

health club management

JUNE 2013 No 203

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Cyril Patrick Baptist, General Manager, Croydon Park Hotel, Croydon UK



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David Webster, Owner Energie Fitness, Newbury UK

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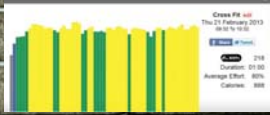
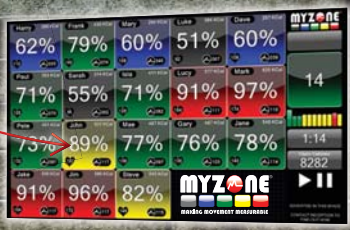
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Is the government losing its appetite for its healthy living agenda? Certainly there was concern among health lobbyists that, at the state opening of parliament last month, the Queen's Speech made no reference to two of the government's previously high-profile proposals: minimum pricing for alcohol, and the requirement for cigarettes to be sold in plain packets. But are there genuine grounds for concern, and does it affect the fitness industry anyway?

It's certainly true that the fitness sector is just one part of a broader, inter-connected wellness industry that encompasses everything from diet to smoking cessation and alcohol awareness. It's easy to become insular, focusing predominantly on our

We must present a united front with our wellness allies to ensure that integrated wellness remains a key focus at a national level

expertise in exercise and nutrition, but the sector must learn to view itself in a broader context if it wants to reach its full potential.

That doesn't only mean creating a holistic wellness offering in our facilities; it means collaborating with other related sectors to drive forward the wellness agenda.

Some of those sectors are already well established. The ban on smoking in public indoor spaces, the increasingly alarming warnings on cigarette packs, the success of drink-driving campaigns over the years, and the calls in alcohol ads to 'drink sensibly' are all proof of the influence of the anti-smoking

and responsible drinking movements, which have successfully aligned the opinions of lobby groups, government, the health sector and the public over recent years.

QOF – the Quality and Outcomes Framework that financially incentivises GPs to make certain referrals or recommendations to their patients – has also included smoking cessation and alcohol awareness schemes for some time now.

And on a nutritional front, the 'Five a Day' campaign – which urges people to consume five pieces of fruit and veg a day – has achieved high levels of public awareness.

All of this indicates a clear momentum behind lifestyle change at a national level, and physical activity – which until now has lagged behind – is beginning to make its own inroads among the various stakeholder groups: initiatives such as Change4Life are encouraging the public to get active, while physical activity was finally introduced to the QOF in April 2013 – albeit only for hypertensive patients at this stage.

But just as we're making headway, questions have arisen over government's commitment to its lifestyle change agenda. It's a little too soon for concern, however, as a week after the Queen's Speech it was announced that NICE will, for the first time, develop quality standards to hold the NHS to account for its public health activity. The first will look at tobacco, harmful use of alcohol – and obesity.

Government is, it seems, finally placing us in the same space as other established wellness industries, but we cannot be complacent; even those sectors are still battling to get their initiatives through. We must invest in far deeper co-operation with our wellness allies, appreciating that we're stronger together, and present a united front to ensure that integrated wellness remains a key focus at a national level.

Kate Cracknell, editor - katecracknell@leisuremedia.com / twitter: @HealthClubKate
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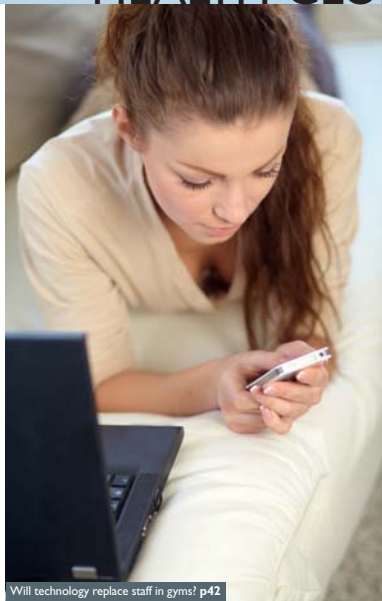
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WELCOME TO HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



Will technology replace staff in gyms? p42



Delivering effective health coaching p54



Building a Paralympic legacy p58

CONTENTS

03 Editor's letter

We must present a united front with our wellness allies to keep the momentum behind integrated wellbeing, says Kate Cracknell

06 Letters

Vibration training can greatly benefit MS sufferers, according to a Borders Sport & Leisure pilot study

08 News round-up

ON-X leisure centre opens, CCMP set to acquire Pure Gym, and Wattbike secures Fitness First deal

16 International news

Finnish chain Hukka Oy unveils a functional studio, and Fresh Fitness opens two more clubs in Denmark

18 People news

Neil King joins Leisure Connection as MD, and Rob Barker is named as the new Precor president

20 IHRSA update

Bill McBride reflects on IHRSA's achievements over the past year, as he passes on the mantle of chair of the board of directors

24 ukactive update

CEO David Stalker reports on a recent focus group examining children's activity and school sport

26 Competitive edge

The Crossing, a three-day mountain bike challenge in Cumbria, takes place on 12–14 July

27 Diary dates

July sees ukactive's FLAME event, including its annual awards

28 Everyone's talking about... Research databases

Should the fitness industry follow the example of the spa sector and launch a central research portal?

30 Interview

Steve Price

The founder and CEO of Mytime Active talks to Kate Cracknell about opportunities in public health, building community partnerships and re-investing profits to change lives

38 A big welcome

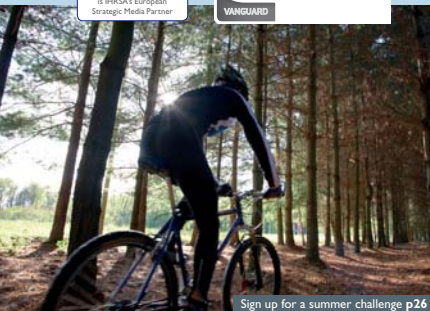
Kath Hudson talks to gym operators specifically targeting plus-sized customers with tailored, non-intimidating packages

42 Man vs machine

As technology gets more and more advanced, will the time come when it actually replaces gym staff? Abigail Harris asks a panel of experts

46 Strong thoughts

Studies in the scientific field of neuroplasticity show that just thinking about exercise can translate into actual, physical benefits



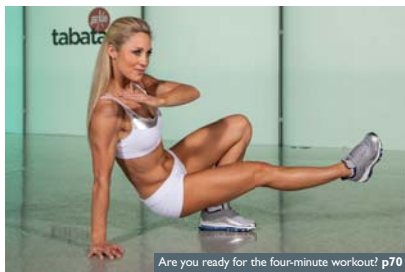
Sign up for a summer challenge p26



New EU laws on nutritional product claims p62



Should we have a central research database? p28



Are you ready for the four-minute workout? p70

READER SERVICES

50 Keep it up

In the second of his three-part series on retention and the member journey, Guy Griffiths looks at the ongoing health club member

54 Asking the right questions

As part of our continuing series on behaviour change, Dr Tim Anstiss offers his advice on the questions, tools and strategies needed to effectively deliver health coaching

58 Expanding horizons

Becca Douglas takes a look at some of the initiatives aiming to deliver a legacy from last year's London Paralympic Games

62 Legislating nutrition

Nutritional supplements are potentially a great revenue stream for clubs, but new European legislation is going to make it harder to promote them

66 A burning ambition

Toxteth Fire Fit Hub in Liverpool is a new, £5.2m, dual-use community facility enabling firefighters to get fit for duty, while also helping to inspire youngsters in an area of social deprivation to be more active. Lauren Applegarth reports

70 High-speed workouts

Kate Cracknell talks to Jane Irving of Big Shot Productions about the fitness industry launch of Tabata – the clinically-proven Japanese workout system that promises results in just four minutes

76 fitness-kit.net special Free weights

A round-up of the latest free weight products for fitness clubs, including new launches from PowerBlock, Les Mills, Jordan Fitness and Physical Company, plus details of some interesting new installations

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For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p78



WRITE TO REPLY

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

Free vibration therapy sessions for MS sufferers

I'm writing regarding your recent article (*HCM* April 13, p71) which mentioned vibration therapy's potential benefits for Multiple Sclerosis sufferers.

My organisation, Borders Sport & Leisure, is a social enterprise responsible for the operation of 14 leisure facilities in the Scottish Borders. As part of our vision to improve lives through physical activity and sport, we've been working with the MS Society Borders over a number of years to trial vibration machines in the management of MS symptoms.

A pilot study we ran in association with the MS Society found that vibration training could improve a range of functions in MS sufferers, including muscular power, strength and mobility. Subsequent analysis using the sports Impact and Social Value Toolkit indicates a potential 4:1 ROI in terms of social value for every £1 invested into vibration technology therapy for MS sufferers.

As a result, we've recently entered into a new agreement with the MS Society in the Borders to provide MS sufferers with free access, for the next three years, to vibration therapy at three of our leisure facilities.

I'd like to urge other operators to consider opportunities to work with charitable organisations in a similar way. Such partnerships can see equipment put to new use and enable MS sufferers to experience



Vibration therapy: MS sufferer
Donna McKay at Teviotdale centre

exercise benefits – and the accompanying social opportunities that attending a gym can bring.

Ewan Jackson
CEO, Borders Sport & Leisure

Full-service fitness serves clients best

I completely agree with Kate Cracknell that group exercise needs TLC to ensure it continues to bring results for providers and their clients (see editor's letter, *HCM* April 13, p3). However, I struggle to see how the new generation of group exercise-only venues will ever be more than a niche market.

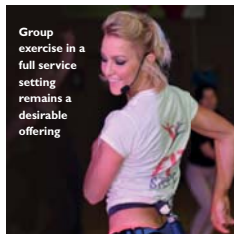
Classes should never be seen as an add-on; they are key and core to leisure centres. We give classes top priority; over 40 per cent of our customers regularly participate in group exercise, and we offer 80–90 classes a week at many sites.

The 'focused fitness' model makes sense to ensure the best-of-the-best is available; multi-purpose operators can learn from the trend towards bespoke exercise by ensuring all aspects of their gyms and group/studio programmes remain innovative in their own right.

However, very few of our members do just one type of exercise, combining gym with classes, swimming with group cycling. As an industry, we advocate a variety of training for all-round fitness, and we should offer that variety in one place to allow people to cross-train effectively and time-efficiently.

The 'future of fitness', I'd suggest, is full-service fitness done well: this will prevail over more niche offerings.

Michelle Bletso
Group exercise development manager,
Everyone Active



Group exercise in a full service setting remains a desirable offering

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Active Nation launches 30-minute fitness sessions

Leisure trust Active Nation has invested £450,000 in refurbishing three of its gyms and installing new Precor CV equipment.

The investment is part of the charity's strategy to launch a new Exercise Experience offer.

The three gyms in Swadlincote, Chorley and Lincoln have been redesigned in a way that helps gym members fit their exercise routine into just 30 minutes per session, using a menu of more than 300 pre-designed exercise programmes.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e3tzf>



The website is an online gym booking service

Leisure Connection signs deal with payasugym.com

Management company Leisure Connection has made its gym and leisure facilities available through online gym booking service payasugym.com.

All sites operated by Leisure Connection across the country have been searchable on the payasugym.com website since mid-March, meaning that consumers can pay for and book single, weekly or monthly usage passes online.

Launched in early 2011, over 1,000 gyms and health clubs are now signed up with the service. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C9Q3K>

Basingstoke Pedal Studio gets £20,000 investment

Basingstoke Sports Trust (BST), which manages Basingstoke Sports Centre at Festival Place, has invested £20,000 into its Pedal Studio.

The investment has resulted in the indoor cycling space now featuring 24 Tomahawk S series bikes, while the interior has also been completely redesigned using UV light-sensitive murals and flashing lights. BST decided to invest in the studio space following an increase in the number of members signing up for cycling classes. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C3So5>

CCMP acquires Pure Gym

UK-based low-cost operator Pure Gym has announced an investment of £50m in new sites following its takeover by US private equity firm CCMP Capital Advisors. The acquisition was completed last month, in partnership with existing management.

Financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed, but a spokesperson for CCMP said the deal will support Pure Gym's aggressive expansion drive across the UK.

Pure Gym currently has 45 locations in the UK, and CCMP will now support a roll-out strategy which will include the opening of an additional 40 new gyms over the next 12 months, including 15 sites in London.

Thomas Walker, MD at CCMP's London affiliate, says: "We're delighted to be partnering with management to accelerate the growth



Pure Gym currently has 45 locations and plans to almost double that

of Pure Gym, an outstanding business with tremendous customer appeal. With Pure Gym's relatively low market penetration and the widespread appeal of a high-quality, low-cost fitness option, we believe there is a significant opportunity to expand Pure Gym aggressively across the UK."

Anytime Fitness expands UK portfolio

Health club operator Anytime Fitness is set to open a new club in the heart of Crawley, West Sussex, this month.

The 3,200sq ft (297sq m) gym, located in Crawley Town centre, will be equipped with Precor equipment and will open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with a security-access key allowing members to enter the club even when it is not staffed.

The club will be operated by entrepreneur James Usher on a franchise model.

Usher says: "There is a great sense of support and community, coupled with the ability to expand in the future with further clubs. The Crawley site is the first of a cluster group of clubs that I'm seeking to open over the next five years."



Globally, a new Anytime Fitness club opens almost every business day

Anytime Fitness is currently ranked number six in *Entrepreneur* magazine's 2013 Franchise 500 list. It opens new clubs globally at a rate of nearly one every business day. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K1F5T>

Hambleton council commits to improving leisure

Hambleton District Council has committed £648,000 in funding to revamp three leisure centres in Stokesley, Bedale and Thirsk.

Improvements will be made to changing rooms, pool plant equipment, outdoor areas and fitness studios.

Councillor for leisure Peter Wilkinson says: "We know our leisure centres are important to our residents and also highly regarded by organisations such as Sport England, but we are constantly seeking to improve the service." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K1F5T>

ON-X leisure centre opens

Linwood's sport and community centre ON-X has officially opened following a £24m investment by Renfrewshire Council.

Designed by Cr8 Architecture and built by BAM Construction, the facility includes an eight-court sports hall, two squash courts, 600sq m gym, four fitness studios and an athletics track. There are also three swimming pools:

a six-lane, 25m competition pool, a teaching pool, and a leisure pool with flumes and lazy river feature. The new centre is part of the council's £40m investment in the local leisure offering.

The gym offers 100 stations, a functional training area and a dedicated indoor cycling studio. Outdoors, a floodlit sports pitch will be available for games of seven- and 11-a-side football, as well as hockey,



ON-X: A new £24m leisure development in Linwood

rounders and touch rugby. In addition to sporting facilities, the ON-X centre also features a centre for adults with learning disabilities, as well as meetings, training and event space.

The opening of ON-X is part of Renfrewshire Council's overall £103m investment in local facilities. The opening of ON-X will ultimately result in three existing leisure facilities being demolished.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=fj7c>

David Lloyd launches Volleybody classes

David Lloyd Leisure has announced it will be the first major UK fitness operator to introduce Volleybody, created by beach volleyball experts in the wake of last year's Olympic Games.

Aimed at people with reasonable levels of fitness, the class takes inspiration from three core moves used during a beach volleyball game: defending, hitting and blocking a ball.

Designed by the British Beach Volleyball strength and conditioning coach Kate Eddy, and team members Zara Dampney and Shauna Mullin, the class is an hour long and is performed to music. It involves participants working in pairs with simple equipment such as medicine balls and resistance tubes.



Shauna Mullin and Zara Dampney helped design the Volleybody workout

Volleybody founder and managing director Katie Taylor says: "We realised there must be a way of taking the top volleyball players' training programme and creating a version for the average woman and Volleybody does that."

Thanet Leisureforce and Vista Leisure merge

Thanet Leisureforce and Vista Leisure have merged to form Your Leisure Kent Limited.

The company will remain a social enterprise with charitable objectives, managing a range of leisure and hospitality services within the Thanet and Dover districts. The two

not-for-profit organisations have worked closely together since 2010, and the merger will improve the sustainability of leisure provision in East Kent, as well as extending the range of services and facilities available for customers.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=A2G3n>

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£2m investment for Canterbury

Canterbury Academy will be receiving a £2m fitness centre after striking a deal with Swedish businessman Carl Gripenstedt. Gripenstedt, who is a director at Competition Line, will give the academy the funding to create a 836sq m (9,000sq ft) fitness area that will offer over 140 resistance and cardiovascular machines.

