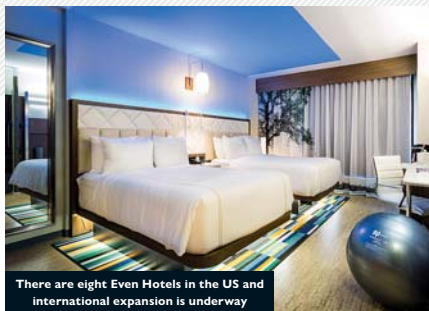
## ▶ INTERCONTINENTAL

InterContinental's Even Hotels brand launched back in 2014 as a lifestyle hotel with wellness at its core – though the hotels have gyms, but not spas. IHG designed aspects of the hotel across four components: eating well, resting easy, keeping active and accomplishing more.

The hotels feature in-room fitness elements with a dedicated workout space, fitness equipment and 18 different workout videos. Running maps are available at the front desk, and bedrooms have been fitted with high-tech lighting and bedding options – such as

eucalyptus linens and colour-changing mood lights – as well as aromatherapy amenities, intended to encourage a good night's sleep. Grab-n-go, health-conscious food is available from the brand's Cork & Kale cafe.

There are now eight Even Hotels open, including three in New York City and recent openings in Eugene, Oregon and Sarasota, Florida. There are 12 additional properties in the pipeline in the US and international expansion is also on the cards, with a development deal announced for a portfolio of hotels across



**There are eight Even Hotels in the US and international expansion is underway**

Australia and New Zealand, and three properties in the works in China – the first of which is set to open in 2019 in Sanya.

"Around the world, we know that there's growing consumer demand for wellness-focused

travel," says Keith Barr, IHG CEO. "Since debuting in the US, the brand has resonated strongly with guests and owners."

Cost: room rates vary depending on location



## SWISSOTEL

Swissôtel's Vitality Room was developed in collaboration with *Wallpaper* magazine and offers wellness features such as black-out blinds, dedicated space for exercise and relaxation, an air purification system, lighting and scent options in the shower, a Vitality snack bar with fruits and superfoods and circadian light features. A 'wellbeing wall' gives guests a choice of three training modules in a compact space, with simple, self-explanatory equipment and a cyber-trainer.

The rooms, which made their debut at Swissôtel Zurich in 2016, also feature a clean, calm



material palette and a reconfigured layout to optimise views and improve functionality.

"There's a

growing desire on the part of travellers to view their accommodations not just as a place to stay, but as a place to reconnect, replenish and revitalise," says Lilian Roten, vice president of Swissôtel.

Vitality Rooms will soon be developed in North America, Asia and the Middle East, with reports of hotels in Singapore and Dubai being next to add the concept.

Cost: 30 per cent more than average daily rate

**Swissôtel's stylish Vitality Rooms feature 'wellbeing walls'**





## PULLMAN

Pullman is bringing wellness concepts to its rooms, rather than redesigning them. The operator has worked with Rythm, a neurotechnology company, to trial its wearable sleep-tech product, Dreem, with guests at hotels in Paris and San Francisco.

Dreem is an active sleep solution designed to enhance sleep quality – a headband uses ultra-fine sensors to track key information such as brain waves, heart rate and breathing, and discreetly diffuses sound to the inner ear. It claims to help

users fall asleep more easily, enhance deep sleep and wake the user at the optimal time.

"A good night's sleep is a cornerstone of Pullman's wellness ethos," says Aldina Duarte Ramos, director of wellbeing for Sofitel, Pullman and Swissôtel. "Our clientele of hyper-connected entrepreneurs and global nomads are always looking to balance productivity with personal wellbeing," she says.

Guests can request the headbands for free, with priority given to Accor club members.

Pullman is trialling the Dreem headband to track and promote sleep



A good night's sleep is a cornerstone of Pullman's wellness ethos

## WESTIN

Last year, Westin Hotels unveiled a multi-million dollar Let's Rise advertising campaign, highlighting the importance of wellbeing for hotel guests during the inevitable disruptions and the unpredictability of travel.

Westin already had programmes including a Gear Lending workout, developed with New Balance, which have been designed to "embody the brand's Six Pillars of Wellbeing" – sleep well, eat well, move well, feel well, work well and play well.

"Around the world, we're seeing travellers realigning their priorities to put their wellbeing first," says Brian Povinelli, global brand leader.



Westin worked with New Balance on a fitness 'gear lending' programme

Yoga teacher Celest Pereira leads a yoga session designed to help guests relax



## MANDARIN ORIENTAL

Mandarin Oriental is taking fitness and wellness outside the gym through its newly launched Mindful Meetings concept (see p40) as well as a partnership with Grokker to create health and wellness video programmes for its guest rooms.

Guests are given free access to a digital library of custom health and fitness video content that they can practice in-room, including a bedtime yoga routine, 20-minute fitness sessions, pilates and



five-minute guided meditation.

The programming is already available at a number of Mandarin Oriental hotels and will be rolled out across the company throughout 2018.

"These activities allow us to leverage the great expertise

and talent that we have in our Spa & Wellness division to give a better overall experience to all our guests," says Jeremy McCarthy, Mandarin's group director of spa and wellness. ▶

## HILTON

Hospitality giant Hilton unveiled an in-room concept last year called Five Feet to Fitness, which brings 11 different fitness equipment and accessory options into the hotel room and includes more than 200 bespoke fitness videos.

The new room type has a 100sq ft (9sq m) fitness space with a Wattbike and dynamic Gym Rax stations, to deliver strength, core, suspension and interval training. At the heart of the concept is the Fitness Kiosk offering equipment tutorials and guided workout routines. Also included: a meditation chair, blackout shades and Biofreeze products for muscle tension.

"We haven't just placed workout equipment in a room, we've completely deconstructed the hotel room and carefully designed a space with an

**Hilton's Five Feet to Fitness rooms feature a 100sq ft workout area**



uncluttered training area, with sports-performance flooring and a separate area for rest and relaxation," says Melissa Walker, global fitness director for Hilton. Hilton currently has 11 hotels and 31 rooms trading under the Five Feet to

Fitness programme, with an additional 23 properties in the pipeline. The rooms are trading at a 20 per cent premium and are achieving a 75 per cent occupancy rate.

**Cost:** around US\$45 (£38, £34) extra, depending on location

**Health club operator Equinox will reveal its first fitness hotel in 2019**



## When the gym becomes the hotel

High-end health club operator Equinox has plans to enter the hotel space - starting with a location in New York City's Hudson Yards in 2019 - with a focus on movement, nutrition and regeneration.

The hotels - which will be located in US urban markets and other gateway cities, including London - will offer healthy food that's tailored to the workout and

travel regime of the guest. They'll also aim to maximise sleep quality by removing disruptors such as light pollution and noise. The target guest is one who already embraces a healthy lifestyle.

Equinox's goal is to "raise the bar on what a hotel experience should feel like, and evolve the idea of travel as something that can fit seamlessly into a healthy lifestyle."



Vitamin C showers at MGM Grand

## MGM GRAND

The Stay Well rooms at the MGM Grand include 17 features designed to help sleep quality, reduce allergies and promote healthy eating. Created in partnership with Delos, Stay Well rooms incorporate features like vitamin C showers, circadian rhythm lighting and healthy mattresses. Since it debuted in 2012, Delos expanded to offer a Stay Well Meetings programme and has also launched an online Stay Well Shop, where customers can buy many of the wellness products they use in the Stay Well rooms.

MGM started with an initial 42 Stay Well rooms when it launched the concept in 2012, but after the first year, it added more, bringing the total to 171 - which now take up the entire 14th floor of the hotel's main tower. Stay Well rooms are also slated to be part of the upcoming Park MGM Hotel in Las Vegas, due to open later this year.

**Cost:** around US\$30 (£26, £23) extra per night



# GLOBAL WELLNESS SUMMIT 2018

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**Nerio Alessandri,**  
Technogym



**Gina Diez**  
Barroso de Franklin,  
Grupo Diarq



**David Bosshart,**  
PhD, Gottlieb  
Duttweiler Inst.



**Mark Britnell,**  
KPMG  
International



**Dan Buettner,**  
Blue Zones



**Dr. Richard H.**  
**Carmona,**  
Canyon Ranch



**Dr. Anjan**  
**Chatterjee,**  
Univ. of Penn.



**Antonio Citterio,**  
Architect and  
Designer



**Clodagh,**  
Clodagh Design



**Jan-Emmanuel De**  
**Neve, PhD,**  
University of Oxford



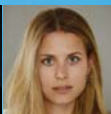
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# Fitness for all

With such a huge proportion of the UK population not meeting recommended activity levels, fitness professionals who expand their range of services will find unlimited opportunities

**W**ith an ageing population and a childhood obesity crisis, now is the time to capitalise on the growing demand for specialist fitness professionals.

A large swathe of the population is in desperate need of the services of specialist fitness professionals. Yet most personal trainers continue to focus on individuals who are already committed to exercising regularly.

With people living longer, growing public concern about mental health problems and record levels of inactivity

***"You only have to take a quick look at the national headlines to see the huge demand for specialist fitness professionals in today's society"***

among children and young people, there is a huge opportunity for personal trainers to expand their services by engaging with targeted demographic groups. Investing in specialist training allows fitness professionals to diversify and expand their portfolio of services. This will not only help to increase their

client base, boost their earnings and their long term career prospects, but will also attract new users to our facilities and create new revenue streams.

## YOUTH INACTIVITY

Our children are more inactive than they have ever been. Current strategies to get them moving are not proving effective. In fact, research published this summer by The Sport and Recreation Alliance found that since 1977, despite considerable effort and significant investment, "activity levels (among children and young people) have at best stayed the same, and at worst declined significantly".

Something needs to change. Children are not simply young adults; they are motivated by different stimuli and respond to different inputs. As a result, bespoke engagement techniques have to be created for this group.

Premier Global NASM's Youth Exercise Specialist (YES) programme has been developed to give fitness professionals the skills to do just that.

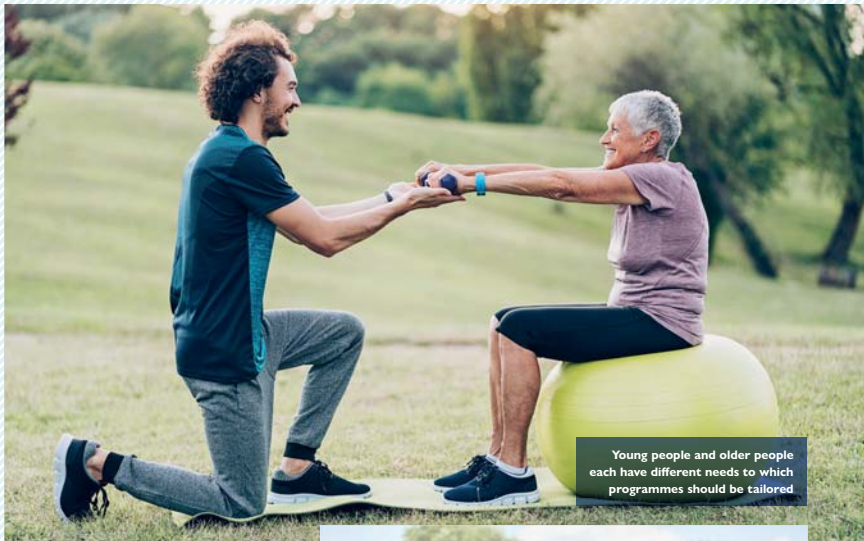
The programmes aim to educate health and fitness professionals on how to design safe, effective and fun training programmes for youngsters aged between six and 19 years of age. It includes fitness and nutrition as well as the science behind the programme and precautions for this age group.

The specialist course uses NASM's Optimum Performance Training™



**The Senior Fitness Specialisation gives PTs the skills to create effective programmes for older people**





Young people and older people each have different needs to which programmes should be tailored

(OPT™) model to give fitness professionals the knowledge, skills and confidence to assist youth clients in attaining their health and fitness goals while keeping them active and healthy.

### SPECIALISING IN SENIORS

The UK's population is getting older, thanks to improvements in healthcare and changes to lifestyles. In 2016, 18 per cent of people were aged 65 and over and 2.4 per cent were aged 85 and over, according to the Office for National Statistics. In some regions, as many as one in three people are aged over 65.

This presents a massive opportunity for the health and fitness sector.

Specialist fitness professionals can play a vital role in keeping this growing segment of the population fit and healthy.

Premier Global NASM's Senior Fitness Specialisation has been developed to meet the growing demand for physical fitness experts for seniors. The programme takes into account the specific fitness needs of ageing bodies when designing exercise programmes that use NASM's OPT™ programme.

The course equips fitness professionals with skills to create appropriate and effective programmes that help fend off the onset of the most chronic illnesses and conditions associated with seniors. Students learn how to better understand the physiological and anatomical considerations of ageing including its



limitations, common medical conditions, and the frequent fitness obstacles that seniors will begin to encounter with age.

As specialists in senior fitness, personal trainers can help older adults reduce their risk of falls – the number one reason older people are taken to the emergency department in a hospital – and help them maintain independence in later life.

You only have to take a quick look at the national headlines to see the huge demand for specialist fitness professionals in today's society. From rising levels of preventable diseases like type 2 diabetes and the increasing prevalence of mental health problems, to youth inactivity and the ageing population, the needs of our population are changing.

Fitness professionals can serve these groups and more by expanding their knowledge and skills with specialist education that will take their careers to the next level and open the doors to a new wave of health and fitness consumers who are in need of their expertise and services.

To find out more about the specialist training modules available, please visit [www.premierglobal.co.uk](http://www.premierglobal.co.uk)

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The ultimate goal of WHO's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity is a 15 per cent reduction in the global prevalence of inactivity by 2030

MORE ACTIVE  
PEOPLE FOR  
A HEALTHIER  
WORLD

Fiona Bull has a global mandate from WHO to fight inactivity

# DR FIONA BULL

The World Health Organization's physical activity expert speaks to

Kate Cracknell about the *WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity for 2018–2030*

## What prompted the creation of the Global Action Plan?

Back in 2013, a WHO document – the *Global Action Plan on Prevention and Treatment of Non-Communicable Disease (NCD)* – named tobacco, alcohol, obesity and physical inactivity as the four risk factors. It spelled out what should be done in broad terms, but without detail.

Since then, documents have been produced to address tobacco, alcohol and diet, but no work had been done on updating and revitalising policies for physical activity. In spite of the known health benefits of being active, and the recognised need to increase global physical activity levels, there remained a lack of up-to-date guidance on the latest evidence, effective approaches and tools to help countries implement them.

So in January 2017, Member State countries turned to WHO and requested our help. The result was a new *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA)* for 2018–2030, published this summer.

The Plan's ultimate target is a 15 per cent reduction in the global prevalence of physical inactivity among adults and adolescents by 2030, with the indicator being meeting the global recommendation of at least 150 minutes' moderate to vigorous physical activity a week. If you meet this threshold, you're active; if you don't, you're classified as inactive or insufficiently active.

Another important recommendation is the need for all of us to do regular strength training, which benefits everything from weight loss to the prevention of falls and the avoidance of conditions such as diabetes.

Importantly, the *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity* isn't about increasing



Bull wants to share best practice, such as the Health Carnival, Malaysia

overall levels of activity, because that could be achieved among already active people. It's about helping more inactive people reach the active level. It's also about reducing inequalities in opportunities to be active: for example, we know inactive individuals are more likely to be women, older, unemployed, less educated, or living in areas where the population is predominantly from lower socioeconomic groups.

## How bad is the situation?

Currently, as a global average, 23 per cent of adults fail to meet the 150-minute threshold, although this varies by country – it can be anything up to 75 per cent of the adult population in places like the Middle East and Latin America.

It's much lower in India and China, and because of their large populations this skews the global average. But these countries are also our biggest challenges, because lifestyles in those markets are

now changing in ways we've seen happen elsewhere: more car use, more sedentary work, less active leisure time in favour of computers and other digital screens. If we don't counter that trend then India and China will start reaching the levels of inactivity we're already seeing in other countries, and we'll be going in entirely the wrong direction.

So we have a two-fold agenda: to reduce inactivity in countries where it's high; and to prevent a rise in countries where it's lower. We want to do this by raising awareness, providing opportunities and increasing participation.

The ultimate goal is to make activity the default choice and part of every day.

## How will the Plan achieve this?

The Plan covers four highly integrated areas. The first is 'Creating Active Environments' – ensuring people have the spaces and places in their local communities where they can be active. ▶



Above: Bogotá, where the streets are pedestrianised at weekends. Below: The Cheonggyecheon in Seoul



- That means having good pedestrian access, as well as making people feel safe to go out and walk, both in terms of crime and the environment. It's also about putting a cycling infrastructure in place: cycle paths, facilities to store bikes, showers at work and so on. And it's about providing adequate access to open spaces, whether that's rivers, beaches or parks in cities and communities.