As part of the overhaul, an additional floor will be added to the existing building to make space for a new dance studio, group cycling studio and ladies-only gym. 3G surfaces have been laid on two new five-a-side pitches and the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) has seen similar improvements. In addition, a new coffee shop is planned at the site and additional car parking spaces are also being created.

The gym will offer low-cost memberships to the public: £15.99 per month.



The investment will result in a 140-station fitness area

"We've negotiated a deal which will bring significant capital investment, improved facilities and sporting opportunities to the area," says academy executive Phil Karnavas.

£17.9m Splashpoint leisure centre opens

The new £17.9m Splashpoint leisure complex has opened to the public in Worthing, West Sussex. Designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects, the centre has replaced the former Aquarena venue.

The scheme was project managed by Deloitte Real Estate on behalf of Worthing Borough Council following a RIBA design competition in 2009. Facilities include a six-lane, 25m competition pool and a learner/diving pool, an indoor leisure pool with flume and play facilities, an outdoor paddling pool, a 100-station health and fitness centre and two multi-use studios. There is also a spa and wellness area with steamroom, heat beds, sauna and treatment rooms.



The design of the centre includes a sloping copper roof

Splashpoint has a BREEAM rating of Very Good and design features include a sloping copper roof, intended to weather with the environment and complement the natural surroundings. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D5wz1>

Obese young men suffer health issues as they age

Young men who are obese in their early 20s are significantly more likely to develop serious health problems by the time they reach middle age, according to new research.

The authors tracked the health of 6,500 22-year-old men, all born in 1955, up to the age of 55. The research found obese participants were eight times as likely as their normal weight peers to get diabetes, four times as likely to suffer potentially fatal blood clots, and twice as likely to have a heart attack. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w7jog>



The indoor pool at the new Dublin leisure centre

Dublin leisure centre gets improved disability access

An €8m swimming pool and leisure centre has opened in Loughlinstown, Dublin, with facilities designed to meet the needs of users with disabilities.

The revamped facility includes three new artificial pitches, a reception area, changing village and children's play area and improved parking facilities. It has also been repainted and revamped throughout. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N9wsg>



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Fitness Hub relocates

An independently-owned fitness club in Somerset, voted the best health club in its region at the 2012 Members' Choice Health Club Awards, has taken advantage of a £100,000 investment to relocate its gym to larger facilities.

The Fitness Hub Gym in Portishead has moved less than a mile down the road to a converted warehouse, which has been transformed into a brand new fitness facility.

The personal investment came from the gym owners, former world champion kick boxer Andy Cleaves and his wife Claire.

The new facilities include a women-only gym area, a spacious main studio, group cycling studio, cardio, power and resistance zones, plus changing rooms and showers.



The club has benefited from a £100,000 investment

A new rope and functional fitness rig has also been installed and there is an extensive timetable of classes, including regular boot camp sessions. A variety of sessions is on offer seven days a week: four sessions out of the 31 available are included as part of the membership. The Fitness Hub also sponsors several local athletes and raised more than £20,000 for local charities in 2012.

Cambridge club introduces CrossFit

Functional Fitness specialist Jordan Fitness has helped bring CrossFit strength and conditioning programmes to Cambridge, at a new independently-owned club, CrossFit Stags and Does.

Run by personal trainers Duncan Boltz and Dino Sperling, CrossFit Stags and Does is the first CrossFit gym in Cambridge, with 1,200sq ft of space dedicated to high-intensity workouts using functional fitness techniques including Olympic lifting.

The gym currently has a community of more than 60 members. The ethos of the club is to push its members hard to achieve individual fitness goals. Jordan Fitness was chosen by CrossFit Stags and Does to supply oversized medicine balls, slam balls, battling



The CrossFit Stags and Does team at the Cambridge club

ropes, powerbands and kettlebells to the club. Co-owner Duncan Boltz says: "I'm a long-time user of Jordan Fitness equipment for functional training.

"We always get new people wanting to use the battling ropes in particular. The workout they offer sets us apart from other facilities".

Pulse 8 invests in Total Gym's GRAVITY kit

Pulse 8 Health and Fitness Club in Wokingham, Berkshire, has installed eight Total Gym GTS units to offer GRAVITY small group and team training at the site.

The club is owned by entrepreneur John Barley, who also owns the adjacent, award-winning Nirvana Spa facility.

The equipment is situated on the club's mezzanine level, and has been added as part of a club-wide revamp. Pulse 8 now offers two GRAVITY small group exercise classes: GRAVITY Tone and GRAVITY HIIT. GRAVITY Tone is a low impact class, while HIIT is a high-intensity interval training programme.

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SUPPLIER & TRAINING NEWS

Agassi's BILT concept enters UK

Eight-time Grand Slam tennis champion Andre Agassi has teamed up with fitness trainer Gil Reyes to launch a new high-intensity weight training machine, which is now coming to the UK and Irish markets.

Co-developed by the pair, the BILT by Agassi & Reyes equipment will be available throughout the UK and Ireland through Concept Fitness International (CFI), which has secured an exclusive distribution deal.

The centerpiece of the new range, the Change of Direction (COD) Machine, received the prestigious 2013 FIBO Innovation Award for its design and safety.

The ergo-efficiency of the moving parts of the COD allows for a safe squat movement, as well as an intense, lateral exercise series, including side shuffles, lunges and single leg squats. The construction of the machine



Former tennis great Andre Agassi signing the deal with the CFI team

provides for a safe, direct line of movement, which protects the spine and back muscles and conforms to the natural angles of the body.

The BILT by Agassi & Reyes line consists of 12 machines, which are all modelled on the exact equipment Agassi used to train during his championship tennis career. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=jsl5n>

Wattbike secures Fitness First deal



The installations will be completed in phases, the first of which will cover 10 Fitness First clubs across the UK

Wattbike has secured a deal to supply its indoor cycle trainer across the Fitness First club portfolio. With an initial installation at 10 clubs across London, Bangor and Poole, the British Cycling-endorsed Wattbike continues its run of recent deals with large chains.

Wattbike will help to enhance Fitness First's PT offering, enabling staff to deliver scientifically accurate fitness testing to members - designed to increase both motivation and member retention levels.

Wattbike's fitness testing protocols will also assist Fitness First PTs in delivering bespoke training programmes to members.

Lee Matthews, UK head of fitness at Fitness First, says: "A focus of the investment at Fitness First, designed to bring a more interactive experience to our members, has been the installation of the most innovative indoor bike into 10 of our clubs.

"Our members and personal trainers now benefit from access to the same scientifically accurate performance data as British Cycling's World and Olympic Champions.

"Using Wattbike as a fitness testing tool, we look forward to helping our members track their fitness gains and reach their personal goals."



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UBM

Holohan teams up with Anytime Fitness in Ireland

Anytime Fitness has signed an exclusive area development agreement with Gar Holohan to develop a chain of clubs in Ireland over the next three years. The first club will open in September in Dun Laoghaire.

Holohan – who in conjunction with Diane Vesey, now European director for Anytime Fitness, set up Ireland's largest sport and leisure management company, Aura – believes there is a gap in the market for a good quality, convenient value proposition in Irish cities.

"Ireland is following the European trend of low-cost budget clubs, and a gap is opening in the market for people who don't want to queue for machines on the one hand or pay €85 per month on the other," says Holohan.

"Diane and I had both looked at introducing Anytime Fitness into Ireland in 2009, but the property prices were still at Celtic Tiger rates. Now opportunities are opening up in good locations and we would hope to develop the first five clubs over the next 12 months."

Aura will still continue to expand and is currently in negotiations with several local authorities to take over a number of existing facilities that are struggling in the current economic climate, particularly following the introduction of VAT for local authority leisure centres.

Vivafit unveils new compact studio concept

Women-only franchise operator Vivafit has launched a new, compact version of its express exercise concept: a studio-based version where every session consists of a group fitness class.

All classes are booked online and taught in Vivafit's traditional express format of 30–45 minutes. There are three versions of circuit training – basic circuit, abdominals circuit, functional circuit – as well as the high energy Body Vive and Sh'bam dancing classes. Mind-body classes – pilates and Body Balance – are also available.

The new studio version is already in operation in two sites in India.

DiR organises inaugural Diagonal 10K

Barcelona-based health club chain DiR last month organised a 10km race – the first race ever to take place along Diagonal, the road that cuts through the heart of the city.

Functional studio for Hukka Oy

Finnish operator Hukka Oy has recently completed a project to create a functional training offering at its club.

Located near Oulu in northern Finland, Hukka Oy is one of the largest privately owned indoor exercise facilities in the country,



The club has brand new functional flooring and kit

measuring over 4,260sq m. A family company with almost 40 years in operation, Hukka Oy has over 4,000 members making over 320,000 visits a year. It aims to enhance the quality of life for Oulu residents by offering high quality exercise facilities and services for members of different ages and fitness levels.

Jordan Fitness – through Finnish distributor Slingshot – has supplied Easy Lock functional performance flooring for the club, complete with the Hukka Oy branding. It has also equipped the club with a large array of functional fitness training kit including medicine balls, plyometric platforms, training ropes, Powerbags, V hurdles and rollers.

The club now offers three separate gyms, including the new functional training studio and a gym for women only. Its timetable features more than 100 weekly group fitness classes, with tennis, squash, badminton and table tennis facilities also available. Members can also relax in an infra-red or Finnish sauna, or take part in personal training and small group training sessions.

New training facility for NZ Warriors

The Vodafone New Zealand Warriors rugby league team has unveiled its new-look high performance training centre at Mount Smart Stadium, in Auckland.

The new 800sq m facility features specially designed functional strength training equipment from Hammer Strength, including power racks, Olympic platforms and plate-loaded machines. There's also a range of CV equipment, including Concept2 rowers, and a wrestling area. The gym also incorporates an altitude training chamber which can accommodate up to 20 players, plus coaching staff, at any one time.



The centre has an altitude training chamber

Evo Fitness combats drug use in clubs

Norwegian operator EVO Fitness has taken a strong stance on the use of drugs in its clubs, launching a tough anti-drug policy mainly targeting steroids and energy-boosting drugs.

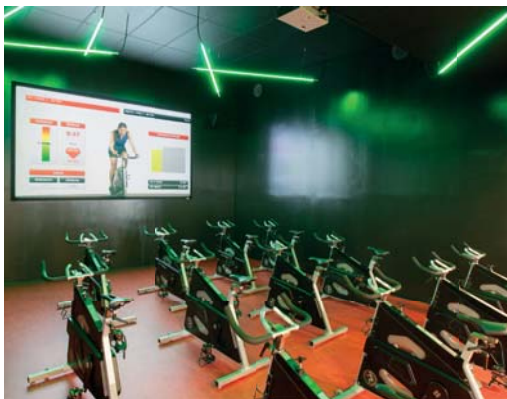
This follows the introduction, in late 2012, of a new national law – Clean Center – which made it illegal to use drugs in fitness centres.

Members undertake not to use doping, accepting this in the terms and conditions when they become a member. All PTs at EVO clubs have also completed a nationally-recognised anti-doping course. PTs and other members are encouraged to report any suspicions of doping, with membership

cancelled for any members who are shown – either through a drugs test, or refusal to take a drugs test – to be using drugs.

"In Norway, almost 5 per cent of all male fitness members are using steroids or other drugs to grow their bodies faster," says EVO Fitness CEO Baard Windingstad. "With the female members, a new trend is the use of fat-burning/energy-boosting drugs. It's a very unhealthy trend for the fitness industry as a whole and most certainly something that EVO does not want to be associated with. I believe we are fighting this harder than any other fitness chain in Norway."

Fresh Fitness: Two new clubs



Fresh Fitness now has 11 clubs in Denmark, all of which offer virtual classes using the Wexer system

Low-cost operator Fresh Fitness Denmark opened two new locations last month.

The clubs opened on 4 May and 18 May in the cities of Aalborg and Odense – Denmark's fourth and third largest cities. They were the second Fresh Fitness sites for both cities, following on from clubs that opened last year.

Both clubs are a standard size for Fresh Fitness, at around 1,250sq m, with monthly membership priced at 149DKK (£16.90). In the gym, Innotech and COP Life Fitness equipment has been supplied by Fitness Engros. Group exercise classes are available, including virtual classes offered via Wexer Virtual. Gantner has supplied the electronic control system, while membership administration uses Exerp software.

"Our ambition is to reach a 20 per cent share of the Danish market, and to do so we need more clubs in the bigger cities," says Rasmus Ingerslev, CEO of Fresh Fitness Denmark. "Our first clubs in both of these cities grew very fast, so it was clear we could continue our roll-out. Judging by the pre-sale at the two new clubs, that seems to have been the right decision."

Fresh Fitness Denmark now has 11 clubs, while Fresh Fitness Norway – led by Paal Hansem – has 15. The latest Norwegian opening took place on 29 April in Tønnesberg, with the first Swedish club also expected to open this year. The fast-growing chain expects to reach approximately 40 clubs in the Nordics by the end of 2013.

GoodLife to open club in Toronto airport

GoodLife Fitness has announced plans for its first ever in-airport location.

The operator, Canada's leading health club chain, is building a club at Toronto Pearson International Airport, set to open this September. The 1,155sq m club will not offer group exercise, but the gym will be equipped with a full range of CV equipment with personal viewing screens, strength training equipment and free weights. There will also be luggage storage, a lounge area with massage chairs, changing rooms with private showers and lockers, and a towel service. Workout apparel will also be available to purchase.

The club will be open to the 30,000 airport staff as well as people travelling through – members of any of GoodLife's 300+ clubs will be able to use the facilities. It will open during airport operating hours: 5am–midnight.

"Working out before or after your flight can have a tremendous impact on how you feel both physically and mentally when you reach your final destination," says David 'Patch' Patchell-Evans, GoodLife founder and CEO. "Our vision is to give every Canadian the opportunity to live a fit and healthy good life. Providing a club at Toronto Pearson is another great way that we can work toward this vision."



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Treharne won the regional award for south-east

Gym Group's Treharne: CEO of the year award

John Treharne, chief executive of The Gym Group, has been named CEO of the Year in the South East by the British Private Equity & Venture Capital Association (BVCA).

The award was one of seven presented as part of the South East final of the BVCA Management Team Awards, produced in partnership with Clearwater Corporate Finance, which celebrates the achievements of companies backed by private equity and venture capital.

The award results in automatic qualification into the national finals. National winners will be announced at a ceremony in London on 4 July 2013.

The Gym Group was founded by Treharne in 2007 and was backed by Bridges Ventures the same year.

- The news came just weeks after the company achieved 15th place in the prestigious *The Sunday Times* 100 Best Small Companies to Work For list.

Total Fitness adds Mellor to board of directors

Total Fitness has named Andy Mellor as finance director, reporting to CEO Richard Millman and joining Brian Davidson and Warwick Ley of RooGreen Ventures LLP on the main board of the group.

Mellor's is the last of the external director appointments to the company as part of the business improvement strategy implemented by Davidson and Ley upon their arrival last December, which was further enhanced by the appointment of Millman as CEO in February. Davidson and Ley will remain close to the business in their roles as non-executive directors.

Mellor brings several years of successful leadership experience within both the finance and commercial functions, specifically in the area of fast-changing multi-site retail operations.

King new MD at Leisure Connection

Management company Leisure Connection has announced that Neil King will be joining the business as its new managing director.

A fitness industry veteran, King currently holds the role of commercial director at Everyone Active and has also worked at Fitness First during his 22-year career. He will take over from Richard Millman.

Julian Nicholls, chair of Leisure Connection, says: "Neil will lead the development of the business and his first-class leisure experience and industry knowledge will enhance Leisure Connection's already strong market position."

"His appointment marks the next important step for us, which is hot on the heels of an £11m recapitalisation of the Leisure Connection business last year."