All of this needs to be well maintained, accessible, promoted and publicised, priced affordably – ideally free – and with no barriers to reaching them.

Two lovely examples: in Colombia's capital city Bogotá, they close a big crossroads every weekend so locals can safely cycle, run or skate. And in Seoul, Korea, they've removed the freeway across a river and instead have re-opened the boardwalk and river pathways.

Much of this first prong of the Plan will be the business of urban designers, city and local councils and the transport sector. That's interesting, because it means local government is probably the largest provider of facilities for being active. But of course, alongside this are the sports and fitness sectors, which need to ensure their locations, pricing, opening hours and activities create accessible and appealing opportunities for everyone.

The second point of the Plan is 'Creating Active People', which focuses on programmes and opportunities that

engage and encourage people to be active, making sure they're having fun and enjoying being active. That could be anything from a Zumba class to free-to-use equipment and workouts in a park, through to organised walks or a park run.

Here, though, I think the emphasis needs to shift to recognising how difficult it is to start: we need more programmes for people who are less fit or new to exercise. For example, one of my earliest jobs after university was working at the Central YMCA in London. One of the things I did was teach a six-week 'introduction to exercise to music' course. The curtains were drawn, so you couldn't be observed, and I taught people how the timetabled group exercise classes ran: the sort of things to expect in the choreography and so on. It helped address the intimidation factor.

The third prong is 'Creating Active Societies'. In a way, this is the main outcome we want to achieve – to increase everyone's awareness of the value of activity across all ages.

We're not just talking about awareness among individuals, but all parts of society. Everyone has to understand how they can contribute and do their bit, but this will only happen if everyone values activity.

For local governments, why should they think about walking, cycling and green space when revitalising inner-city areas? Why should they invest in a leisure centre, potentially with subsidised usage?

For schools, why should they invest, bearing in mind it doesn't have to be a financial investment as much as a commitment to activity? There's a lovely example from Iran where schools have an exercise break of two or three minutes in

**Right: Bull wants to see more government initiatives like This Girl Can**  
**Below: Activity from Valley Leisure, funded by the Sport England Make your Move programme**



## “ What’s on offer in gyms doesn’t appeal to the majority of the population. I’m intrigued to know why the market doesn’t respond

every class, in the classroom itself; it’s up to the teacher to decide when it happens and it’s led by one of the pupils.

And for us as individuals, why is it important to make the time to be active? Why should we prioritise it for ourselves, our children and our elderly parents?

We also need to review the way we perceive things. At the moment, many decision-makers say: ‘We know it’s vital, but it’s someone else’s job’ or ‘It isn’t something we’re going to pay for or prioritise’.

These attitudes have prevented progress. So if a local council has pedestrianised an area, for example, let’s not moan because we can’t park outside our favourite restaurant. Instead, let’s acknowledge the many ways pedestrianisation improves our community – councils need community support to make bold decisions.

The final element of the Plan is the underpinning, enabling factor: ‘Creating Active Systems’. There are a number of things we need in place to support all this: policy and governance that promotes activity and prioritises it, both nationally and at a local level; solid action plans, with training to implement these;

a data system to track participation; robust evaluation, so we know what’s working across different groups; strong advocacy, people talking about how important activity is and how, from gyms to urban design, we’re all part of the same solution; and steady, potentially reallocated, funding streams.

### What can health clubs do?

They can do more in terms of training, so staff are skilled up and ready to work with non-traditional gym-goers. I’d welcome that discussion.

I’m also intrigued to know why the market doesn’t respond better to the untapped end of the continuum. What’s on offer at the moment doesn’t work for the majority of the population. Many people go to a gym and are put off, and this is one of the biggest barriers to enticing them back into activity – they’ve already decided it isn’t for them.

There’s such an opportunity to get below the surface of the stereotypes, but generally the fitness industry has not been overly interested. For those who are, WHO and I would be very interested to discuss opportunities –

products, services and programmes – to reach the least active and to look at how we can work together in this area.

### Can we really have an impact with such a global agenda?

Absolutely. Everyone has a role to play.

We need governments to get on-board, and more campaigns like This Girl Can aimed at different market segments. But we also need role modelling and leadership. That could be as simple as making a statement in your workplace, saying: ‘This is important, we can change the social norm in our office’.

For example, at WHO, we’re prompted to use the stairs rather than the lift, and have stand-up meetings. That’s the sort of leadership that can change social norms, as well as national campaigns and everything in between.

### What are the biggest obstacles to achieving the GAPP goals?

Firstly, it’s inertia and lack of prioritisation of activity. We need it at the top of the agenda and with accountability.

Secondly, we need to build capacity, including training everyone in the



## FIONA BULL – A CAREER IN PREVENTION

### What's your background?

I trained as a PE teacher and did a Masters in Sports Science at Loughborough just as we were beginning to understand the seriousness of conditions like heart disease and diabetes, and to appreciate the role activity played in their prevention.

I couldn't understand why people weren't more active. I began to explore the reasons and did a PhD in this area.

After my Masters, I moved to Australia to work in workplace health promotion and became very interested in the evidence base: if we knew why people do and don't exercise, could we work out solutions and put those into practice?

That led me closer to the world of policy and my career for the past 20 years has focused on research, practice and policy.

I've worked in universities; as director of the National Centre for Physical Activity in the UK from 2004 to 2012; at the CDC in the US Department of Health; and then at WHO on policy.

### When did you rejoin WHO and take up your new role?

I rejoined WHO in 2017 as programme manager in the area of surveillance and prevention of non-communicable disease.

My counterparts work in the areas of alcohol and tobacco, but my remit is unhealthy eating and physical inactivity as key risk factors.

Specifically, my role is to lead WHO's work developing global policies and guidance tools and then to support countries in implementing these.

### What projects have you worked on?

Three stand out. The first looked at how we measure participation. It's one of the driest areas, but it's fundamental, because it measures change.

Governments weren't interested because they didn't think we could measure participation – we didn't have data to show the size of the problem. This in contrast to tobacco and obesity, where we use BMI and blood pressure.

Today we have digital tools, but in the early days it was about getting the best measurement possible.

The other projects were interventions. The first, relating to workplace activity, advocated providing subsidised gym membership and promoting activity in the workplace – especially in small, affordable ways.

The field has since shifted its focus to encourage staff to take breaks, use stand-up desks, use the stairs, hold walking meetings and so on.

The next project concerned exercise prescription. We were advising patients to quit smoking, but we weren't advising them to be active. I looked at how healthcare professionals could promote activity.

They have two roles: to reinforce the importance of being active; and to connect people with providers of activity.

The challenge remains that we still aren't training doctors in physical activity.

We, therefore, need simple measures: a very quick reminder on the GP's computer screen, with a prompt to ask the patient a quick question about activity and record it in their notes; resources to help them



Fiona Bull has a global role at the World Health Organization

give the best advice they can in the short time they have with patients; and ways to follow up, because habits won't change as a result of just one discussion.

Physical activity needs to be recognised as a 'vital sign' that health professionals ask about during every consultation – something being considered in the US.

There are other good examples: in Scotland, they're integrating activity into the medical curriculum, in Finland they're linking an app to patients' notes to send pointers about local opportunities for activity and the UK's 'Let's Get Moving' project is allowing doctors to refer patients to programmes in the community.

There are promising examples out there, but we need to get these shared and adopted. This is where we come to the agenda of the new Global Action Plan.

“Physical activity needs to be recognised as a 'vital sign' that health professionals ask people about at every medical consultation

- ▶ new agenda and what it takes: so, for example, school teachers need to be supported and trained in what they could be doing and how schools can contribute. Similarly, what's the role of the fitness sector? Everyone needs to understand and value the role they can play, as well as understanding and supporting the contributions of others.

Thirdly, we need to fully connect all these opportunities to reap the maximum benefit: we need to see the recreation community supporting the transport sector when it's talking about walking and cycling, and supporting the education sector when it's talking about

how to get adolescents and kids more active before, during and after school.

### What's the role of the World Health Organization in promoting activity globally?

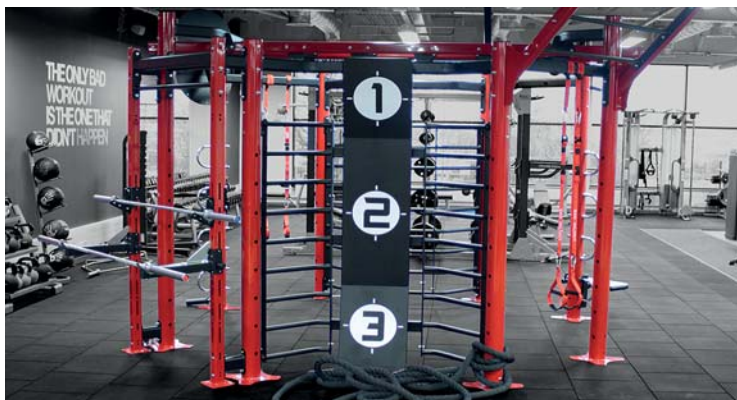
Our role includes sharing best practice from around the world – joining the dots globally and encouraging the adaptation and adoption of great initiatives across different countries. We also facilitate and help countries and communities get started in building connections and co-ordinating their activities.

We'll encourage communities to involve and motivate all stakeholders –

for example, making sure they have their sport, transport and recreation sectors involved in their solutions, as well as private industry. We'll also recommend the creation of a co-ordinating mechanism – a committee or taskforce – that oversees everything and identifies synergies, so, for example, doctors know where to refer their patients.

The whole challenge is enormous, but every community can identify things they could do better. That's where they should start. That's my call to action to everyone, because we all have a role to play: identify the best two or three things you can do and start now. ●





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Myzone's philosophy is to award people for their own personal exercise journey

Voted IHRSA Associate Member of the Year 2018, Myzone is the brainchild of Antipodean entrepreneur Dave Wright, who set out to find a way of making everyone feel good about exercise

# FEELING GOOD ABOUT EXERCISE

“

M

yzone is all about rewarding those people who bust a gut in the gym, but then feel depressed that they're not as fit, strong or powerful as other people," says Myzone creator Dave Wright. "By devising a way to reward effort,

we've levelled the playing field, so everyone has an equal opportunity to show how hard they are trying."

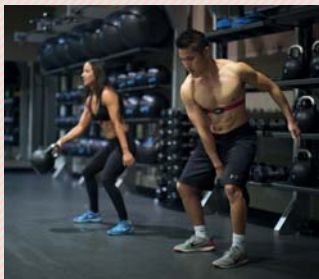
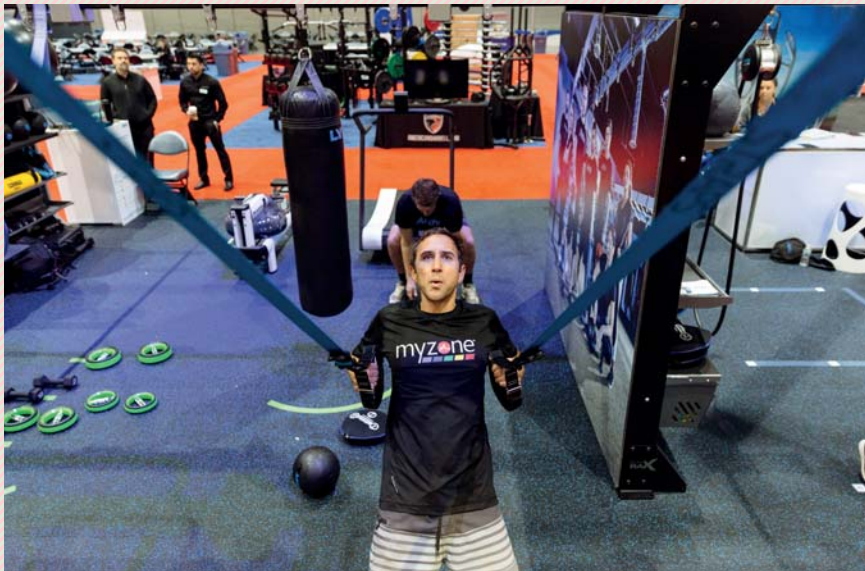
Myzone's heart rate module is accurate to EKG 99.4 per cent and lets users know – in real-time, how long they spend in each heart rate zone while they're exercising. This effort is then translated into Myzone Effort Points (MEPs), so they can compete against other people or, more importantly, themselves.

In classes, users can see their effort level displayed on live screens, which give real-time feedback and motivation.

After classes, users receive a summary of their workout, including MEPs earned and calories burned. The club also has visibility of the data, so they can form a deeper relationship with their members' fitness journey. This is key for retention, which Myzone has been proven to improve by 24 per cent. As well as being a great member engagement tool, it also offers secondary spend potential through premium programmes and even the sale of belts – more than a million have been sold to date.

## REWARDING THE JOURNEY

The inspiration for Myzone came from showing millions of people around the gym floor who would frequently be intimidated by the space. "Often they would say they'd like to go away, lose weight, get fit and then come back to join," says Wright. "To the 85 per cent of the population who don't use gyms they can be intimidating



**The system combines heart rate belts with digital walls, enabling real-time individual feedback for exercisers of all levels of ability**



and competitive environments. There's nothing to reward people for the process of getting fit, but lots to make them feel inadequate during the process."

Determined to find a way of using technology to mobilise deconditioned people, Wright connected with experts to create a new style of accurate tracker. Although in competition with large retailers selling activity trackers with big marketing budgets behind them, Myzone's key to success is that it has been designed by an operator for operators with a powerful purpose.

Currently used by more than 6,000 facilities, in 64 countries, Myzone is ISO 27001 compliant, as a stamp of

its commitment to data privacy and understanding of the social and business importance of this.

It has continued to evolve, offering new features, including Challenges, Zone Match, MZ-Fitness Test, In-house Timers, a club-branded Myzone app, e-commerce and also marketing support.

The product road map for 2018 was launched at IHRSA, in the form of Myzone 3.0. This comprises some very exciting innovations, including a 3D scanner, which can be used with an iPad and camera to create a 3D avatar of a person, calculating the circumference of their limbs and showing them realistically what they look like. ▶



Myzone enables people to compete against their own best score to build their confidence



*I saw one of the mums and asked how her daughter got on at sports day. "She hated it – she came last in everything," was the reply, "but she hasn't stopped talking about the Myzone day – it's the only time she's done exercise and not felt sad afterwards."*

Dave Wright, CEO, Myzone

Also the MZ-20 scales are about to be launched, which show weight, muscle mass, body fat and hydration levels. "At £49, these can be used at home or in clubs, so people can see how their bodies are changing," says Wright.

#### STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Myzone is going from strength to strength, being used by boutique clubs, independents and bootcamps. Other clients include the public sector and trusts, universities and private sector operators, hospitals, the military, professional sports teams, obesity clinics and even focus groups at a live presidential debate during the Donald Trump/Hilary Clinton campaign.

Wright says he had a stand out moment that epitomises why he wanted to create Myzone and why he's proud of what the team has achieved.

"My wife and I went into our local primary school during health schools week and organised a Myzone activity called Zone Match for the kids to play," he says. "A few weeks later I saw one of the mums and asked

her how her daughter got on at sports day. "She hated it – she came last in everything," was the reply, "but she hasn't stopped talking about the Myzone day – she told us that it's the only time in her life that she's ever done exercise and not felt sad afterwards."

"That's why I wanted to do it," says Wright. "Those feelings of inadequacy echo into adulthood, and as an operator myself, I strongly believe that the industry is mainly famous for making fit people fitter, but Myzone means that absolutely anyone can feel good about exercise, whether it's before, during or after the event, as long as they put the effort in." ●



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## Gamify your club: Your customers will love you for it!

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### Benefits of Myzone

-  Get results your customers can trust with **99.4% EKG accuracy**.
-  Connect to 3rd party equipment and other wearable devices for maximum versatility.
-  Customers can view their effort in real time on their smartphone or on club tv.
-  Myzone allows customers to earn points, gain status rankings and compete with friends.
-  Help your community flourish with in app social features which allows engagement and motivation outside of the club environment.

Learn more at [myzone.org](https://myzone.org) or [info@myzone.org](mailto:info@myzone.org)



@myzonemoves | #myzonemoves | #myzonecommunity



# A STRONGER OFFERING

Strength training is a key part of any gym. But how can you use strength training equipment to differentiate your offering? **Steph Eaves** asked operators to share their stories



The Fitness Function's strength training programme uses Total Gym kit

SUPPLIER: **TOTAL GYM** OPERATOR: **THE FITNESS FUNCTION**

**JULIE BURFOOT-BROWN**  
Founder and director

"We've created an innovative 45-minute small group strength programme, which utilises Total Gym equipment for incline body-weight resistance training.