King adds: "I've been impressed with the progress which I've seen at Leisure Connection in recent months and I'm delighted to be joining the business at such a pivotal moment. Leisure Connection has an impressive team and a wide-ranging



Neil King joins Leisure Connection from SLM

and diverse client portfolio which forms an excellent foundation on which to continue to build the business."

King is also a board member of ukactive, and SkillsActive, and a trustee of the Health & Fitness Foundation.

Life Fitness promotes two senior managers

Life Fitness has made two key changes to its European top team.

The company has appointed Jason Worthy as the new managing director for the group's UK business. Worthy is a fitness industry

veteran, having previously worked with LA Fitness and Fitness First.

He was also head of sales at Technogym until 2007. Worthy initially joined Life Fitness in April 2012 as the general manager for the distributor business in the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region.

Elsewhere Kyle Millroy, operating out of the Life Fitness Benelux office, will now serve as the managing director for the distributor business. Millroy came to Life Fitness in 2011 as senior account manager for distributor business before being promoted to business development manager.

Frank van de Ven, vice president of international business for Life Fitness, says: "Life Fitness has an exceptional talent base that drives us internationally."

"These changes reflect the hard work of both team members and signal a renewed commitment to the growing strength of the industry in both regions and globally."



Worthy will be tasked with leading the UK business

Carl Liebert Leaves 24 Hour Fitness

Carl Liebert, president and CEO of US-based group 24 Hour Fitness, has announced he is leaving the company. The move became effective on 17 May. Liebert had been with 24 Hour Fitness for six years. He is leaving to become president of USAA Capital Corp.

The company has announced that the day-to-day management will be undertaken by a three-strong office of the chair while it searches for a new CEO. The three members in the office are Elizabeth Blair, Jeff Boyer and Patrick Flanagan.

Rob Barker named Precor president

UK industry veteran and current Precor vice president, Rob Barker, has been named as the new Precor president.

Barker joined Precor in 1995 as the UK sales and marketing manager and has developed his experience through several positions.

For the last five years, Barker has served as vice president of EMEA & APAC, and as a member of the global Precor senior management team, where he has helped shape the company's growth strategy.

The news follows the announcement that long-standing Precor president Paul Byrne will retire on 1 September 2013.

Byrne has worked with Precor for 38 years, including 13 as president. During his reign, Precor has grown from a US\$20m manufacturer of home rowing machines in the US to a US\$350m supplier of home and commercial fitness experiences globally.

Barker says: "I'm honoured and excited to be asked by Paul Byrne to become the Precor president upon his retirement. It's been my good fortune to work closely with Paul for



Barker will take over from the retiring Paul Byrne

many years and to see first-hand how Precor has, under his stewardship, innovated entirely new categories of fitness equipment and services like the EFX, AMT and Preva."

Gillingwater and Ashley join sporta team

sporta has expanded its head office team to further support its cultural and leisure trust members.

Cate Gillingwater joins sporta as programme manager, supporting a Sport England Lottery-funded project to deliver a community sports participation programme in England. The aim is to increase the number of individuals aged 14 and upwards who are participating in sport once a week, as well as providing feedback on what does and does not work in the sector.

Gillingwater joins sporta from Age UK, where she worked on the Big Lottery-funded

'Fit as a Fiddle' programme across England. She has also worked for East Riding of Yorkshire Council in a number of roles, mainly managing Sport England and partner-funded programmes targeting inactive populations.

Nathan Ashley has also joined sporta's head office. Ashley will take up the role of policy and projects officer, a new role that will see him working with members, collating evidence of the work they carry out to build social cohesion and tackle inactivity. He will also be involved in lobbying and public policy issues, helping to influence policies and agendas.

Four new appointments for Right Directions

Four new members of staff have started work at Right Directions Management, which assists operators in creating environmental and health and safety management systems, as well as managing Sport England's quality scheme Quest and ukactive's Code of Practice.

The quarter are Sue Popham, Andy Whilde, Sian Wheeler and Kelly Joyce.

Popham and Whilde will take up posts as quality and health and safety managers, while Wheeler will take up a role as a customer service manager. Joyce, who has recently graduated with a sports therapy degree, has joined the Quest team to help with administration of the quality scheme for sport and leisure.

Popham brings 20 years of leisure experience to the role, having worked across the industry for private health club operators, privately managed local authority facilities and local authority and trust-managed centres, latterly for Chase Leisure Centre and Cannock Park Golf Course.

TRX adds Spooner to commercial team

Functional training supplier TRX has appointed Mel Spooner as UK & Ireland commercial manager and strategic accounts lead EMEA. The appointment marks an increase in momentum for TRX within the UK as the brand sets out to deliver a new, bespoke strategic plan for large multi-site customers.

Spooner will be working with all major operators and will also be responsible for driving UK TRX Education and launching the training platform, TRX TEAM TRAINING.



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Reflections on the past year

• Bill McBride • President • Club One

I've had the distinct honour and privilege of serving as the chair of IHRSA's board of directors for the past year. It's been a remarkably rewarding period for me – one during which IHRSA and our industry have clearly made a great deal of progress.

I'm particularly proud of IHRSA for the following reasons:

- Because the association's management, staff and current board of directors perform their duties in an effective, collaborative and transparent manner.
- Because it's fiscally responsible with our money, increasing reserves while investing in programmes, events, research, publications, and public policy to grow and protect the health and fitness industry.
- For the success of its legislative initiatives, both in the US and beyond.
- Because it continues to adopt technology to serve us better. For example: its website www.ihrsa.org, which has been translated internationally; its aggressive tracking of state public policy; and its new, user-friendly mobile app.
- For the continued growth and success of its international events and conferences.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/MI7H

IHRSA has invested in technology projects in the past year, including a new, user-friendly mobile app

- For the rich culture that IHRSA, in concert with all of its constituencies, has created: its long-standing mantra of "success by association".

By working and moving forward together, we are, in fact, stronger. Here's to you, the IHRSA family and the community. Thanks for all of the opportunities you've offered me.

Ask the experts: Corporate wellness – tracking employee participation at the gym

Is there a standard or best practice for corporate clients wanting to track their employees' participation at the fitness centre? Christine Thalwicz, director of communications & research for ACAC Fitness & Wellness Centers in Charlottesville, Virginia, US, offers her insight on this topic:



"It has always been fairly straightforward to create attendance reports from club management software systems. However, as clubs that manage multiple corporate accounts know, each company's reporting needs and wants are different. Some companies like to review monthly attendance benchmarks. Others want to examine records quarterly. Some may require two visits a week while others require two visits fortnightly.

"Human manipulation of all this data to each company's specifications would be extremely tedious and time-consuming. Our solution was to create a computer programme that gathers attendance data in a searchable format, which we make accessible through a secure online portal. Authorised human resource officers can access cumulative attendance data, by date range, for employees with subsidised memberships. Individual corporate members may also access their own data to monitor attendance.

"The ability to input unique start and end dates ensures that the usage reports generated are according to the querying individual's or organisation's parameters. Our corporate clients appreciate the efficiency of this self-service reporting system. They know we are always happy to help should they need assistance, but they like having the data at their fingertips."

Read more answers to this question by visiting the website at www.ihrsa.org/industryleader



Employee fitness attendances can be easily searched on the system



Health Club Management is IHRSA's
European Strategic Media Partner



Over 94,000 people attended this year's FIBO, which took place in its new location of Cologne, Germany

Event schedule: Spring 2013 recap

After IHRSA 2013 in Las Vegas, the spring event season featured the mother of all European events – FIBO – which recorded 94,000 attendees in its new location in Cologne, Germany. I also had the pleasure of attending the following national events:

First AVV Seminar in Istanbul, Turkey, on 27 March. Similar events are planned for other Turkish cities.

Sixth Credi Care Conference on 4–5 April in Oslo, Norway – the country's biggest industry event of the year.

Second Ceska Fitness Komora Annual Conference in Prague, Czech Republic, on 19 April. The newly formed Czech fitness association focused on co-operation between fitness and medical sectors as its main topic.

Benefit Partner Event on 23 April in Warsaw, Poland. Benefit Systems is the leading corporate benefit provider in the country, with 80 per cent of clubs as clients.

DHFO Annual Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 22 May.
FitExpo Posnan in Poland, 24–26 May.

Events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

20 June 2013

Measuring Member Loyalty:
Benchmarking Your Club Using IHRSA
Research (Webinar)

5–7 September 2013

14th Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil
Latin American Conference & Trade
Show – São Paulo, Brazil

17–20 October 2013

13th Annual IHRSA European Congress
– Madrid, Spain

12–15 March 2014

The 2014 IHRSA International
Convention and Trade Show – San
Diego, California, US

Kids on track for a heart attack

Do you know how old your kids' arteries are? It's an important question as scientists increasingly discover links between healthy habits in childhood and risk of heart disease later in life, and growing concerns about the cardiovascular health of overweight children.

A new study, reported in *The Wall Street Journal*, suggests there is a simple way to assess a child's arterial health. The calculation is the ratio of triglycerides to HDL, or good cholesterol – easily determined from a standard cholesterol blood test. In the study, based on nearly 900 children and young adults, researchers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center found that the higher the ratio, the greater the likelihood a child would have stiff and damaged arteries. The good news is that doctors believe health can be restored to young people's arteries with regular activity and a healthy diet.

Rexona Portugal and Clube VII: Driving participation



Members pay for days they don't attend the club

With the aim of promoting exercise, the deodorant brand Rexona and the Portuguese health and fitness Clube VII have joined forces to reward motivated athletes.

Launched in May and with a limited number of entries, the Rexona Clube VII Plan is a plan in which each participant pays only for the days they do not attend the gym. The full implementation of the plan, which means daily visits lasting for at least an hour, will not involve any cost to the participant. However, each day of non-attendance will cost €3, with a maximum monthly cost of €60 per participant.

The Rexona Clube VII Plan, implemented by agency Torke + CC, has a minimum participation of three months. Participation is on a first-come, first served basis.

IHRSA Store's spring sale ends on 30 June

There's never been a better time to build your business library. Until 30 June 2013, save 15 per cent when you spend US\$50 or more at the IHRSA Store sale. Popular items include: *The 2011 IHRSA International Report*, *Profiles of Success*, *The IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report*, and IHRSA 2013 convention recordings. Visit www.ihrsa.org/store and enter the promo code SPRING2013FS for the 15 per cent discount. Questions? Contact store@ihrsa.org

About IHRSA

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

To learn how IHRSA can help your business thrive, visit www.ihrsa.org
Locate a quality IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

A global perspective

Kristen A Walsh highlights some of the key findings in this year's IHRSA Global Report, available to purchase now

Published in May, *The 2013 IHRSA Global Report* is the most up-to-date publication on the global fitness business. The report consists of a comprehensive industry overview, including input from several industry leaders from independent clubs, large club chains, club associations and federations.

The industry research section details the market size and scope of the Americas, Europe and Asia Pacific markets. The company profiles section highlights nearly 300 leading club companies from around the world, including financial and membership information. The final section includes supplier profiles, which provides clubs with useful information about industry-leading products and services.

Altogether, the global health club industry currently generates an estimated US\$75.7bn in annual revenue from more than 150,000 clubs. Roughly 132 million people belong to health clubs worldwide.

The Americas

In the US, the health club industry held steady in 2012, although successful club operators reported improved performance. Industry-wide, revenue reached an estimated US\$21.8bn in 2012.

Comparable to 2011 results, more than 50 million card-carrying members belonged to 30,500 US health clubs in 2012.

The IHRSA Index of 18 health and sport club companies, representing 538 sites, recorded strong performance indicators in 2012 relative to 2011. Overall, revenue grew by 8.1 per cent as total membership dues revenue rose by 6.7 per cent.

In Latin America, the industry is robust, with opportunities for growth. According to *The IHRSA Latin American Report*, health clubs generate an estimated US\$5.5bn in revenue from more than 46,000 health clubs in 15 Latin American markets. Brazil leads in revenue (US\$2.4bn), club count (23,398), and members (7 million). Mexico and Argentina represent the second and third largest markets in the region. Mexico generates an estimated

US\$1.5bn in revenue from more than 7,800 health clubs serving 2.7 million members. Nearly 6 per cent of Argentinians belong to a health club as the market attracts 2.3 million members.

Low penetration rates and increasing health awareness

Roughly 132 million people around the world are health club members

present opportunities for industry growth in Latin America. On average, 1.7 per cent of Latin Americans belong to a health club.

Europe

The economy in Europe continues to challenge markets in Spain, Italy and Portugal. Preliminary estimates show a decline of up to 20 per cent in market size, club count and memberships. Key performance indicators are also estimated to have declined by roughly 10 per cent in Greece and Ireland.

Nonetheless, the health club industry in the UK and Germany has remained stable with growth in select sectors. Total club count and membership increased slightly in the UK as 5,900 clubs attracted 7.6 million members. The UK has seen notable growth in the low-cost segment, as well as strong member loyalty at independent facilities. The total number of members in Germany held strong, as nearly 7.9 million Germans belonged to more than 7,000 health clubs.

Overall, the European health club industry remains the most lucrative region with the greatest number of health clubs. Europe generates roughly US\$32bn in revenue from more than 45,000 clubs. Nearly 41.9 million members belong to health clubs in Europe.

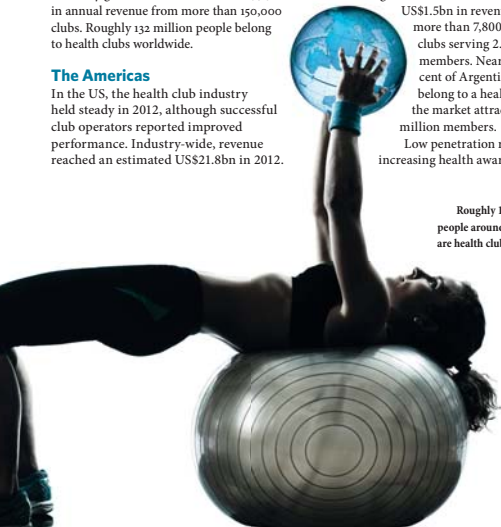
Asia Pacific

The Asia Pacific region serves 17 million members at more than 21,000 health clubs. Asia generates roughly US\$11.5bn in revenue from more than 18,000 clubs and 14.6 million members. With nearly 3,000 businesses, Australia and New Zealand generate US\$2.1bn in revenue from some 2.3 million members.

According to *The Australian Fitness Industry Report*, nearly one out of five Australians (18 per cent) participate in fitness activities. This is expected to exceed 7 million by 2020, as fitness activities represent the second most popular exercise after walking. The Australian fitness industry draws from a range of business models, such as fitness studios, 24-hour facilities, full-service chains and outdoor PT.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The 2013 IHRSA Global Report is available at www.ihrsa.org/2013-ihrsa-global-report for US\$139.95 (US\$69.95 for IHRSA members). Contact the store@ihrsa.org with questions.



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Children's activity agenda



ukactive CEO David Stalker reports on the recent ukactive Vanguard focus group, which brought together key organisations in children's activity and school sport

On 30 April, ukactive held a focus group that brought together delegates from the health, fitness, education and physical activity sector to discuss the various issues surrounding children's activity and school sports.

The aim was to provide an insight into the changing education landscape and review the innovative ways in which commercial brands are engaging with schools. The event was sponsored by Premier Sport, one of the leading school sports coaching providers in the UK, and Danone Nations Cup – the official FIFA Junior World Cup created by global food company Danone.

Physical activity in schools

The group first looked at the role of physical activity in schools. John Hanson, from the Association for Physical Education, summarised the current professional standards, the national curriculum, the latest Ofsted report and recent funding announcements. Sarah Gregory and Stephen Carroll, from ARK Schools, explained the aim and structure of its network of soon-to-be 27 academy schools.

The delivery of physical education was highlighted in an Ofsted report in February, which stated that classes were not strenuous enough and there was not

enough co-ordination between services to help obese children; the report added that a quarter of schools needed to improve their physical activity provision. A month later, an announcement by the Department of Health stated that it would not force schools to spend money on specific sports schemes. However, it has provided ring-fenced sports premium funding for primary schools and is actively encouraging external providers to play a key role in offering their expertise to improve sports provision.