Each session is carefully split into sections that focus on different areas of the body, to create a total body workout.

We wanted to develop a workout that's efficient and interesting. Using Total Gym equipment and its accessories we've designed a fun programme that uses resistance training techniques.

Within each workout we use different methods of resistance training to keep the sessions alive and challenging for all levels, to ensure members stay engaged and the workouts are effective.

Most importantly, each session must be achievable for all clients.

The members love these classes, as they're made to feel at ease. They're getting fitness results and can see marked improvements in their physical strength and wellbeing. They like the way in which they can challenge their bodies in a safe and effective way, while being taught by experienced trainers."



**Escape Fitness fitted out the gyms at TRIB3**

► **SUPPLIER: ESCAPE FITNESS OPERATOR: TRIB3**

**KEVIN YATES CEO**

"TRIB3 has been kitted out with all-natural materials and carefully chosen pieces sourced from local antique shops. These include the heavy barn doors that members walk through to get to the gym, and even some old boxing spit buckets. It all adds up to a truly unique (but authentic) environment.

This authenticity extends to equipment, which includes Escape kettlebells, medicine balls and octagon dumbbells

(which don't roll away!), to fit in with the bespoke feel of the gym's interiors.

Escape also worked with us to create a customised grapple stand-up boxing bag to help us realise our vision of creating a training space that inspires people to join and delivers bottom line results.

In particular, we wanted to deliver a range of products and a level of service to satisfy the millennials market.

We knew that it isn't just what your club looks like or how good the equipment is that matters, the club has

to be viable. It needs to deliver results. That's the only way a club can go on investing in superior-grade equipment and exceptional facilities.

From very early on, feedback from our clients has been very encouraging.

For example, on Facebook and other platforms, people post their views on how good the workout and experience is at TRIB3. And an objective level of the success of the club is its Net Promoter Score, which is over 68. That seems to put us in line with the likes of Apple."

**SUPPLIER: EGYM OPERATOR: INVERCLYDE LEISURE**

**KIERON VANGO  
Chief executive**

"In January 2018, as part of a diversification strategy, Inverclyde Leisure opened a dedicated women-only facility at the Waterfront Leisure Complex in Greenock, Scotland.

Before the development, the space – which is located on a mezzanine floor above the main fitness area – was used predominantly for storage.

It was an under-utilised area of the facility that did not offer members and customers any products or services or provide any revenue opportunity and so our aim was to make it more productive.

The 50 sq m space was transformed, with the installation of a nine station eGym strength circuit core to the offer.

As part of the development, the area was given a dedicated entrance, enabling the centre to market membership independently of the other fitness facilities, creating a new income-generating opportunity, aimed at a very specific population segment.

The eGym circuit is driven by intelligent software, which means that after an initial induction with an instructor, users are able to visit the facility and complete a highly effective, safe workout, under their own steam, without the need for an instructor.

This minimises staffing costs without compromising on the user experience.

We currently have 150 members of our women's fitness facility. Members often use this membership to become more confident and comfortable in visiting the facility at the beginning.

In most cases this has resulted in an upgrade to a more comprehensive membership category and in members trying new products and services." ●

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**FS** COMMERCIAL  
DIVISION

# MATRIX

## The driving force in fitness

Matrix Fitness is the fastest-growing commercial fitness brand in the world and a division of US\$800 million global powerhouse, Johnson Health Tech. We talk to MD Matthew Pengelly

### What is Johnson Health Tech?

Johnson Health Tech is a truly global business which remains loyal to its founding philosophy to promote health, value and sharing, not simply via its products but also by giving back to its communities across the world.

This philosophy began in 1975 when our founder Peter Lo gave back to his childhood home in central Taiwan, establishing a library and a community and learning centre called the Lo garden.

All the Johnson Health Tech subsidiaries give back like this. Here in the



*"It's our corporate philosophy to promote health, value and sharing, not simply via our products, but also by giving back to our communities"*

Matthew Pengelly

UK, we hold regular charity challenges and events and also work in partnership with local schools and colleges to promote healthy lifestyles.

Financially, Johnson Health Tech is a very strong and stable business, owning

all its own manufacturing warehouses in Shanghai, Taiwan and the USA.

Because we own all components from the first phase of product development to quality control through to manufacture, we are able to maintain the highest quality standards, while minimising costs to the customer. This is a particularly strong USP, of which we are very proud.

### How does Matrix innovate?

Three factors make innovation happen at Matrix: corporate culture, our development process and technology.

Corporate culture is important to our employees and is celebrated – in thought and word – in our communications and even on the walls of our buildings.

Our corporate culture is based on sincerity, expertise and initiative and is embedded in everything we do.

Our development process thrives on continuous improvement and is based on the results of research and data gathered.

The process begins with our customers and we look to club owners, PTs, users and technicians to identify un-met needs.

From that point, we set out to improve our existing products and also to develop new ones. Our innovation involves learning from other sectors such as consumer electronics, technology, automotive, furniture and design.

We draw inspiration from these to transform our ideas into prototypes, at

Matrix products are specified by operators such as The Gym Group, Snap Fitness and PureGym







**Above: The Matrix S-Force Performance Trainer, leading the way with magnetic resistance**

which point we have a good idea what will work – and what won't!

Technology is an essential tool that helps customers maximise their return on investment. We invest heavily in this area, as the best ideas can only work if the technology behind them is cutting edge.

Recent examples of where our concepts have matched with leading technology solutions are the Workout Tracking Network and the Personal Trainer Portal, which help trainers connect and engage with members.

Our Matrix Connected Solutions assign workouts to members, check their progress and communicate with them via any internet connected device, to increase engagement and enjoyment.

Ultimately this helps gym members to achieve their goals and is a powerful way to improve retention levels.

Aside from individual user experiences, our commercial customers can track individual equipment activity from wherever they are, to optimise their space and maximise equipment lifetime.



## JOHNSON HEALTH TECH

**Matrix is the** commercial division of Johnson Health Tech (JHT), which has 26 wholly-owned subsidiaries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia Pacific and North and South America and over 70 distribution partners.

In terms of scale, worldwide, JHT has over 5,500 employees, 260,000sq m of wholly-owned manufacturing warehouses and over 300 retail stores. Last year, the business generated US\$800 million in revenues.

The UK business was established 10 years ago and currently employs 147 people, with annual turnover in the region of £35 million.

- **"By truly understanding our customers and their members' needs, Matrix has positioned itself as a total solutions partner, offering so much more than fitness equipment alone"**

#### **You've been with Matrix a year – what's changed?**

Over the last 12 months, we've not only streamlined our processes, but also our entire sales team structure – all while increasing our profitability.

The team now consists of sector specialists, dedicated project managers for key accounts such as PureGym, Snap Fitness and The Gym Group and customer experience managers.

Together they ensure sustainable growth and focused, bespoke support throughout each customer journey.

A fresh focus on sector-specific fitness solutions sees Matrix poised for further significant growth.

#### **What's your strategy?**

All the team have expert experience in each of their sectors, enabling us to work with all our customers to really know and deliver exactly what they need.

By truly understanding our customers and their members' needs, Matrix has positioned itself as a total solutions partner, offering so much more than fitness equipment alone.

We pride ourselves on really listening to customers before recommending what they need, rather than what they want. The two things are not always the same!

Part of our restructure involved creating sector-specific teams, each of which has a playbook, with clear goals for the next 12 months across the business.

This, in turn, drives product and brand development, as each sector is analysed in terms of the competition, customer and consumer needs and the identification of 'gaps' ready for new products.

It's early days, but looking at each sector as a discrete area is already showing us brand development opportunities that address specific user needs.

#### **What's next?**

We have some very exciting product launches later this year: anyone who



Founder Peter Lo and family, with current CEO, Jason Lo, second right

#### **MATRIX – THE EARLY DAYS**

**It was all started in 1975** by Peter Lo, his wife Cindy and their business partner, Jean Hung, in Taichung, Taiwan, with a simple foundry, at a time when American companies were needing manufacturing support.

The company was called Johnson Metals, after the famous Xueshan Mountain in Taiwan which is formally pronounced 'Chasen', and the similar-sounding 'Johnson' was taken to appeal to the European and North American markets.

Mr Lo earned his first client, Ivanko, by sending 2,000 handwritten letters to companies in America, offering his manufacturing services. After two decades of aggressive investment and growth, JHT emerged as a premier manufacturer of industry-leading fitness equipment.