David Batch, CEO of Premier Sport, said: "I'm sympathetic to the challenges faced by school teachers and PE, particularly at primary school level. They are given inadequate training, pressured to deliver excellent academic results and then berated when they aren't providing excellent specialist teaching in an area most aren't comfortable delivering in the first place."

Commercial involvement

The second part of the session looked at how commercial organisations are getting involved in school sports and health policy. Michael Nelson, from the Children's Food Trust, spoke about its evaluation of Danone's Eat Like a Champ nutrition programme. This aims to tackle the growing issue of poor nutrition and

obesity among primary school children aged nine to 10 years through six specially tailored lessons about healthy eating.

Adrian Burt from Vivo Miles presented its digital solution to driving behaviour, rewarding improvement and incentivising increased activity and wellbeing.

This was followed up by an open discussion around the rapidly changing school sports landscape. By facilitating discussions between service providers and school groups, we hope to start linking what's currently on offer in schools with the resources of experts from within the sector, ensuring that children aren't just receiving a guideline allowance of activity, but cultivating skills and knowledge about the benefits of physical activity that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

Gregory said: "It was great to see all sides of the industry working together to achieve change. I really hope effective partnerships can drive lasting impact on the levels of physical activity among school age children."

Long-term change

The focus group ended with a call to develop a working group to look at what children need – in terms of physical education, physical literacy and sport – to further build on the work being carried out in schools and the community.

ukactive urges any organisation with an interest in physical literacy to get involved and share their expertise with schools and the local community. One of our long-term goals is to play an active role in supporting children and young people to establish an active lifestyle as early as possible in life. We work closely with our members, and especially the Vanguard Group, to enable partnerships between a range of leading organisations capable of delivering that long-term change.

For more information about Vanguard membership, please contact Stephen Wilson, director of public affairs and policy: stephenwilson@ukactive.org.uk



A recent Ofsted report found a quarter of schools needed to improve their physical activity provision



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Details: www.ratracecrossing.com

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK/ROBERTO CAUCINO



Cycle through national parks

31 AUGUST 2013

Great London Swim

The Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) provides a helpline for the 40,000 people in the UK who have a spinal cord injury. To help raise money, it is challenging people to join thousands of swimmers in this year's Great London Swim. Set in the heart of the capital's Docklands, the one-mile course takes place in the Royal Victoria Dock and is the equivalent distance of around 63 lengths in a standard 25m pool. It's said to be the largest open water swim event in the south of England, and participants will be in the water for about 40 minutes. Registration is £30 and the fundraising target is £150. Details: www.spinal.co.uk

Event includes trekking and rafting



1-12 FEB 2014

Coast to Coast Rainforest Trek

The 122km route in Costa Rica goes from the Pacific to the warm waters of the Caribbean. It takes in traditional farms, coffee plantations and tropical rainforests that are home to howler monkeys and exotic birds. It also includes a visit to Volcan Irazu, the highest active volcano in the country, and a 30km rafting stage. This is an open charity challenge: registration is £449 and the sponsorship target is £1,450. Details: www.discoveradventure.com

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ukactive's **FLAME** conference will kick off with a golf and spa day on 2 July

JUNE

24-25 Facilities Management (FM) Forum

Venue Heythrop Park, Oxfordshire, UK

Summary

Organised for FM directors and managers involved in the procurement of FM products and services.

Web www.forumevents.co.uk

JULY

2-3 ukactive FLAME Conference

Venue Telford International Centre, Telford, UK

Summary

This annual conference is ukactive's biggest networking and educational event, attended by key decision-makers and senior management from across the sector. It kicks off with a golf and spa day for delegates on 2 July. The Ball of Fire gala dinner, featuring the FLAME Awards, takes place on the evening of 3 July.

Web www.ukactive.com

29-1 August 9th Annual International Conference on Kinesiology & Exercise Sciences

Venue Athens, Greece

Summary

Organised by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER) and the Pan-Hellenic Association of Sport Economists & Managers (PASEM). The annual conference is designed to bring

together scholars and students from a wide range of applied and integrated health sciences.

Web www.atiner.gr

AUGUST

7-11 IDEA World Fitness Convention

Venue Los Angeles, US

Summary

Claimed to be the world's largest, longest-running international fitness convention and featuring diverse educational programming from world-renowned presenters.

Web www.idealife.com/world

SEPTEMBER

3-5 BASES Conference 2013

Venue UCLAN, Preston, UK

Summary

The annual conference of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences, the professional body for sport and exercise sciences in the UK.

Web www.bases.org.uk

5-7 Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show

Venue São Paulo, Brazil

Summary

Latin America's premier health and wellness event, featuring three days of seminars, networking and a trade show.

Web www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil

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Research databases

The spa industry pulled off quite an achievement when it created its research portal – www.spaevidence.com. The site re-badged four selected medical research engines under the spaevidence banner, creating one site that gives access to thousands of clinical studies into 21 of the most common spa and wellness modalities.

This was the first time much of this research was made available to the public. Users can decide on the depth they want to go into, either reading the full research document, or a summary of five research documents per therapy.

When the site was unveiled at the 2011 Global Spa Summit, its creators – Susie Ellis, Dr Kenneth Pelletier, Dr

The spa industry launched a research portal in 2011, making scientific research to support its practices easily accessible. Should the health and fitness industry follow suit?

Daniel Friedland, Dr Marc Cohen and web developer Self Optima – were given a standing ovation. Much of the audience was in tears, as they felt their work had finally been given credence.

So should the fitness sector follow the lead of the spa industry? There's certainly no shortage of research. If we did manage to create a research portal, might this be enough to persuade GPs to prescribe exercise to patients on a wider scale? Could this be the tool

to persuade the sedentary population to take action?

Were such a project to go ahead, there would be several practical issues to address. Pulling it all together would be a lot of work: who would do this and who might fund it – might it be a candidate for

crowd-funding? And who would govern it on an ongoing basis?

If it's an industry project, will the public view it suspiciously – will it only work if the healthcare industry, or government, also has a role in its creation?

And if such a website were set up and proved successful, attracting new interest in fitness among the public, would we be ready with the support people might need to change their lifestyles? We ask the experts....

SHOULD THE FITNESS SECTOR CREATE A RESEARCH DATABASE? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

SUSIE ELLIS

Global Spa and Wellness Summit • Chair

I think the health and fitness industry should definitely follow the lead of the spa industry in creating a portal. We saw a need to communicate all of the evidenced-based research to consumers, the industry, the media and medical professionals. In doing so, we've given credence to the people working in the industry.

There have been many studies done, but finding them was not easy. Although it initially seemed like an insurmountable challenge, once we found the databases and worked out that we could pre-populate the searches on the site, we had overcome all of the major challenges. We selected PubMed because it's readily available, Cochrane because it has a lot of credibility with doctors, TRIP because it's user-friendly and Natural Standard because it had already curated a lot of information. This is the only database we pay an annual fee to use; the rest were happy to get the extra traffic to their sites.

Global Spa and Wellness Summit funded the portal, which cost around US\$50,000 to set up: the figure would have been higher if the doctors hadn't given their time for free. The portal now costs about US\$10,000 a year to run. The way it has been set up means it gets regularly updated, as the databases are updated, so it's simple to govern.☺



DR DANIEL FRIEDLAND

SuperSmartHealth • CEO & president

The health and fitness industry should follow our lead. The main aim of spaevidence.com is to help anchor the spa industry with a scientific foundation. The portal highlights science-based wellness choices and reinforces the efforts already being made by spa professionals to bring wellness to people.

There's more work to be done – making the portal more accessible, for example, and continuing to educate not only practitioners but also health-seekers among the general public to leverage the evidence – but it's a great first step.

Whereas the spa industry has multiple modalities to deal with, the health and fitness industry has a narrower scope. However, there's so much research about exercise that to try and present it all would be almost impossible. The fitness industry would need to frame the key questions that the health-seeker might ask if they wanted to engage in a healthy regime. It would then need to look for the key databases and find a cost-effective way to collate, digest and present the evidence and keep the database updated. I fully advocate the health and fitness sector doing this. It would create transparency, giving wellness empowerment to the health-seeker and a powerful tool set to maintain their optimal health.☺





A fitness research database could become a powerful health tool for users

CHRIS BEEDIE

ukactive Research Institute • Director

“Yes, the health and fitness industry should have a database of research. However, I think on a political and business level this is likely to be a non-starter. Beyond the immediate vast scope of the task from a scientific perspective, the biggest problems are those of who would host it and who would fund it. ukactive would be the obvious host, and the industry the obvious funder. However, the ‘industry’ is a nebulous entity, and there will be plenty of people unwilling to fund the project while being happy to benefit from it.

For a resource of this type to be truly effective, we do not need a portal to existing databases, but rather a regularly updated database of relevant research supported by expert commentaries. There also needs to be a clear distinction between useful and poor quality research.

At the ukactive Research Institute, we’re currently focusing on writing papers that synthesise published research in specific areas (for example, exercise and insulin sensitivity, exercise and lipid profile) – papers that also provide exercise prescription guidelines based on these syntheses. As a result of these processes, we anticipate that a useful research database will develop organically.”



DR LUCY GOUNDRY

Nuffield Health • Medical director, wellbeing

“Creating a resource like this would be a huge step forward. As GPs, we’re trying our best to engage and educate people about the benefits of regular exercise.

However, patients have to take responsibility themselves, so anything we can do to support them is fantastic.

For this to gain the support of the medical industry, it would need to be peer-reviewed medical evidence and be carefully monitored by a clinical expert. Assuming the content was evidence-based, I think both patients and GPs would use it. To gain credibility, either the NHS or a not-for-profit healthcare charity partnership should support the project, rather than a commercial organisation which might appear to have bias.

It isn’t easy to prescribe exercise to people, especially if they have one or more chronic diseases. But the evidence for exercise is compelling. Recent Nuffield Health research with the London School of Economics highlighted the health and financial benefits of exercising, suggesting that if the average person did just 12 minutes’ more exercise a day, they could make substantial reductions in their risk of developing lifestyle-related diseases. If the facts are clearly explained, and in context, people will most likely be more inclined to exercise, especially if there is support available to guide them.”



STEVE PRICE

“I don't want to put Mytime Active up on a pedestal, but I do believe we're very different from other organisations in the sector,” says Steve Price, founder and CEO of the leisure trust. “Our whole ethos and way of doing things sets us apart, and it's something we've carefully nurtured over time.”

The organisation – established in 2004 as Bromley Mytime but rebranded three years ago to reflect its increasingly broad geographical remit – has, in Price's view, several key areas in which it differentiates itself. “Our model is one of a genuine social enterprise,” he explains. “We're community-based. We're evidence-based. We have high levels of partnership working, because we believe the societal issues we're trying to address are too big for one organisation alone to solve. We focus on empowering people to change their lives – those values lie at the very heart of what we do. And we consistently re-invest our profits in the right areas to ensure we deliver on our agenda.”

That ongoing re-investment is a key part of the model, says Price: “Local government was never in a position to do that – it was always a case of boom and bust. New facilities would be built, but further down the line funding wouldn't be there to re-invest and keep venues up-to-scratch. With all the financial pressures on local government, leisure wasn't a priority and it became unsustainable – services were being disproportionately reduced each year.

“Through Mytime Active, we've been able to create a much more sustainable model, re-investing our profits – £16m to date – in continually improving and expanding our services. People get confused about the trust model, saying it's not for profit. That's totally wrong: we may be non-profit distributing, but we absolutely are about generating profit. That profit is the engine that allows us to create initiatives that can change people's lives.

“And that very much fits with our ethos, which is not just about providing

The founder and CEO of Mytime Active talks to Kate Cracknell about opportunities in public health, community partnerships, and re-investing profits to change lives



Price: “We've taken logical next steps, not giant leaps in the dark”

services: it's about opportunities, life chances, and empowering people to take control.”

Investment and expansion

He continues: “In the Mytime Leisure division, our strategy of re-investment has meant improved facilities at our four main leisure centres, including new play centres, gyms, exercise studios, health consultation rooms, changing facilities, 10-pin bowling... We've invested £5m in the Pavilion alone. We wanted to realise the full benefits of the assets we had, already rather than expanding into new territories.

“Through the Mytime Golf division, with its 19 courses, we're also the UK's largest operator of pay-and-play golf. In that division, our re-investment programme has allowed us not only to improve facilities at existing venues but also to acquire new ones.

“Our aim is to reduce the barriers to participation in golf, particularly among young people, so ours are not members' clubs – we're very community-focused. In line with that objective, we've run initiatives such as our golf club amnesty: we invited anyone with an old set of clubs that was gathering dust in their garage to donate them to us. Over 1,000 people handed in their clubs, which we then refurbished. These can now be hired for free by any young people wanting to come along and play golf.

“But a major area of re-investment has been, and continues to be, our Mytime Health division: we've put a strong focus on growing our health services portfolio. That includes our recent acquisition of MEND, the kids' nutrition and physical activity programme that focuses on educating the whole family.

“MEND complements our existing weight management services very well, giving even more choice to local authorities and CCGs, and has great synergy with our existing portfolio and company ethos. It also brings with it a scale that we didn't have in our offering before: extensive research and development, an evidence base of over 55,000 adults and children MEND has helped around the world, 60 existing contracts across the UK, and research partnerships with the likes of Great Ormond Street Hospital and University College London Institute of Child Health. That sort of evidence base is invaluable in demonstrating value for money to health commissioners.

“We're also developing licences for other organisations to operate MEND in the US, Canada and Australia, and will potentially extend this programme to other markets too. We saw the acquisition as an investment in the future of our health business.



“PEOPLE GET CONFUSED ABOUT TRUSTS, SAYING THEY’RE NOT FOR PROFIT. WE’RE NON-PROFIT DISTRIBUTING, BUT ABSOLUTELY ARE ABOUT PROFIT”



(Clockwise from top) Mytime’s MEND kids’ nutrition and physical activity programme educates the whole family, while the trust’s golf division aims to reduce the barriers to participation among young people by offering free club rental

“So our organisation has certainly expanded significantly in recent years, moving beyond leisure into golf and health, with an annual turnover of £40m. But as CEO I’ve done some very simple things: I’ve built on the strengths of the existing people and the strengths of the company, and I believe we’ve taken logical next steps rather than giant leaps in the dark.”

Partnership work

It’s clear, speaking to Price, that it’s the health division that particularly excites him at this stage: “Health is the real

growth sector for us and a key focus going forward. Leisure is a mature market that’s already well covered, while health is an emerging opportunity.”

He continues: “Some of our health programmes are run through our own leisure centres: our HeartSmart programme, for example, for those who’ve had a heart attack or cardiac event, and our long-standing GP referral scheme, into which 56 local GP surgeries now refer. But our model is broader than that. It’s about working with community partners and stakeholders to deliver our services in

the community. While Mytime Leisure is very much centred on the Bromley area, with leisure centres operated on behalf of the local council, Mytime Health operates across the UK.

“We currently have around 60 contracts, from Cambridgeshire to Norfolk and Waveney to several London boroughs. Outside of England, we operate the MEND contracts in Wales and Scotland. And I think, with the reforms that are going on in the NHS at the moment, we’re very well positioned to grow further. It’s about looking at selective opportunities that

► fit our company ethos, values and portfolio of current services, as well as the expertise of our people – we have great skills in the organisation when it comes to community development and partnership working.

"We energise community organisations to engage and we upskill them. In fact, when we talk about re-investing, this is an important part of what we do: investing in people. As an industry, we're very good at investing in physical assets, but nowhere near as good at developing people. You have to take people to places they never thought they would go. You have to lead and inspire them.

"This is very much our approach – upskilling the community itself – and as a result, our offering isn't really about direct service provision. The leisure centres clearly are, but much of our outreach work is about community engagement, identifying partners who are much closer to the community than we are – to the different demographic and ethnic groups we need to reach to address health inequalities – and therefore much better placed to deliver programmes effectively."

Seamless delivery

Mytime's Health Trainer programme is one example of this community partnership approach. The scheme sees individuals recruited from within the community and trained to motivate people to change their behaviour and lifestyles. This includes supporting community members to stop smoking, lose weight or increase levels of physical activity. Health trainers are trained to assist clients on a one-to-one or group basis, assessing their health and lifestyle risks. "Health trainers essentially do health checks – interviewing people, often in GP surgeries," explains Price. "They take the load off the GP."



Mytime Health Trainers help people improve their diet and lifestyle



Mytime is now developing licences for other organisations to operate the MEND nutrition and activity programme in the US, Canada and Australia

"You have to take people to places they never thought they would go – to lead and inspire them"

The initiative has already been rolled out in areas such as Norfolk and Waveney, Portsmouth and Hampshire, the West Midlands, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire NHS commissioned the service in November 2009, with impressive results: Mytime Health now works with 15 GPs across Cambridgeshire, with over 5,500 referrals to the service to date. There's an average weight loss of 2.3kg per participant, physical activity has increased by an average of 69 minutes a week, General Health Scores have increased by an average of 14 per cent – and perhaps most significantly, 82 per cent of patients have achieved their primary goal.

"I think there's a great opportunity for the leisure sector to engage much more in this area," Price adds. "There's a degree of convergence between health and leisure, and roughly it's called wellbeing. I believe there are great opportunities to improve participation in physical activity via health benefit messages. However, it can be hard work and there's a cost associated with it, so there's a question as to whether the fitness industry in general would see merit in this approach."

Mytime Active, however, has very much embraced this opportunity. "There needs to be an integrated approach and I believe we're well placed to offer this," explains Price. "My view is that, at the moment, people get bounced around the NHS: if someone's had a heart attack or cardiac event, the likelihood is they've smoked or continue to smoke, have a poor diet and are overweight, and don't participate in regular physical activity. They therefore need access to a range of different services to address the root causes of their heart problems – dietitians, nutritionists, smoking cessation schemes, physical activity specialists, CVD nurses – but so often these are delivered in silos, through separate clinics.


"If you were to look through the patient's eyes, which is the best place to start, all those services should be offered in one venue. That's what we're trying to do, and that's why it's important to get out into community settings – schools, GP surgeries, village halls, leisure centres – with our programmes. We need to be wherever the people are who need those services.

"Our programmes range from smoking cessation to exercise referral, adult and kids' weight management to the Health ►

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Primetime is a programme for the over-60s



- ▶ Trainer scheme. We've also developed a diabetes programme and are looking at offering something in the area of sexual health, as there's a high demand for this. "The recent changes in the public health structure should also help here: we need to build relationships with the new commissioners, but I believe local authorities are much better placed to integrate leisure with social care, health services and so on. Nevertheless, they still face tough financial decisions, so we always come back to the same issue: evidence and value for money. We need to demonstrate that it would be foolhardy to cut back on the programmes we're running. "We're currently looking at investing a further £100,000 in a bespoke software system that will guide patients through our programmes, providing the evidence we need to demonstrate that they represent excellent value for money."

Cradle to grave

Price continues: "The other very successful initiative we run – and I'm



ArtsTrain engages young people through activities such as song-writing

"Local authorities are well-placed to integrate leisure with social care and health services"

going back into leisure here – is Primetime, which is a programme for the over-60s. We have a team of 24 volunteers, all dressed in lime green so you can't miss them when you walk into our leisure centres, whose role it is to organise activities for our older members. They do lots of social activities – they'd been to the theatre when I last spoke to them, and were going off to do a belly dancing class.

"The volunteers are all older themselves, so the members may even know them personally – at the very least, the word spreads through local friendship groups. That encourages people who might not otherwise come to our centres to give it a go. Again, it's finding the people who are best placed to tap into networks that already exist.

"We run 64 dedicated Primetime sessions a week across eight venues, and in a typical month we'll get around 30,000 visits from people aged over 60."

At the other end of the age spectrum, Mytime's ArtsTrain initiatives target young people: "It's not a traditional

leisure offering – it's more focused on engaging young people through activities like song-writing and music production. It's designed to help young people gain skills and qualifications that will make them more employable."

Strong foundations

"Our over-arching vision is to change people's lives," concludes Price. "I believe the whole ethos of our organisation is structured around delivering that. However, there's no room for complacency, and we'll continue to look selectively at opportunities to reach even further into communities around the UK.

"Looking forward, we will continue to expand our health offering nationally, further grow our golf portfolio, and maximise the value of our existing leisure assets through continual re-investment. So we certainly have strong ambitions as a business. But as I said before, none of this is a case of giant strides in the dark. We're simply building on what we already do well." ●



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QUALITY CHANGING ROOMS

A key to attract and retain new members - make the right choice first time round

Craftsman partners clients to realise their vision to design and implement high quality changing rooms that work for all those people who will use them in the years ahead.

A crucial part of that process is to analyse the customer demographics and their potential storage requirements and then design within the space available.

The key to designing changing rooms that work is:

- Analysing the potential client
- Determining the storage expectations of users
- Evaluating demand at peak times
- Designing in the right combination of lockers, be it: for families, for parent and child, for those on the way to and from work, casual users, and disabled users.

Our consultation with the client includes an analysis of the varying needs within male and female changing rooms – specifically the female changing rooms should take into account:

- A well thought out layout that affords greater privacy
- Private changing cubicles
- Good quality vanity and grooming areas for members
- Good circulation space

Private spaces

The desire for privacy and secluded areas in which to change frequently tops the list of customer demands.

Most of us feel vulnerable in changing rooms; they should be a place where members can feel safe and at ease, in a pleasant environment where they feel comfortable encouraging them to keep on returning.

Too often, we find that entrances to WCs lie adjacent to the showers, which means outdoor footwear mixes with bare feet. Wherever possible, shower areas should lead through to the swimming pool or heat experience area.

John Gibbs and the Craftsman team have more than 20 years' experience in helping their clients achieve the best changing room design by identifying

potential areas that will enhance the users' enjoyment.

Sadly changing rooms are often an afterthought with priority given to: the gymnasium; aerobics studios; heat experiences; swimming pool; sports hall; reception; and refreshment area.

With the remaining space left over designated as changing, regardless of whether it is large enough to accommodate the potential demand.

Very often lockers are then added without any real thought being given to:

- The size and combination of lockers
- Private changing cubicles
- Vanity and grooming areas
- Bench seating
- Circulation space

Value for money

Unlike gym equipment, which is usually replaced after four to seven years, when changing rooms are fitted out, they will be expected to last from between 12 and 20 years.

By getting it right from the start, changing rooms are able to deliver exceptional value for money. If they're wrong, operators and their customers have to live with the consequences for many years.

Changing rooms offer
the best lifetime
value for money



Photos above: ON-X Linwood Sport and Community Centre (left) and Teviotdale Leisure Centre (right)
Photos left: Luxury at Pennyhill Park (left), and lockers tailored to wheelchair user requirements

More operators are talking to their customers about their expectations for facilities. The quality and design of changing rooms is one of the strongest factors emerging.

Changing rooms have to be designed to accommodate the demands of peak periods, which actually only represent 30 per cent of available opening time. If they fail to work at these times, operators risk alienating customers.

So Craftsman is working with more and more operators who are creating a host of innovative ideas to extend peak hours and the flow of users over a longer period, in order to make the changing experience more pleasurable for everyone.

Having spent a lifetime in leisure operation and in providing great

changing rooms, John and the team can claim considerable experience and expertise in the needs of a wide cross-section of users. The requirement of a family differs totally from someone who arrives pre-changed and only wants to store the basics like their mobile phone, car keys and cash.

Instead of asking, "How many lockers do you want?", we view each installation as unique, evaluate its potential clientele and the best possible design emerges. Changing rooms offer arguably the best lifetime value for money.

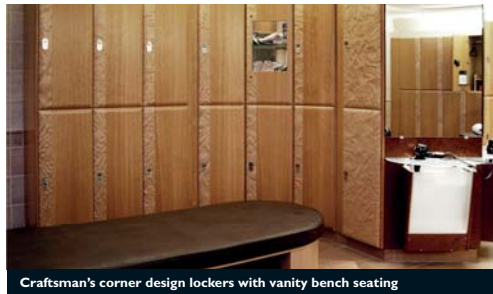
The correct specification will stand the test of time and help you future-proof leisure provision.

Changing rooms are at the heart of every facility and using them provides excellent opportunities to encourage

participation, to retain members and attract new ones. Take advantage of Craftsman's know-how to help you achieve that vision. ●

If you want changing rooms that work, from a company with over 20 years experience, contact John and his team at Craftsman today for:

- A detailed discussion
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Craftsman's corner design lockers with vanity bench seating

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A BIG WELCOME

For some overweight people, going to a gym or exercise class is a daunting prospect. Kath Hudson talks to gym operators specifically targeting plus-size customers with a welcoming, tailored package

In the US and the UK, 60 per cent of people are either overweight or obese. Obesity causes many health issues including some cancers, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stress and depression. Some experts say obesity is responsible for more ill health than smoking.

Although this is a hard market for the fitness industry to reach, we are now seeing concerted efforts

to meet the needs of overweight consumers. "The opening of gyms specific to plus-size people in the US is indicative of a wider change within the sector – a move towards adapting to the needs and demands of consumers and offering increasingly niche fitness facilities and programmes," says CEO of ukactive David Stalker.

He continues: "A cultural shift has begun in the sector towards viewing

people in a holistic way, and looking at the causes of an individual being overweight rather than just treating the consequences. We need to continue to build on this, through further innovation and collaboration, to reach the large percentage of the population who remain inactive."

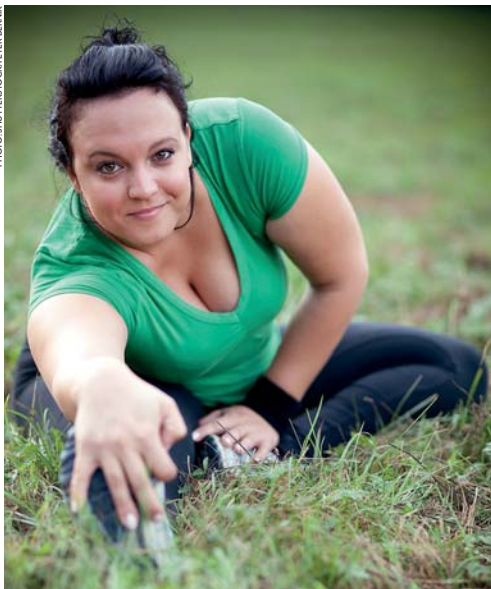
In the UK, we're starting to see a change in the sort of programmes being offered. LA Fitness has partnered with Weight Watchers to link physical activity and nutrition, for example, while Nuffield Health launched a comprehensive nutritional programme in January 2013 covering everything from digestive health, through blood sugar management, to energy and stress consultations. Groups such as Nordic Walking also tie up with local healthcare providers to deliver programmes for the management of obesity and related conditions. Meanwhile Curves and Gymphobics target their marketing at women who want to get more active, but who previously may not have felt comfortable using a gym.

Complementing these efforts, the ukactive Research Institute is currently working with fitness centres across the country to build an evidence base for delivering physical activity counselling to people who may be overweight and suffering from chronic health problems, to help them make positive lifestyle changes. There's also a rise in niche qualifications in areas such as weight management, nutrition and psychology.

Many of the successful plus-size offerings are run by people who have successfully lost weight themselves, and so understand the challenges and the fears that overweight people have about entering gyms and starting to exercise. To cover fitness alone is not enough; most providers also look at nutrition, and give counselling support too.

Here we take a look at a selection of fitness operations that have been designed specifically for overweight customers.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/PETER BERANEK



"MANY OF THE SUCCESSFUL PLUS-SIZE OFFERINGS ARE RUN BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY LOST WEIGHT THEMSELVES"

Niche, plus-size programmes are on the rise

BODY EXCHANGE

CANADA

FOUNDER: LOUISE GREEN

I set up Body Exchange in Vancouver in 2008, as a lifestyle change, after having a baby. Previously I was working as a talent agent in the film industry. It was stressful and involved long hours, and I didn't think it would mix well with motherhood.

While pregnant I gained around 45lbs, but I was still passionate about working in fitness, so I decided to target upper-size people. I did some market research and found there was nothing dedicated to this group of people in Canada. It immediately attracted a lot of media interest, so I realised it was very timely.

No-one is banned, but the language and imagery of our marketing material is targeted at upper-size people. To market the business, we've looked at the lifestyle patterns of our target client and have gone to them, as they won't come to us. I call places like Weight Watchers clubs "watering holes", as here you find larger people who are motivated to change. Doctors also refer people to us.

The programme is bootcamp-style, using equipment like resistance bands, BOSU balls and agility ladders, and is run in community-based locations. Exercise takes place either one-to-one or in classes, which vary in size from five to 25 participants. We don't run sessions



Green has now licensed the concept

in health clubs because our customers wouldn't enter the buildings; they take place in community halls or outdoors. Body Exchange also offers an online, customisable nutrition programme, as well as goal-setting and lifestyle coaching.

We offer a programme based on two or three days a week. To start with, people are fearful they won't keep it

up – people come with a lot of fear and lack of trust in themselves. But the sense of community in the group really builds motivation. Our customers organise hikes and snow-shoeing in the mountains together. For those who buy into our offering, retention is really good.

Some people lose huge amounts of weight and transform their bodies, while others come off their medication and are now no longer pre-diabetic. Others become more fit but don't lose weight, because they can't control their eating – I think we're dealing with a lot of emotional eating. Very often obesity is just a symptom of a deeper problem. Eating is the biggest struggle for most.

I have now licensed the business, so it operates in six different communities in Vancouver, but I want to make Body Exchange a national company through licensing. Alberta, Calgary and Ontario are the first cities I want to target and, as I'm originally from the UK, I'd like to take it there. ▶

Green says her clients prefer to avoid gyms



SQUARE ONE

UNITED STATES

FOUNDER: MARTY WOLFF



Square One sees a high rate of retention

I lived 25 years of my life morbidly obese and learned many bad habits, but I always wanted something else. When I appeared on *The Biggest Loser*, I found my place – as well as meeting my wife.

After leaving the show I 46lbs lighter, I did a lot of public speaking, which culminated in launching Square One in Omaha, US, last year. It's a club of like-minded, larger people. Most are morbidly obese and we use a mixture of exercise, therapy, dieting and mentoring on how to tackle obstacles to help members control their triggers and cravings. Most of them have no clue about the fight they are fighting, or how to defend themselves, so we help them to build strategies.

The programme is based on a mix of research and my own experience. For example, one thing obese people

tend to suffer with is an 'all or nothing' mentality: they think that, if they break the pattern by eating a cookie, they might as well give up that day. I compare this to spending money. If you buy one thing you haven't planned, you don't have to go and empty the bank account.

Many people see incredible results with weight loss, but some people simply can't get past the emotional eating and fail to lose weight. Working out is the easiest habit to grasp, because I can watch them, but I can't watch them when they're at the fridge at home.

But even when people are obese, or morbidly obese, exercising can make a huge difference. Losing 8–10lbs could mean reducing or coming off blood pressure and cholesterol medication.

Recruiting members is one of the things we're still learning how to do. The difficult part is working out how to approach people and we're experimenting with that – targeted advertising on Facebook, for example, for those who have 'liked' *The Biggest Loser* and *Weight Watchers*. When compared to the industry standard, we do a really good job at retaining people. This is because we've created a community of people.

Square One offers packages starting at US\$60 and rising to US\$300 a month. Whether in the gym or in classes, PT or small group training, people always have to work under the guidance of a trainer.

Going forward we plan to franchise, initially in the mid-west of the US.

BUDDHA BODY YOGA

UNITED STATES

FOUNDER: MICHAEL HAYES



Classes are taught in a light-hearted way

I was tired of being the biggest person in my yoga class, so in 1996 I embarked on a Sivananda yoga teacher-training course in Barbados. After this, I developed my own practice and worked privately with another teacher, discovering how to get my body into the yoga postures.

Buddha Body Yoga grew out of this experimentation and is the only yoga offering I know of that caters exclusively for plus-size people. Although with my skills I could teach regular yoga, I find larger people more interesting and challenging to work with. Millions of teachers work with the slender, strong and fit, but only a handful work with big people.