**"Mr Lo earned his first client, Ivanko, by sending 2,000 handwritten letters to companies in America, offering his manufacturing services"**

saw us at FIBO and IHRSA will know we launched 32 products there.

Our most recent launch is the S-Force Performance Trainer – a unique product designed for HIIT and functional training. It's proving immensely popular with our sporting partners who trialled it and the health club roll-out is now nicely targeted.

Next up is the launch of our Target Training Cycles range. These cycles are genuinely ground-breaking and unique in the indoor cycling market. The premium CXP bike is the first to allow targeted training with multiple metrics – all of which can be viewed on the LED-lit console at the same time.

The coloured consoles change depending on whether the member is on track to achieve the target they've set – whether that be calories burned, heart

rate, watts or distance. The personalised tracking and measurement are taking indoor cycling to the next level – on the gym floor and in the cycling studio.

Early results indicate that this range will do really well for us and our customers.

As the brand strengthens and develops, we will continue to strive for sustainable growth and streamlined processes.

Our commitment is to always deliver the most innovative products, which are sought after by fitness-lovers, to drive the success of our customers' businesses.

## **MATRIX**

**TEL:** 01782 644900

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**WEB:** [www.matrixfitness.co.uk](http://www.matrixfitness.co.uk)

# MATRIX

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# How can clubs get the most out of virtual?

HCM's **Steph Eaves** gets tips from our panel of experts

It took years for virtual to be accepted by the market, however, things have reached a tipping point recently as operators have been adopting it in earnest, in a bid to get an edge over the competition and reduce costs.

As with all new things, implementation brings expected and unexpected benefits, such as the power to experiment with new classes without financial risk and a straightforward way to connect to the fast-growing home fitness market.

However, there's a balance to be struck between virtual and live classes, to ensure it works for the benefit of all, as our experts explain.

## Wendy Coulson

### LES MILLS

#### How can clubs maximise the potential of virtual?

The average cycle studio stays idle for 83 per cent of the day, meaning up to £120,000 a year in lost revenue.

Adding virtual helps clubs maximise their studio assets and lighten the load during peak periods, by offering more workout options across the day.

We encourage operators to include virtual messaging in their marketing, as our research shows that providing an 'always-on' group exercise timetable is a great way to attract members.

People want to choose when they work out. Six out of ten members surveyed said the number of group exercise classes a gym offers – live and virtual – influences their decision to join.

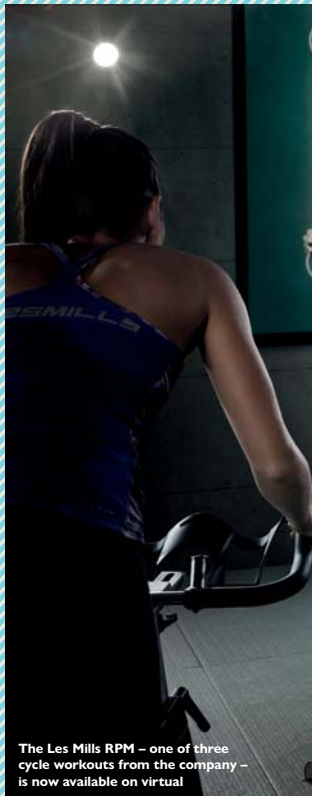
Clubs also need to consider the quality of the content and the technology, as this can be the biggest determinant of success. For example, an immersive class such



as The Trip [the Les Mills experiential cycle class] is made more effective by cinematic-quality screens, innovative lighting and hi-tech sound: for virtual to work, experience is everything.

#### Tell us about the benefits

There's a common misconception that live classes could become a thing of the past, as virtual asserts its place in the gym. However, operators are noticing a positive correlation between virtual and live classes, with virtual helping increase the number of people attending live classes.



The Les Mills RPM – one of three cycle workouts from the company – is now available on virtual

Research shows 75 per cent of virtual fitness users also attend live classes and there's a 12 per cent average increase in live class attendance when clubs timetable both virtual and live workouts.

We suspect this is because virtual is helping people overcome the initial intimidation they feel when they're new in a group exercise class.

Virtual also enables clubs to build a bigger base of regular participants, increasing class sizes, and this has a positive impact on the number of times people work out each week and how long they stay as members.

Research by ukactive shows members who attend three or more Les Mills classes a week maintain membership nine months longer than non-attendees.

"There's a 12 per cent increase in live class attendance when clubs timetable both virtual and live workouts"



### How can clubs ensure that virtual classes are safe?

We've been filming our classes for decades to educate instructors on how to deliver a great, safe class, so filming these experiences for virtual isn't a leap into the unknown and we use bespoke camera angles to film for virtual to demonstrate the moves more clearly.

We've also adjusted the editing so we give participants more time to change their equipment and get their set-up right.

Our virtual class presenters also make an extra effort to engage the audience in virtual, so they feel more connected.

The product design of Les Mills classes – both live and virtual – uses a coaching model with three layers. Layer 1 is designed to establish technique and

motivation. Layer 2 starts more slowly, but the exercises gradually build in intensity or complexity. This ensures people are warmed up and not jumping into something too complex too quickly. Finally, Layer 3 is about dialling things up. Now the user has nailed the exercises, they can increase the intensity.

The classes are designed to help people ease into the programme.

### Any other tips?

Clubs should measure attendance. Many don't and it makes it difficult to measure value. We know group exercisers attend more frequently and are 26 per cent less likely to cancel than gym-only members.

Virtual can help operators reach beyond the four walls of the gym and

be a more consistent touchpoint in their members' lives through at-home platforms like Les Mills On-Demand.

Clubs know members are going to try online videos at home, so they might as well support them with a high-quality offering that complements the in-club experience and generates revenue.

It's also a retention tool for keeping members in the exercise habit and can serve as a funnel, drawing members to the club who've formed a love of fitness online.

Today's consumer expects to be able to access anything, anytime, anywhere and clubs need to be able to cater for this.

### About Les Mills Virtual

*Les Mills classes are now available in virtual, and work alongside live classes.* ▶





Tracking attendance enables operators to fine-tune schedules and improve service

## Paul Bowman

### WEXER

#### How can clubs maximise virtual?

Invest in the best installation – the quality of the virtual environment has a significant impact on member enjoyment.

The most effective virtual installations are in studios with no natural light, allowing every aspect of the experience to be controlled, from lighting and sound to screen quality and even scenting.

In our research, 48.9 per cent of members felt their virtual fitness experience would be improved if the whole studio experience were better.

It's also important to invest in technology that's robust, reliable and that you can trust to deliver classes around-the-clock to avoid members turning up to find their class has been cancelled due to technical issues. Such scenarios have a negative impact on member satisfaction – worse than not offering classes.

Make sure you market the new studio to members. It sounds obvious, but our research found 67 per cent of members weren't using their club's virtual studio, due to a simple lack of awareness.

Then get staff buy-in – your studio needs to be the thing everyone's talking about, and what better way to get members enthused than mobilising staff?



“Research carried out by Wexer and Zumba found introducing virtual boosts live class attendance by 12 per cent”

Build a team of passionate virtual advocates who can create a buzz around your new studio, then watch as they kindle that same passion in your members.

Track attendances, so you can identify top performers and class slots where refinements will improve the experience.

Research carried out by Wexer and Zumba found introducing virtual boosts live class attendance by 12 per cent.

#### What are the benefits?

Wexer research from 2016 found 21 per cent of virtual users had been a member of their gym for more than a year, compared with only 15 per cent of non-virtual users. It also found 52.2 per cent of virtual users visited the gym at least three times a week.

Forty per cent named virtual as a factor in their decision to join a club.

The main focus of virtual is to encourage people to attend live classes – it's a route in for those who are too intimidated to enter a room full of regulars.

There are times when it isn't financially viable to run live classes, but that doesn't mean your studios have to be empty: virtual classes allow clubs to maximise studio yield and offer an around-the-clock schedule of high-quality group exercise.

Virtual enables clubs to make the most of top instructors via live streaming, which means they can broadcast a 'superstar' class to other areas of the club and the estate. They can also be added to the Wxer platform. It's a great way to ensure all members enjoy the very best of the group exercise offering and not just the few who can fit into the studio.

#### About Wexer

Wexer Virtual's On-Demand Player is a touch screen unit that delivers virtual fitness content



Virtual fitness allows members to maintain their workout momentum, even if they can't make it to the club

## Jason Von Bank

### WELLBEATS

#### How can clubs exploit virtual?

Start by integrating virtual into your offerings. For example, personal trainers can use Wellbeats fitness assessments with clients and also supplement one-on-one training with virtual classes that members can do on their own.

Clubs can also use virtual to create communities of like-minded members with similar goals, such as offering virtual spin classes to cyclists in the off-season or yoga classes to members who want to improve their flexibility.

#### What are the benefits?

Virtual classes enable clubs to engage members beyond the facility and deliver a more customised experience.

They also break down barriers for people who are not quite ready for a public workout or who are juggling



“Clubs can use virtual to create communities of like-minded members with similar goals”

caregiving or intensive work schedules that make it difficult to get to a regular class.

More importantly, virtual classes can open up additional revenue streams for clubs and assist both with member retention and long-term engagement.

#### Any other tips?

The consumer demand for virtual fitness is growing fast and clubs need to embrace it and view it as a supplement to live classes rather than competition for their more traditional services.

Clubs that integrate virtual fitness in a variety of ways create membership continuity and strengthen membership acquisition and retention strategies.

#### About Wellbeats

*Wellbeats Virtual Fitness delivers fitness classes, workout plans, and fitness assessments to users anytime, anywhere.*

*Wellbeats' content and technology enable individuals to take control of their health with solutions that fit their lives.*



“By extending virtual to become ‘anywhere fitness’ you can stretch your reach across the region, the country or even the world”

## Brad Weber

### FITCLOUDCONNECT

#### What's the key to success?

To do it now while the opportunity to stand out is strong. Once everyone's doing it, it won't be a differentiator.

Streaming classes to remote users gives you access to new membership income without having to carry the real estate costs. We have clubs with locations on the west coast of the US with members right across the country paying for classes.

The technology exists to charge appropriate taxes, do the tax reporting and take multi-currency payments.

The third thing to do is to ensure you're going out live to your members.

#### How does it work?

Our offering includes pre-recorded classes and live classes, which are streamed at the exact time they're occurring in the club.

The platform also drives PT revenue and bootcamp training courses.

#### Any other tips?

Use your imagination: offer live broadcasts from experts, create a rock 'n' roll class, a yoga in the park remote broadcast, or send your top trainer on a trip to an exotic location to provide some 'live on location' classes. Have fun with it and challenge your imagination!

#### About FitCloudConnect

*FitCloudConnect is a live streaming app, which enables people to work out remotely from any internet device*

## Garrett Marshall

### FITNESS ON DEMAND

#### How can clubs exploit virtual?

In short, organise a compelling group fitness offer. Our analytics provide business intelligence that enables operators to understand the most popular formats, frequencies and times of day for virtual classes, so the club's virtual strategy can be refined and tailored over time.

The speed at which you get engagement in your virtual programme upon implementation has a proportionate effect on long-term usage. So a thorough communications strategy is paramount at launch.

#### What impact can clubs expect?

We're currently involved in the first independent research study on virtual in a big box club setting.

The study is taking place in an established club with 13,000 members and a significant live programme.

Early findings show that overall group exercise attendance increased by 39.5



“One in every three club visits for group fitness are for virtual classes”

per cent in March 2018 year on year. In addition, one in every three club visits for group fitness are for virtual classes and six per cent of club visits in March 2018 (a total of 60,000 visits) were for virtual.

#### About Fitness on Demand

*The Fitness On Demand platform delivers fitness media and programming through a variety of channels.*

## Jonny Queen

### FITBOX

#### How should clubs use virtual?

Until operators schedule a class at a certain time, they don't know if there'll be a demand for it – virtual gives them the freedom to experiment with their schedule without financial risk.

Our system enables clubs to publish timetables by way of a simple web link, to ensure members and new customers are kept up to date with these changes.



“Virtual gives the freedom to experiment without financial risk”

Virtual is also a great tool for driving members towards the live group timetable.

Clubs in commuter belts experience demand for classes before work and with virtual they have a product to offer at a time when it's not easy to get instructors.

Operators also need to be aware of the ROI they'll get if they offer studio space with virtual content to corporates and community groups.

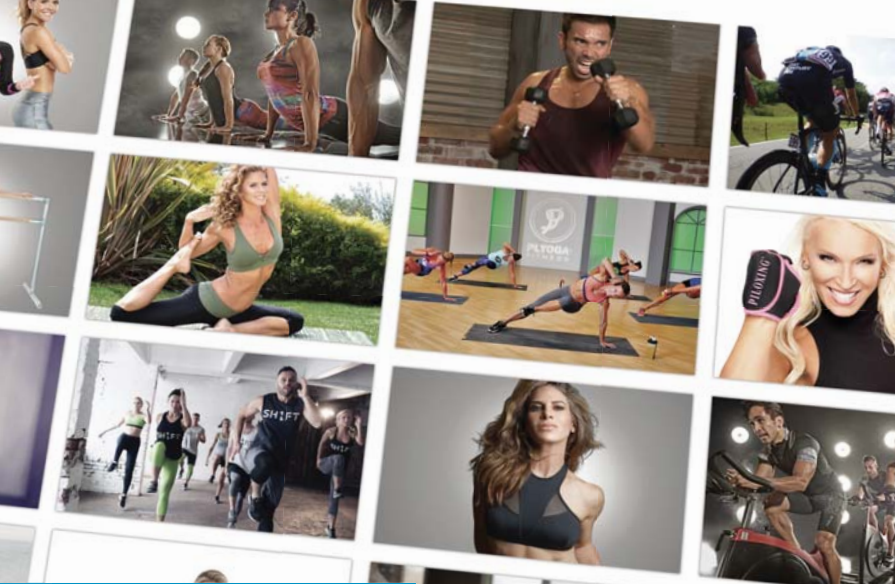
The benefits of increased productivity gained from mid-week employee stress reduction are well-documented, with relaxation and yoga classes being offered as employee benefits.

#### What are the benefits?

New workouts are quickly available on virtual, so gyms can be very responsive to trends. It also saves money, because gym instructors can be costly.

Virtual brings in different types of customer, only a percentage of whom would be reached by live classes, as the new workouts can be designed to appeal to a far wider range of people.

Virtual has given gyms the opportunity to take best practice from sectors such as retail and to create a different ambience. Starkly-lit, mirror-clad studios for the elite have been replaced by enveloping spaces that provide a positive workout experience. ●



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# LISBON CALLING



**The IHRSA European Congress, which takes place next month in Lisbon, Portugal, is a must-attend, must-experience event for industry leaders doing business in Europe, says IHRSA's Kristen Walsh**

**A**uthorities and thought-leaders from inside and outside the industry will provide stimulating and instructive commentary on best practices, current trends and a wide range of other vital club topics at this year's IHRSA European Congress.

Attendees will network with more than 500 colleagues, from dozens of countries, during focus group discussions, lunches and lively evening receptions. They'll also have the opportunity to tour some of Lisbon's top health clubs.

## MEETING IN LISBOA

The venue for the Congress, which will be held between 15-18 October, is the world-class EPIC SANA Lisboa Hotel.

"Since it began, the IHRSA European Congress has been a huge success, providing participants with a unique chance to promote and develop our industry," observes Mikel Urdangarin Liebaert, the director of Fundacion Estadio Fundazioa, a large multisport complex in Álava, Spain. "It's also a great way to make new friends, reconnect with old treasured acquaintances, and discover new European cities and clubs."

"Making the effort to open your eyes and look beyond your local or national market is the best business investment you can make," suggests Simone Casiraghi, the manager of GCLUB Fitness and Spa in Vimercate, Italy.

This year's keynote addresses will include ones on 'Leading in a Disrupted World' by Lucy Adams, the CEO of Disruptive HR, a London-based consultancy, and a former HR director



**Praça-do-Comércio – this is the second time the city has hosted IHRSA**

## LISBON HIGHLIGHTS

Lisbon is a coastal city renowned as the point of departure, centuries ago, for dozens of historic exploratory voyages to North Africa, India, North America and other parts of the world.

During the Congress, you'd be well advised to explore some of Lisbon's many attractions, among them:

- Rich historical sites – you'll be within walking distance of many of the city's most iconic landmarks, including the Marquês de Pombal and Avenida da Liberdade.
- Breathtaking views – the city's seven hillsides offer impressive views. Ride a tram to the top of the Alfama neighbourhood, or walk to the Amoreiras 360° Panoramic View to survey the city below.
- A mix of modern and classical culture – wind your way through Lisbon's picturesque cobblestone streets and discover its many museums, cafés, and bustling squares.
- Fine and fresh dining – from the freshest seafood in the world, to traditional sweets in a local pasteleria, Lisbon has flavours to please every palate.