I run seven classes a week at our New York studio and am just negotiating new space so I can expand my class size. Finding clients is not necessarily easy though: word of mouth and media coverage seem to be the best way, but

many plus-size people remain scared to come to classes. I've had people register and not turn up, or arrive five minutes late but then refuse to join the class.

Once people start coming, however, retention is good because I make it fun – it's a community with lots of jokes and playing with postures. It's not serious like many other yoga classes can be.

Some people come because they want to lose weight, some want to be more flexible, some want to experience yoga and others like the feeling of movement. If I can stop someone hobbling, or help

them move and sit more comfortably, I consider that a success.

I'd like to take the concept across the US and around the world with teacher-training. I've set up a certified five-day yoga teacher-training programme for working with big people, which is open to qualified yoga teachers. ●

This feature first appeared in *Leisure Management* 2013 issue 2, p62.



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MAN VS MACHINE

Technology: does it reduce the burden on staff or actually replace people altogether? Does it enhance customer service or create an impersonal environment? Abigail Harris asks a panel of experts for their views on how clubs might balance technology with the human element

Sean Turner

Chief digital officer
Holmes Place Group



With the market becoming more competitive, the strategic use of technology is becoming key to success in our industry and is delivering opportunities for operators in all market segments.

At the budget end, technology supports a low-cost value proposition by allowing clubs to significantly reduce operating costs. Clubs can now be run effectively with a minimal number of staff, with online sales, RFID access, vending machines and virtual classes able to replace traditional teams.

High-end clubs are leveraging technology to add value and enhance the premium experience: emerging technologies allow improved product and service delivery by club teams both inside and outside of the club. Examples include on-demand virtual personal training, hi-tech personalised equipment, biometric analysis and health tracking.

I believe technology will continue to challenge traditional staffing models in our industry. People will be replaced in areas where technology proves to deliver more effectively, but the human element will still remain crucial in premium service roles such as personal training. A blend – human and technology – will emerge to optimise the balance between member experience and business results.

“People will be replaced in areas where technology proves to deliver more effectively, but the human element will still remain crucial in premium service roles”

Rasmus Ingerslev

CEO
Fresh Fitness Denmark



We asked more than 2,000 users of virtual classes if they preferred video-based instruction to a live instructor: 90 per cent said no. So why do they appreciate virtual classes to the extent that it actually influences their buying decision? Their answer is very clear: the flexibility.

This is a good example of how technology offers members an option they did not have before and, in a nutshell, captures what technology has to offer our industry. It can extend our offering, making it even more flexible

and exciting – but it cannot replace human interaction or create the same magic. It can only support it.

I believe we will see an increased use of technology in the fitness industry. Multiple new technologies will become industry standard, serving different purposes across the various price ranges of clubs. High-end will remain high-touch, with lots of human interaction but supported by, for instance, better data-mining to allow even better and more relevant services. Low-cost clubs are already able to replace the least valued services provided by staff with technology – for instance, member check-in and cashless payments.

In that sense, technology is a key driver in allowing a wider span of price and service, but it won't replace staff.

Jon Nasta

COO
Retention Management



Technology will always get the job done and it's more efficient. We check in with technology, bank with technology, book hotels and holidays with technology. These experiences have certainly been improved by technology.

The App Store opened in July 2008 with a choice of just 500 apps; last year, 800,000 apps were available, with 40 billion downloads. Five years ago there were fewer than a dozen technology-driven, low-cost, high volume gyms in the UK; now they're driving the growth in the market. While technology will not impact your members as much as you may think in the next 12 months, it will do so far more than you think in the next five years.

For our industry to continue to grow, we must make our clubs more convenient to access, as well as maximising the gym experience beyond their walls. Technology will help us to do this. However, it will not replace staff – it will simply redefine their roles in delivering better customer experiences.

For example, savvy operators are beginning to use virtual classes, online instruction and webinars. Evidence from these early adopters shows a correlation between members trying virtual classes and then going on to take part in instructor-led classes.

Used correctly, technology can make gyms more social again, with social networks enabling instant updates on performance and so on.



Virtual classes won't replace live classes, but do offer added flexibility

"It may be that, at the beginning, members need more hand-holding by staff; once they feel more comfortable in the gym, technology can step in"

Paul Byrne

President
Precor



Our view is that technology will enhance the exerciser experience, making gym staff and the services they provide more relevant than ever. Operators will see the benefit of members who are more engaged and motivated to work out more frequently.

We're seeing this now with Preva Networked Fitness: exercisers who have signed up for Preva personal accounts and set weekly goals are working out, on average, one day more per week than those who don't. By focusing on realistic goals, monitoring progress and offering rewards for goals reached, Preva is also encouraging even non-exercisers to take

their first steps into physical activity.

That represents a growing audience who will seek out additional services in the gym, from PT to group classes to body fat testing – many of which can also be promoted via networked technology.

This kind of use of technology doesn't infringe on the role of a staff member: it significantly enhances their ability to connect with exercisers and help them reach their goals.

That said, I believe we need to segment our members more effectively. We need a better understanding of their fitness life phases, and the specific needs they have at each life stage, and segment according to these. It may be that, at the beginning, members need more hand-holding by staff; once they feel more comfortable in the gym environment, technology can step in and play an even more significant role in guiding them towards achieving their goals.



Preva has been designed to enhance the member's exercise experience

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Rick Stollmeyer

CEO
MINDBODY



Is technology a threat or a lifesaver? At MINDBODY we see technology as a solution – a medium that takes over the nitty-gritty aspects of running a business and frees up staff so they can do what they're really meant to do: spend time face-to-face with clients.

The question we ask ourselves is 'where do staff really belong?' Should instructors be hovering over paper, taking attendance before class?

Or should they be greeting clients, preparing equipment and welcoming new students while technology tracks attendance with a card swipe?

Should managers be manually calculating payroll for three hours at their desk at the end of the week? Or should they be providing face-to-face feedback to employees as technology prints payroll reports in three seconds? Technology, as we see it, makes businesses more personable – it complements staff rather than replacing them. With mobile management and credit card processing as the next big thing, the chance for improved staff-to-client interaction are exponential.

"It's no secret that people are accessing social networking sites and content via their smartphones like never before. Gyms have a golden opportunity to tap into this"

Simon Withey

VP of business development
Cybex international



We live in exciting times, with technology moving at a breakneck pace. It's changing every aspect of our lives: how we communicate, shop, learn and find our way to our destination.

Technology can help us find our way in fitness too. It helps club owners manage their assets (their equipment, staff and members) and can also help members manage their exercise experience.

But introducing technology just to be techy isn't necessarily a good thing if it's not improving a member's experience or helping club owners manage their businesses. The question is: how much technology is too much technology for your business and your members?

The Manhattan Club in Vienna, Austria, is a great example. It has around 5,000 members with a reported 90 per cent retention rate – and no technology. How do they do it? Simple: they focus on delivering outstanding customer service to their members.

In an industry where trends drive much of the demand, we need to carefully evaluate the options available to us and make sure the impact of any added technology is consistent with the promise of an improved user experience.

Andrea Bianchi

MD
Technogym UK



Technology will never replace the human touch. Social interaction is proven to be of immense benefit to one's emotional and physical health, and one-to-one contact within the gym is absolutely here to stay.

It's no secret that people are accessing social networking sites and content via their smartphones like never before. People want to be connected wherever they are. Gyms have a golden opportunity to tap into this, taking the gym experience beyond its physical boundaries and connecting with existing and potential members in these arenas.

To allow operators to do this, our solutions include interactive consoles like VISIOWEB and UNITY, which provide end users with an entertaining and connected training experience. Used with ready-made business applications such as Technogym's Coach and Challenge Apps, operators and trainers can track members' exercise data and can motivate, inspire and challenge them to achieve their goals. They can also keep in touch with them both inside and outside the gym via the mywellness cloud website and mobile apps.

The correct role of technology is not to replace but to enhance the roles of facility managers and trainers.

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Technology can take
the gym experience
beyond its four walls

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ ANDREI ZANULIUKA

"The question should be how technology can enhance both customer and staff experience. By addressing both, you can impact on client retention and improve staff efficiency"

Tom Withers

Head of sales
Gladstone Health & Leisure



and access control provides customers with choice. When they have a 24/7 opportunity to renew/buy a membership or book a class, this drastically opens up your sales opportunity and allows clients to interact on their terms.

Reducing the burden on staff is another key consideration in the use of technology. By reducing the need to check-in members or answer the phones, staff are free to provide great customer service in-club. They can also use hand-held technology around the club, such as Gladstone's Communicate and Learn2 software, enabling staff to have information at their fingertips.

By embracing technology, you can take your business to the next level in customer service. ●

In short, no, technology will not fully replace staff in gyms. The question should be how technology can enhance both customer and staff experience. By addressing both of these audiences, you can impact on customer retention and improve staff efficiency.

Take one example: allowing customers to interact with you when and how they want within their busy work and private lives. Simply introducing self-service technology in and out of club through the use of mobile, web, kiosks

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RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Strong thoughts

Studies have shown that just thinking about exercise can have physical benefits. We take a closer look

For centuries it's been believed that the brain was a static organ incapable of change. In recent decades, however, it's been discovered that the brain is dynamic and has the ability to change, heal and renew itself.

Growing research in this field – known as neuroplasticity – has shown that thought itself can actually result in physical as well as mental changes; you use the same sensory programmes in the brain when you imagine an action as you do when you perform that activity.

In gym terms, this means that just thinking about a workout can have benefits. While it's obviously not recommended that people stop exercising because of this, there's an argument that more 'thoughtful exercise' has the potential to enhance results.

Power of imagination

A recent study by the University of South Carolina Upstate¹ has shown that, when people focus their mind on a muscle during strength training, they increase the output of that muscle significantly.

The test was carried out on 11 male footballers who performed three sets of bench presses at 50 per cent capacity while electromyographic (EMG) activity was measured in their pectorals, deltoids and triceps. The first set was performed without any instruction, but in the following sets participants were told to focus on the chest and tricep muscles respectively.

In the set where they were asked to focus on the chest muscle, activity in the pectorals rose by 22 per cent, while activity in other muscle groups was unchanged. Similarly, when instructed to



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/INERVA STUDIO

The field of neuroplasticity says thought itself can produce physical changes

think about the triceps, activity in those muscles rose by 26 per cent.

In a fourth bench press set which was performed at 80 per cent capacity, there was no significant change in muscle activity despite verbal instruction, suggesting that thoughtful exercise might not be as effective during high-intensity workouts.

Thought provoking

Meanwhile, an older piece of research from Harvard University² found that thinking about everyday activities as exercise can actually improve fitness.

The four-week study was based on 84 female housekeeping staff working in seven hotels. All of them worked a 32- to 40-hour week cleaning around 15 rooms a day at similar hotels.

The weight, BMI, waist-to-hip ratio and blood pressure was recorded in each participant, who also filled out a questionnaire on whether they thought their work duties were acts of exercise.

Subjects in four hotels (44 people) were told that their daily housekeeping work meant they were meeting the recommendations for an active lifestyle. They were given details about how many calories were used in different activities – 15 minutes of changing linen equated to 40 calories, while 15 minutes cleaning a bathroom used 60 calories, for example.

The remaining 40 participants working in the three other hotels were not given any such information.

After four weeks, subjects in the informed group perceived themselves to be getting more exercise than before. Compared to the control group, their physical health had also significantly improved: their average weight dropped by nearly 2lbs; average BMI decreased from 26.05 to 25.70; and average waist-to-hip ratio fell from 0.834 to 0.826.

The researchers concluded that: "These results support the hypothesis that exercise affects health in part or in whole via the placebo effect." ●

¹Snyder BJ et al. Effect of verbal instruction on muscle activity during the bench press. *Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research*. September 2012

²Crum AJ et al. Mind-Set Matters: Exercise and the Placebo Effect. *Psychological Science*. February 2007



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As members arrive, pass through reception, access the changing rooms, work out in the gym, relax in the spa areas or order food and drink in the café, today's most forward-thinking health clubs should be providing them with an easy, seamless and cashless way of enjoying their leisure experience.

With GANTNER Technologies' range of access and SMART systems, all information and functionality required by both club and member can be stored on a single, convenient data carrier and relayed to a central database. Far more sophisticated and durable than a simple magnetic strip card, all GANTNER systems use the latest RFID (radio frequency identification) technology to hold and convey information. Members simply use a card, wristband or key tag to access all systems within the club – from check-in, to the lockers, sunbeds, vending machines and any point of sale terminal within the facility.

Although there are three product choices, GANTNER's UK business development manager, Alexander Egele,

says the RFID wristband is rapidly becoming the choice of many leading health clubs because of its ease of use, durability of material, and the fact that it is comfortable to wear. The use of RFID technology means that the SMART cards or bands cannot be copied by any unauthorised individuals, last up to 10 times longer than magnetic cards, offer high reliability and are resistant against conditions such as heat, cold or damp.

Another great benefit for the club is that these SMART devices come in various shapes, designs, colours and materials. A club's logo and branding can also be incorporated in GANTNER's screen designs.

While aesthetics are an important consideration, it is the reliability and functionality that makes the GANTNER system stand out from the crowd. All its products and systems come with the benefit and backing of 30 years of research and development at its headquarters in Austria. In the leisure domain in particular, GANTNER is the technological leader for electronic administration systems in many of the

large European health club chains, as well as leading leisure resorts, spas, thermal baths, ski centres and golf clubs.

Safe and secure

It is often acknowledged that some members, regardless of the wide range of facilities on offer or the price, will decide to join a health club based on the quality and convenience of its changing rooms. Apart from attractive changing room design, health clubs should also be able to offer a locker system that is highly secure (perhaps even more important in very large resorts, or in 24-hour gyms where staff presence may be limited) as well as being easy to use.

GANTNER's patented electronic locking system offers advantages to members and clubs alike, dispensing with the need for cumbersome mechanical locks that can jam and require the inconvenience of an individual key, money, or code to remember. Members simply swipe their smart band to open, and if they forget their locker number, they can access an information terminal which will remind them. And thanks to the immediate alarm in the event of a burglary attempt, they can be assured that valuable possessions are safe.

For the health club, GANTNER offers its locker system either on a wired network or battery operated, and both can be easily integrated into almost any type of changing room locker. The system can also identify which lockers are free, and offer alarm-monitored burglary protection, a night opening function (for cleaning or security) and



◀ GANTNER's secure locker systems offer ease of operation and peace of mind for clubs and members

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KEEP IT UP

The member journey should last the full length of the membership – and, if possible, beyond. In the second of his three-part series on retention and the member journey, Guy Griffiths looks at the ongoing member

You've managed to lead as many members as possible through the new member journey, and they've hopefully developed the habit of coming to the club regularly. However, they haven't completed the full member journey – far from it. In fact, your job is to try and prevent them from completing the journey, keeping them on the path to lifetime membership.

Some members will inevitably drop through the net, and we'll look at absent and ex-members next time around. But at the heart of the problem for many clubs is the fact that the member journey or service plan is often so focused on new members that it falls apart a couple of months after they join: a member only has to turn down a review appointment and they can drop off the radar, never to be spoken to again.

Many incidents will get in the member's way on their journey, but if you can identify these, you have the opportunity to take action and measure the overall effect of those actions. So how can you reduce the number of members falling through the net?

Identifying members at risk

There are many methods and systems that help identify members at risk of leaving. Rather than tell you which one to buy, let's keep things simple and consider how you could recognise members in your club who need attention.

First up, visit frequency is the key factor in any drop-out-risk calculation.

Smart systems base this on historical data, so for example a member who always visits three times a week, then drops to twice or once, will be flagged up. Conversely, someone who typically visits once a week and then makes four visits could be over-exercising and so also high risk.

But beware the 'recommendation' of three visits a week. While people should take frequent exercise, at GG Fit we see no consistent pattern, in terms of differing retention levels, between gym members who visit once a week and those who visit three or more times a week once the new member phase is over.

Of course there are differences in retention rates between clubs due to other variables, but we actually see some clubs' low frequency members sticking around longer; in other clubs, it will be the higher frequency members who have longer average memberships. Indeed, the average member visit frequency for most clubs is around once a week. Well-staffed private clubs have higher average visit frequencies – some as high as two visits a week – whereas budget clubs often average well under one visit a week per member.