IHRSA encourages delegates to enjoy Lisbon



## If you're involved in a decision-making capacity in this industry, the IHRSA European Congress is for you

Joe Moore, president & CEO, IHRSA

for the BBC; 'Change Management: Improving Performance Every Day' with Chris Roebuck, a British economist and the visiting professor of transformational leadership at the Cass Business School in London; and 'The Three Secrets for Personal and Team Excellence' featuring Pedro Vieira, a master trainer at Life Training in Porto, Portugal.

During the event, Jay Ablondi, the executive vice president of global products for IHRSA, and Jeroen van Liempd, the MD for IHRSA Europe, will assess the state of the European industry, providing details from the recently released *2018 IHRSA Global Report*.

### DYNAMIC EUROPE

According to that report, in 2017, the European health club industry consisted of some 59,000 facilities, serving 60 million members, and generated US\$28.8 billion in revenues. "While Sweden has the highest member penetration rate at 21.4 per cent," Ablondi points out, "Germany is the European leader with respect to facility count, with 8,988 clubs. It's followed by Italy with 7,500, and the UK, which has 7,038."

Among the numerous educational sessions scheduled for the Congress are 'Low-Cost Fitness as a Change Agent' with Juan Del Rio Nieto, the CEO of Viva Gym in Spain; 'The Customer Journey and

Membership Lifetime' with Jose Teixeira, the operations director for Solinca Health & Fitness in Portugal; and 'Five Things You Need to Know That Will Change How You Think About Design' with David Barton and Leila Timergaleeva, founder and CEO, respectively, of TMPL Gym, New York City.

The keynote presentations and educational sessions will all be simultaneously interpreted into Portuguese, Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Russian.

Another highlight of the Congress will be the presentation of the 2018 European Club Leadership Award to an IHRSA member who's made a significant contribution to their company and the industry by virtue of their leadership and strong professional performance. Last year, Jon Wright, the founder of Xercise4Less, the UK chain, was honored with the award at the Congress in London.

Applications for this year's award are due to IHRSA by 7 September. Visit [www.ihrsa.org/awards](http://www.ihrsa.org/awards) for details and to download the application.

"We're honoured for the Congress to return to Lisbon, which is one of the oldest cities in Europe with so much history," explains Florian Cartoux, IHRSA's director of Europe.

"For many attendees, it will be the place to rejuvenate before the winter, and hear some of the most compelling industry speakers from both sides of the Atlantic," he adds. "We want build on last year's successful Congress in London and match, if not surpass, the number of 650 attendees from 40 countries."

"If you're involved in a decision-making capacity in this industry – if you're an executive, owner, investor, general or department manager – the IHRSA Congress is for you," concludes Joe Moore, president and CEO. ●

### REGISTRATION DETAILS

*Health Club Management* magazine readers are eligible to receive an early bird discount on conference places until 14 September, by using the promo code HCEC during online registration at [www.ihrsa.org/congress](http://www.ihrsa.org/congress)

The registration fee increases after that date, and the hotel discount ends on 24 September, unless the hotel sells out prior to that date. To take part in the club tours, both pre-registration and an additional fee are required.

# PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness

Wearable X's smart yoga leggings combine fashion and technology, says **Billie Whitehouse**

New York-based lifestyle brand Wearable X has developed an innovative new wearable for yoga enthusiasts that acts as a digital yoga coach.



*"We worked with over 50 yogis across three different continents to understand the importance of alignment in time and space."*

**Billie Whitehouse**

Designed to make yoga easier and more accessible, the Nadi X smart yoga leggings feature woven-in technology, including accelerometers and haptic feedback around the hips, knees and ankles, that connect to an app. The app then uses motion sensors to detect the wearer's position and corrects the pose by vibrating in the areas where the user needs to adjust.

"I was never really any good at yoga and felt intimidated whenever I would explore a new pose," explains Wearable X co-founder and CEO Billie Whitehouse. "We worked with over 50 yogis across three different continents to understand the importance of alignment in time and space."

We're redefining what it means to be a lifestyle brand by combining fashion and tech."

Haptic feedback prompts accurate postures



Ben Moir, co-founder and CTO of Wearable X, says:

"We believe technology should empower the human experience, not overtake it."

"With Nadi X, the sleek design allows technology to seamlessly integrate

with the tights, allowing the beauty and design to take centre stage."

The leggings were funded on Kickstarter and cost US\$250.

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
**WEARABLE X**

Cover Ninja lets operators organise stress-free staff cover, says **Claudia Newland**

A new smartphone app that enables fitness facilities to source cover instructors is currently being developed.

Created by business partners Claudia Newland and Nicola Addison, Cover Ninja is designed to save time and ease stress when arranging staff cover, by connecting operators with a community of qualified fitness instructors.

The app pairs the most appropriate instructor with the venue by using an algorithm, which uses criteria set by the facility to make the



*"The industry has been crying out for a more efficient way of managing group exercise class cover"*

**Claudia Newland**

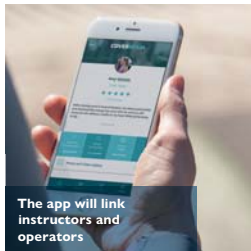
best match. It also ensures that every instructor is qualified and insured.

In addition, it gives freelance instructors a platform they can use to get more work and experience based on their preferences.

Other features include a peer rating system that allows users to share their experiences and reviews.

"The industry has been crying out for a more efficient way of managing group exercise class cover," says co-founder Claudia Newland.

"Staffing is a known, longstanding challenge for instructors and operators alike" she adds.



**The app will link instructors and operators**

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
**COVER NINJA**

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## SEPTEMBER

### 24-27 | SIBEC North America

Omni La Costa Resort & Spa, Carlsbad, CA, USA

Major operators in the health, recreation, sports and fitness organisations meet with executives from national and international supplier companies.

[www.sibeevents.com/northamerica](http://www.sibeevents.com/northamerica)

### 26 | National Fitness Day

UK-wide

This event sees fitness providers across the UK open their doors for free to allow members of the public to try out a wide range of fitness activities.

[www.nationalfitnessday.com](http://www.nationalfitnessday.com)

## OCTOBER

### 6-8 | Global Wellness Summit

Cesena, Italy

The Global Wellness Summit (GWS) is one of the foremost gatherings of international leaders in the US\$3.7 trillion global wellness economy.

The industry is comprised of sectors as varied as spa and hospitality, complementary medicine, workplace wellness, beauty, wellness tourism, healthy eating, nutrition, fitness and mind-body, wellness lifestyle real estate, thermal and mineral springs, and personalised medicine and public health.

[www.globalwellnesssummit.com](http://www.globalwellnesssummit.com)

### 9 | RRR – Retention, Retention, Retention

Oxfordshire Golf and Country Club, UK

GGFit has announced the launch of RRR – a dedicated retention conference focused on providing operators and gym owners with data insight and expert advice to help improve member retention rates.

With a packed programme of speakers and opportunities to share best practice, the event is designed for anybody keen to retain members and positively impact profit margins.

[www.ggfit.com/events/RRR](http://www.ggfit.com/events/RRR)



Retired ballerina Darcey Bussell will open National Fitness Day with a group workout

### 15-18 | Annual IHRSA European Congress

EPIC SANA Lisboa hotel, Lisbon, Portugal

IHRSA's annual European Congress creates networking opportunities for operators from across Europe, with more than 500 industry professionals in attendance.

Seminars are designed to help visitors improve their operation and grow their business, and there is the opportunity to meet one-on-one with leading suppliers of fitness equipment and services.

[www.ihrsa.org/congress](http://www.ihrsa.org/congress)

### 24-26 | Club Industry Show

Hilton Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA

This conference and trade show is designed to connect and educate the fitness community.

The programme aims to inspire personal growth and provide insight into the future of the industry.

[www.clubindustryshow.com](http://www.clubindustryshow.com)

## CHARITY CHALLENGE

### 1 October

#### The Virtual Frontline Walk

Anywhere, UK

Commemorate the Centenary of WW1 at your own pace. Walk 100km to commemorate those who fought 100 years ago while supporting the soldiers and veterans of today.

Whether you're a beginner and want to get into walking or a keen walker and want some fun competition, you can do the challenge in your own time or race others.

It's a great way to stay fit and active while supporting soldiers, veterans and their families. You'll get rewards when you hit different milestones.

[www.virtualfrontlinewalk.soldierscharity.org/](http://www.virtualfrontlinewalk.soldierscharity.org/)



Walk to raise money for veterans



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