Knowing the trends and averages at your club is the best place to start.

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Booking a client review is a classic retention method

Then if you can, find out how often each member intends to visit, and check how often they actually do visit. If this is drastically different, take action. Trying to persuade a member who comes once a week to visit more often can even have a negative effect on retention.

A second identifier is whether a review is due. Members may have been promised, or signed up to, having a review within a few months. We'll return to what constitutes a review in a moment, but suffice to say it's a classic retention mechanism. However, so many members fall through this gap that it becomes ineffective. Clubs struggle to monitor it and it gets dropped.

The process is simple: ask your members when they next want a review,



"TRYING TO PERSUADE A MEMBER WHO USUALLY COMES ONCE A WEEK TO VISIT MORE OFTEN CAN EVEN HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON RETENTION"

then record that date on your system or on their programme card. When the date comes around, book their review. You could also consider systematically offering a review to anyone who has not had one for, say, six months or longer.

The old-school approach is to flick through the exercise card file and flag/sticky-note/remove any members who are due a review. Of course, if you're using an exercise management system, it should do this for you. You can use similar methods (flagging/moving exercise programme cards) for members who have had no contact recorded for

a long time, or who've been absent for, say, 45 days. When they come in, or return, it's important to check in with them, record notes for other members of the team and take any necessary follow-up action, such as a short-term review to see how they're getting on.

These are just a couple of clear-cut indicators of drop-out risk, but other factors may combine with these, such as membership length, age or type.

Take action

The first, most basic, form of action is to contact the member. Talk to them. If

they're visiting much more or less frequently than usual, find out why, and if it needs addressing, ask if there's anything they can do to fix it. Without going into a whole article on member interaction and coaching, it's better for a member to work out the solution for themselves rather than take on your suggestions (see p54, and *HCM* May 13, p46). You're there as their support in making the changes they want to make.

Meanwhile, lots of clubs are starting to change their 'programme review' to simply a 'review'. The idea is to alter the perception that a review involves an

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RETENTION SERIES

"THE IDEA IS TO ALTER THE
PERCEPTION THAT A REVIEW
INVOLVES AN INCREASE IN
EXERCISE INTENSITY,
DURATION OR RESISTANCE"

- ▶ increase in exercise intensity, duration or resistance. Instead, you offer a chat about what the member has achieved, their current exercise goals and any new exercises they would like to try – or indeed old ones they don't like.

Many members are either afraid of, or do not see the value in, a traditional exercise programme review; it's therefore difficult to get them to make an appointment. A regular review session that's more focused on them and their motivation is easier to sell to members. At the end of the day, the review is a good opportunity to spend some time with the member, listen to them and get to know them more.

Just speaking to your members about a review can help with their motivation. For example, staff at a local authority group of centres spoke to 1,200 members about their review in the space of one month. Only around 200 members actually had a review that month, while others set a next review date. Nevertheless, the average visit frequency of all 1,200 members increased by 67 per cent, from 0.9 visits a week to 1.5 visits a week.

Any other interaction with an ongoing member needs to boost their motivation to attend the gym regularly; sadly it's not possible to give motivation to your members – they have to find it for themselves. Gym challenges and events are good ways to support their motivation levels, and 'train with a friend' is another good initiative. If you give out free guest passes at membership milestones – three, six and 12 months, for example – measure how many are used, and through which members.

Before you start a new class timetable, do a test run and invite only existing members. In other words, make your members feel privileged – there are so many new member offers out there, but your existing members need to feel as important, or more important than, your new members.



'Train with a friend'
is a good offer to help
boost motivation levels

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Measure

As with the new member journey, unless you measure your efforts, you will not be able to improve your member retention. Reports and systems exist to look at the big picture, but here are three quick metrics that you can use as monthly performance indicators.

Firstly, check how many reviews are due or overdue each month. There will be an acceptable number of reviews that should be due each month depending on your total active members, but you should be trying to reduce this number most months. If you can monitor this per instructor, you can introduce KPIs and competition between instructors not to fall behind.

Active member percentage is another simple gauge. Divide the total number of paying members by the number of members who have made visits in



the last four weeks; you're looking to increase this number each time by reducing drop-out. The higher your active member percentage, the healthier your business and membership will be.

Finally, count how many members drop off the 'active' list each month. Count how many of your active members have not visited for 45 days, for example, or simply count how many exercise cards you remove from the file each month due to inactivity. Your target is to get this count down to zero, which means that no members have become inactive that month... if you do, throw a party for all your staff, as they've been working very hard!

Summary

You've put a lot of time and effort into getting your members into the exercise habit; your goal now is to keep them

coming regularly, whether once or three times a week. Members who are at risk of leaving are generally quiet about it. You must identify who you think could fall by the wayside, take action, and measure the effect. Stop your members from coming to the journey's end!

In next month's *Health Club Management*, we'll take a look at what to do if your members do slip through your net. ●

Guy Griffiths works for GG Fit, an independent consultancy that helps clubs improve member retention by working with staff, systems and processes. His new book, *Stick Around*, is available from all good bookshops and online retailers.
Web: www.ggfit.com
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Asking the RIGHT QUESTIONS

As part of Health Club Management's series on behaviour change, Dr Tim Anstiss offers practical advice for delivering health coaching: questions, tools and strategies

More and more people are developing and living with long-term conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancer and arthritis. That's partly because we are living longer, partly due to better medical care keeping us alive with health problems that used to kill us, and partly due to unhealthy lifestyles such as poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking and so on.

So how might we best help individuals who are experiencing poor health and wellbeing, including those who are already receiving good medical care? And how can we help healthy people to stay that way? Health coaching is one approach that's becoming popular.

What is health coaching?

The first part of *Health Club Management's* behaviour change series looked at the individual as expert (see *HCM* May 13, p46). Health coaching sits very much alongside this: it's an approach to helping someone that involves guiding them and supporting them, rather than instructing them on what to do.

Coaching has been defined by The Association for Coaching as "a collaborative, solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life

experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee". Other definitions of coaching include "unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" (Whitmore, 2003).

Health coaching, by extension, is the application of coaching psychology to help a person change their behaviour and aspects of their lifestyle in ways that are likely to be associated with improved health, reduced risk of disease or disease complications, and enhanced functional capacity (their ability to do things). One definition of health coaching might be: "A collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment to change, coupled with guidance and support in helping them make changes likely to result in improved health" (adapted from Miller and Rollnick, 2013).

A large and growing body of research links this way of talking to people with better outcomes in a range of different behaviours and settings. It helps people to eat better, lose weight, stop smoking, become more active and drink less. So how do you do health coaching?

Undertaking health coaching

Firstly, it helps to have the right mindset and assumptions about behaviour change. The effective health coach:

- Has an optimistic view of people's ability to change
- Knows that if the person being coached tells you the reasons why they want to change, and how they might do it, it's much more powerful than the coach telling them
- Accepts that the other person is the ultimate decision-maker, not the coach
- Works in partnership with the other person, doing coaching with them, not to them
- Creates the right conditions for the person to think things through for themselves



Coaching can help unlock a person's full potential

"The health coach knows that a person's readiness to change their behaviour is related to how important they think changing the behaviour is, combined with how confident they are that they can change"



Effective coaches practise empathetic listening rather than telling clients what to do

The effective health coach uses empathic listening to help the other person feel listened to, heard and understood.

This is a very active form of listening involving accurately paraphrasing and reflecting back what a person says, but using different words that capture the same meaning.

It helps to get the person talking more and perhaps understanding themselves better. These 'reflections' are combined with summaries that draw together several things the person has said into a few sentences – summaries that are used occasionally throughout the session to check understanding, to move the conversation along, and to bring the conversation to a close.

A nice summary might – of course depending on what the person has said – sound something like: "The main reasons you want to lose weight are to feel better about yourself, get into some of your favourite clothes, and get more involved in activities with your two young children. Joining the club is something you've been thinking about for a long time, and you're really looking forward to attending the classes and getting support from other people. You think

you will be able to attend three times a week, and you and I will talk again in two weeks' time to see how it's going."

It cannot be emphasised enough how important empathy – trying to understand the world from the other person's perspective, and communicating this effort – is for change

and good relationships. It probably accounts for 30 per cent of the power in a typical health coaching conversation.

"If all health and fitness professionals were trained in proven methods of health coaching, more members would achieve their health goals and retention figures would climb"

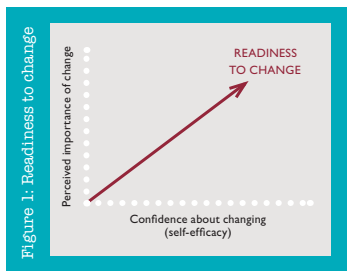
Readiness for change

The health coach knows that a person's readiness to change their behaviour is related to how important they think changing the behaviour is, combined with their self-

efficacy – that is, how confident they are that they can change (see Figure 1, p56).

To build perceived importance for change, the health coach asks open questions such as:

- Why might you want to make this change?
- What are your three best reasons?
- How do you hope things will be in four to five months' time, once you have changed your behaviour?
- How do you think things will be if you stay the same? ▶



- ▶ These questions are combined with reflections to help the person think more deeply and talk about why they want to change.
 - To build self-efficacy or confidence about changing, the health coach might use a scaling question such as: "How confident are you that you can eat better and keep this up for six months, where 0 is not at all confident and 10 is very confident?" Let's assume the person says 4 (the number is not that important to be honest) – the coach then asks: "Why 4 – why not 1 or 2? Where do you get your confidence from?" and lets the person talk.
 - Once the person has explained why they have some degree of confidence, the coach asks: "And what would have to happen for your confidence to become 6?" This gets the person thinking a little more deeply about what they need to do in order to change and stay changed, and also the help they need to be successful.
 - If they are stuck, the coach might suggest some further proven behaviour change techniques such as goal setting, self-monitoring, using social support and periodic follow-up. If the person shows interest, the coach explores how these might fit into the client's behaviour change plan.

Tapping inner resources

The skillful health coach knows that it's better to discover what a person already knows about something than it is to jump in with information. They use open questions such as "what do you know about how much physical activity is required for health?" and "what do you know about the benefits of strength training?" If the person doesn't know much, or has some wrong information, the coach might first ask to share some additional information. Once they have shared it, they then ask: "What do you make of what I have just said?" This little sequence – Ask-Share-Ask – is respectful of the other person, helps the coach understand their knowledge first, prevents information overload, and helps keep understanding.

Throughout the conversation, the health coach uses an 'evoking' style to draw information from within the person, rather than filling them with facts and information from the outside. This style is much more likely to lead to engagement in the conversation and to the person owning any behaviour change plan, rather than making them feel as though it's been imposed on them.

Key to engagement and evoking is the use of open rather than closed questions. Rather than asking questions such as "could you go for a walk at lunchtime?"



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Getting people to reflect on and state their own intentions, such as changing their diet, is an important process

or "have you thought about eating more fruit?", the skillful health coach asks questions that are hard to answer with just one word, such as:

- How might you go about taking 30 minutes of moderate activity a day?
- What do you think would happen if you were able to eat more fruit and vegetables each day?
- What's the first step you could take to help you reach your goal?
- How can I help you to succeed?

It can also be helpful to have a model or framework in your head that will help to guide the coaching conversation, such as the GROW model. In this model, the coach starts by enquiring about the person's own Goals. Then you explore with them how things are now: their Reality. Then you explore and share Options for change. And finally you agree a Way forward.

Summary

Health coaching is a powerful approach to helping people change their health behaviour. As noted by Debbie Lawrence in last month's feature, however, many people working in the health and fitness sector will have to 'unlearn' some of their own behaviours (such as telling people why and how to change) before they can really start to become an effective health coach.

Nevertheless, if all health and fitness professionals were trained in proven methods of health coaching such as motivational interviewing, more members would achieve their health goals, retention figures would climb – and the health of the nation might just improve.

Next month I will share my top tips for wellbeing coaching, which will build on the concepts covered in this article. ●

Tim Anstiss is a medical doctor who has been training health professionals in the use of behaviour change techniques for over 20 years. He helped develop the training materials for the Let's Get Moving national programme for physical activity, and co-authored a National Obesity Observatory report on weight loss. He is currently training cancer clinicians in health coaching as part of the National Cancer Survivorship Initiative, and is developing a health coaching qualification in conjunction with SkillsActive. He is also a former international polevaulter and Gladiators contender.



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▲ Leisure Connection: Wheelchair sports for disabled and able-bodied

Welcoming newcomers

Last year saw the 25th annual spinal unit games at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, welcoming the 13 spinal units from across the UK. Promoting a healthy and active lifestyle through sport for people who have been paralysed in the last year, the games feature a mix of competition and 'have a go' sessions, allowing participants to experience a wide range of sports. Archery, table tennis, bowls, swimming and shooting are among the activities on offer.

McElhatton says: "The games is a great programme to inspire and encourage newly paralysed people into physical activity. We recognise that competitive sport isn't for everyone, but the 'have a go' sessions are great to inspire and encourage a broader range of people. We'd love to see this rolled out across the UK, working with more operators to host similar events."

'Use it or lose it'

For some operators, disability provision has only recently started to come to the fore, but Watford Leisure Centre has been successfully running its

EXPANDING HORIZONS

Becca Douglas takes a look at some of the initiatives aiming to deliver a legacy from the London 2012 Paralympics

2012 will be remembered as an amazing summer of sport for Great Britain – not only in terms of the medal table and the achievements of Team GB, but also the fact that it shone a spotlight on the home-grown Paralympians who live and train in our facilities day in, day out.

Legacy was the watchword in the build-up to the Games, so what's being done at a grassroots level to encourage and enable more disabled people into sport and physical activities, at all ages and all levels of ability?

Martin McElhatton, CEO of WheelPower – the national charity for wheelchair sport – says: "More than a

thousand men, women and children in the UK are paralysed due to an accident or illness every year. Many more people acquire a disability that means they need to use a wheelchair. Through sport and regular physical activity, those whose lives have been traumatically changed can enjoy the tremendous physical and psychological benefits of participation, and indeed competition."

But where would you go if you were disabled tomorrow? Would you be happy to go to your local leisure centre and train in the gym with everyone else? For some, the answer would be 'yes', but for others more is needed to stimulate their bodies and brains too.



Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis class for the past 17 years.

With a motto of 'use it or lose it', the class is about prevention as much as cure, helping those with Parkinson's and MS to preserve their mobility, balance and co-ordination, while at the same time exercising the muscles with the aim of preserving as much body movement and control as possible. Exercises have been devised in conjunction with staff from the Hertfordshire Neurological Rehabilitation Centre.

The class has, says the centre, benefited from the continuity and quality of instructors, who have helped maintain a fresh approach over the years.

Inclusive approach

Leisure Connection doesn't believe there needs to be a division between

disabled and non-disabled users, and the company runs a number of mixed classes in its sports halls each week.

These encourage disabled and non-disabled users to compete on a level playing field in activities such as wheelchair basketball.

Kevin Yates, head of fitness, marketing and communications, says: "Our users love the inclusive wheelchair basketball and sitting volleyball classes. They inspire each other and friendships form very quickly. In no time, we find that members who were just coming in for wheelchair basketball are now training in the gym or taking part in group cycling classes with these friends using Krank cycles. It's truly moving."

Leisure Connection is also appointing a disability sports champion, whose job it will be to ensure the very best of

▲ IntractAbility: Jobs disabled people can gain fitness qualifications

disability and inclusive sport is shared and enhanced in all centres and with all stakeholders, coupled with ongoing training at all sites.

Starting young

It's arguably even more important that children who are paralysed find sport early in their life, or early into their condition. In April 2013, WheelPower and Leisure Connection provided 120 young disabled people aged between 11 and 18 years – from the east London boroughs of Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, Havering and Barking & Dagenham – with a unique sporting and ▶

► **Impulse Leisure runs group exercise programmes for stroke and cardiac rehab patients**

► cultural event at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the birthplace of the Paralympic Games.

Time to Shine was a free initiative for the young participants thanks to funding from the Mace Foundation. Attendees were able to experience a wide variety of inclusive sporting activities – run by qualified coaches and volunteers and designed to suit all abilities – including volleyball, archery, street dance, swimming and much more. There was a mixture of ‘have a go’ and competitive activities, with youngsters taking part alongside others of a similar age group and in their borough teams.

Ian Seabrook, business development manager at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, says: “We offer many programmes for disabled people locally, nationally and internationally, but what made this special was that Time to Shine took participants away from their day-to-day lives and empowered them physically and mentally. The key to delivering sustainable and effective programmes is the mental stimulation they provide too. Crack this and the programmes will grow and grow.”

It's not always long-term...

Being confined to a wheelchair may not always be permanent. For example, every year 150,000 people in the UK suffer a stroke and the consequences, although varied, can include weakness in an arm, leg or both depending on the



severity of the stroke; it can sometimes lead to short- or long-term paralysis.

Exercise and physical activity can not only aid the physical symptoms, but can also help with mental health issues such as depression. Impulse Leisure, in partnership with Thurrock Council, therefore runs the Thurrock Stroke Network. Through specially designed group exercises classes, the network aims to aid independent living and provide a supportive social structure to enhance quality of life for those who have had a stroke.

Clients of all ages attend the classes twice a week, with each client assessed and personal goals set. The classes deliver mixed activities, including use of a Technogym Kinesis wall, a light wall, boxing stations and badminton. Impulse Leisure is looking to extend the sessions and a study is currently underway to measure outcomes among attendees. However, marked improvements – both physical and mental – have already been observed among users of the service.

Education is key

It's not just leisure operators that need to be driving innovation in this area; the

relevant education to support the delivery also needs to stay one step ahead of the curve.

InstructAbility is a programme created by YMCAfit in conjunction with spinal injury charity Aspire. It offers unemployed disabled people the opportunity to train as fitness instructors, with a view to them working in gyms and running community outreach activities specifically targeting disabled people, to get them participating in fitness and sporting activities.

The programme has won awards for its innovation, not only in terms of providing employment opportunities for disabled people, but also inspiring a new generation of potential Paralympic athletes – the programme is able to reach new audiences of disabled people who have either been put off participating in these activities in the past or not considered it as a viable option for them.

The programme has been delivered in a few areas of London to date, and one in four InstructAbility graduates have gone on to gain employment. Employers include Virgin Active, Fitness First, YMCA, GLL and Fusion. ●

CASE STUDY - SPENCER VAUGHAN

Spencer Vaughan has always been a very active, sporty person. He played rugby and enjoyed surfing and motor-cross. He joined the Royal Marines when he was 20 years old.

During his first year of general duties, while on an adventure training exercise, he sustained a spinal cord injury that left him paralysed from the chest down. He participated in the InstructAbility course and, once qualified, entered phase two of the programme with a work placement at Everyone Active's Plymouth Life Centre.

Guy Westwood, fitness manager at the Plymouth Life Centre, says: “Spencer's enthusiasm and willingness has been an inspiration to the team and customers alike. Staff have gained a far better knowledge of the daily challenges wheelchair users face.”

InstructAbility has ► given spinal injury victim Vaughan a new career





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LEGISLATING

NUTRITION



Nutritional supplements are potentially a great revenue stream for gyms, but new European legislation is going to make it harder to promote them. Kath Hudson reports

Without taking a protein drink, my husband fades away to nothing when he's exercising. Using one on a regular basis has helped him build lean muscle and made recovery much faster. I've also found that drinking a protein drink after exercise stops me feeling ravenous and picking at naughty food.

If I wasn't aware of these benefits, it might be helpful if my gym were to tell me. However, if they did so while standing in front of a shelf full of nutritional products for sale, they would be contravening new European guidelines. They could tell me that "protein contributes to growth and the

maintenance of muscle mass" – but specifying lean muscle and talking about recovery would stray into murky areas.

NHCR guidelines

The European guidelines, Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation, came into force in December 2012 after a six-year period during which the claims being made by products were assessed. Prior to this, food legislation only defined the mandatory information required on labels, and prohibited misleading or false claims. The new guidelines now clearly state that only certain health and nutrition claims can be made about food, thereby harmonising the rules on claims across the 27 EU member states.

The burden of proof has changed. Previously, when a claim was challenged, a business had to prove it was true. Now the business has to get authorisation before being able to use the claim.

The aim is, of course, to protect consumers by stopping false claims from being made. However, the move

deals something of a blow to the sports nutrition and food industry as a whole, by requiring incredibly robust scientific studies to back up the sort of claims that have traditionally been widely used by nutritional supplements, such as "contributes to the growth in muscle mass". Only authorised claims can now be used in commercial communication.

Dr Adam Carey, chair of the European Specialist Sports Nutrition Alliance (ESSNA), explains why the legislation has been introduced: "Health and nutrition claims made in relation to food products require authorisation before they can be used in the labelling and marketing of food products.

"Within the context of a rather complex procedure, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is responsible for verifying the scientific basis of claims. Under old legislation, the burden of proof was different and EFSA did not assess claims – it was a national competence. This legislation has been adopted to protect the public from



Accepted claim:
Products containing protein can contribute to growth of muscle mass

“This legislation has been adopted to protect the public from spurious and false claims, and ensure marketing of products is based on evidence accepted by the scientific community”

spurious and false claims made by some food manufacturers. It seeks to ensure advertising and marketing of products is clear, accurate and based on evidence accepted by the scientific community.”

According to the ESSNA, over the last couple of years organisations in the food industry from across the EU have submitted more than 40,000 dossiers for supporting information for their health claims to be assessed. EFSA grouped similar claims together, with the result that around 4,000 different claims were put forward to be reviewed. EFSA has now assessed just over half of the dossiers, and to date only a little over 200 health claims have been approved by the European Commission. Any claims that were rejected in this round of assessment can no longer be used.

Any scientific claims that were based on inconclusive evidence – ie where the claimed benefits might or might not transpire – or claims that were shown not to be deliverable 100 per cent of the time have also been thrown out.

There are currently still a number of claims under evaluation, but decisions on these are expected soon.

Questionable process

But while the new legislation has consumer interests at heart, some of the verdicts are questionable, and the rejection of some claims doesn't mean they are actually untrue. Guidance on preparing dossiers for health claims was thin on the ground, meaning insufficient evidence, or sometimes even the wrong kind of evidence, was submitted to EFSA. There were also instances where claims submitted under the wrong category were not even considered.

For example, according to this legislation, only mineral water can rehydrate the body. Even though orange juice can in practice also rehydrate the body, it missed accreditation because it contains sugar and other substances that don't serve any rehydration purpose.

Carey also believes it's fair to say that, when authorising claims, the authorities

did not always take into account the specific needs of a particular group of the population, including sports people.

For example, despite being scientifically proven, the health claim for sodium tablets – the maintenance of normal muscle function – was rejected, because it went against general public health guidance to reduce levels of sodium intake. However, this failed to take into consideration the fact that elite sports people have different needs from those who are less physically active: sodium is more important for individuals exercising at high intensity, notably athletes. Expert bodies such as the International Olympic Committee have acknowledged that electrolyte losses, including sodium, must be replaced with either sports drinks or foods. Without this, hyponatremia – a condition of low sodium concentration in the bloodstream – can occur.

Legislation that was meant to protect the consumer therefore risks stunting innovation, reducing information flow ▶

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Accepted claim: Carb-electrolyte solutions help maintain endurance performance

▶ and leading to products being taken off the shelves or made harder to buy.

The good news

But there is some cause for optimism: Carey says the sports nutrition industry has fared better than most, with its claims doing well in comparison to those of other food sectors.

For example, all claims for probiotic products have been rejected. Meanwhile, most claims for vitamin and mineral products have been approved, as well as the benefits of protein, creatine and carbohydrate-electrolyte solutions.

What has been proven, and what gyms can happily say to their customers, is as follows:

- Products containing protein contribute to growth and the maintenance of muscle mass.
- Creatine increases physical performance in successive bursts of short-term, high-intensity exercise.
- Carbohydrate-electrolyte solutions contribute to the maintenance of endurance performance during prolonged endurance exercise, and enhance the absorption of water during physical exercise.

Furthermore, there is some hope that the legislation might be relaxed in the future, as EFSA takes on board the particular requirements of sports nutrition. "Policy-makers and other stakeholders have recognised some of the challenges around sports food, and in the next few years the European Commission is due to prepare a report

assessing sports nutrition regulation," says Carey. "We hope this will clarify some of the regulatory challenges faced by the sports nutrition industry, and ESSNA is actively engaged on that front."

In the meantime, in the UK at least, the legislation will not immediately be aggressively enforced, as a short settling-in period has been permitted, provided businesses show they are undertaking steps to comply. However, some EU countries have already started enforcement. Manufacturers may have to change their packaging, and going forward their relationships with clubs – offering clubs advice on how to sell and offer product samples – will become even more important.

Gym staff certainly shouldn't be put off selling nutritional products to customers, but they will need to inform themselves of the facts (see information box below).

It will also be more important than ever for staff to understand the product and the goals of the client. Lynn Clay, technical education manager at Maxinutrition, advises: "Get to know members and provide genuine recommendations that will support their results and offer solutions, rather than trying to sell them a particular promotion."

Gym goers should also be encouraged to do their own research and talk to people who use the supplements: good products speak for themselves, and those using them can still be used as unofficial advocates, as the new legislation doesn't cover non-commercial communication. ●

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To delve deeper into this subject, take a look at:

- The EU Register: <http://ec.europa.eu/nuhclaims>
- Department of Health Guidance documents <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutrition-and-health-claims-guidance-to-compliance-with-regulation-ec-1924-2006-on-nutrition-and-health-claims-made-on-foods>

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A BURNING AMBITION

Lauren Applegarth pays a visit to Toxteth Fire Fit Hub, in Liverpool, to see how the new dual-use facility is getting firefighters fit for duty while encouraging young people in the area to get active

Mention the area of Toxteth and for some, what may spring to mind are the infamous riots of 1981. Fast-forward to 2013 and this inner city area of Liverpool, like many other urban areas, is struggling against the economic downturn, with above average levels of unemployment and social unrest.

In the face of these challenges, in October 2011, permission was granted for what would become the Toxteth Fire Fit Hub – a multi-million pound sports facility, built with the interests of the local youth community at its heart.

Community focus

The Hub, which is also home to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's new Toxteth Community Fire Station, was launched in spring 2013. Built in the centre of the district and on the site of the original Toxteth Sports Centre, the £5.2m project was secured through £2.3m funding from the Department of Education's myplace



The Hub has a 340sq m gym, as well as a 170sq m functional training zone, for firefighters and the local community alike

initiative, a further £2.8m from Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, and £500,000 from Liverpool City Council.

Liverpool-based architects Cass Associates were commissioned to design the building, working alongside the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to deliver the facility to its dual-purpose requirements: central to the Hub and a condition of the fire service's residence is the 340sq m gym, which offers premium quality exercise equipment for use both by the station's firefighters and by members of the community.

In addition to the split-level gym, the Hub offers a 1,200sq m sports hall, group fitness studio, four outdoor five-a-side pitches and a community fire station – and it has grand aspirations for its role within the local community.

"The focus of the site is to make a real difference to the lives of young people in the immediate area and in Liverpool," says Sara Lawton, project leader for the facility at Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. "Our aim is to encourage healthier lifestyles by encouraging young people to engage in positive activities."





Local young people have in fact been involved throughout: the Toxteth Fire Fit Hub Ambassadors, a group of local youngsters who helped shape the Hub, will continue their involvement in the governance of the site once it's fully operational this month. In addition, Wates Construction – which was responsible for the build, and which employed 60 per cent of the labour required for the project from the Merseyside area – hired eight local apprentices who were jointly funded by Wates, its supply chain and the Merseyside Apprenticeship Programme.

Fit for the job

With the interests of the local community at its core, the Hub nevertheless still had to meet the critical requirements of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, a key stakeholder and investor in the facility that now has 20 firefighters based on-site.

The gym houses over 30 pieces of cardiovascular and strength equipment from Cybex International – treadmills, Arc Trainers and bikes, alongside the

The £5.2m facility brings new sport and fitness opportunities to an area of social deprivation

Bravo all-in-one functional training system, free weights and selectorised strength equipment from Cybex's VR3 Total Access range. Through Cybex's build-to-order policy, the treadmills, Arc Trainers and bikes were personalised with blue frames, while the selectorised equipment features customised upholstery.

A further 170sq m area on the first floor offers a dedicated functional training zone including kettlebells, medicine balls, dumbbells and Powerbags, as well as a boxing ring. "From the moment we were invited to quote for Toxteth Fire Fit Hub, we were immediately excited by the project and its ambitions," says Paul Steel, business development manager for Cybex UK.

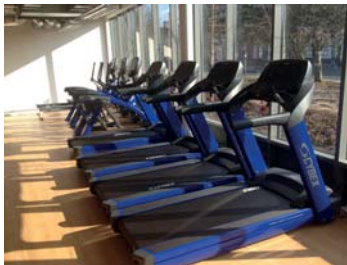
As part of its agreement with the facility, Cybex has already been putting the firefighters through their paces using its Firefighter Performance Programme. Developed by the Cybex Research

Institute and already widely used in the US, the training concept is designed to enhance the specific physical attributes required by the profession.

"The programme stood out as part of Cybex's tender – we felt it was something our staff would really benefit from," says Lawton. "Firefighters need to be ready to respond to any emergency they are called to, and they spend a lot of time during the week focusing on their fitness. Having a gym like this on-site is great for them."

With three levels of difficulty, the Firefighter Performance Programme combines intervals and circuits using Cybex's Arc Trainer and a range of functional resistance equipment, including medicine balls, dumbbells, ropes and training ladders.

Fire crew who have already taken part in the programme include several individuals who were recovering from injury and working towards returning to full duty. Chris Rock, master trainer for Cybex, explains: "It's important that we teach the firefighters how best to use the equipment and the feedback ▶



The Hub is also home to a sports hall (above), while gym equipment was personalised with blue frames and customised upholstery (left and below)



- was very positive, particularly from those who recognised the role that the programme could have in helping them regain full levels of fitness."

Train like a firefighter

Rock adds: "The programme ensures much higher levels of understanding of the equipment than is the norm, and the fire crew – as part of their involvement at the facility – will be able to impart this information to other gym users, giving young people the opportunity to train like, and alongside, firefighters."

Kieran Timmins, deputy chief executive of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, adds: "Not only did Cybex offer a cost-effective solution to our unique requirements as a fire service, but we especially liked its concept of allowing the wider community user group to 'train like a firefighter' along with our fire crews."

"The crews will act as role models and community leaders at the station, while maintaining their operational fitness using the equipment in the gym."

In line with its community and youth focus, the Hub's business model is very much built around providing maximum accessibility, with the choice of pay-as-

"The fire crew – as part of their involvement at the facility – will give young people the opportunity to train like firefighters"

you-go or an annual membership fee, reduced for youth members. The football pitches will also be available for private hire seven days a week. Councillor Dave Hanratty, chair of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority, says: "The Hub aims to help and support young people to a fitter and brighter future. It will make a huge impact. Nothing compares to it – it's truly unique."

Apprenticeships

There's no doubt that, throughout its development and construction phases, Toxteth Fire Fit Hub has played its part in supporting the local community.

However, the challenge remains for the site to continue to meet its objectives as a fully operational sports facility.

At the launch, the mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson announced that Liverpool City Council would be funding seven apprenticeships at The Hub, covering administrative, youth worker and reception staff roles. "I'm pleased to be able to help with tackling unemployment through the joint City Council and Fire Authority project at the Fire Fit Hub in Toxteth," he said. "Apprenticeships can make a difference to young people's lives and equip them with vital work skills for the future success of Liverpool."

"The Toxteth Fire Fit Hub is a true example of how regeneration projects can not only make a physical difference to a community, but also bring with them lasting benefits for its people," adds Tony Shenton, business unit director for Wates Construction, North West.

Hanratty concludes: "The site ticks all the boxes for the fire and rescue service, with a gym that combines an excellent design layout and mix of equipment to ensure the crews are supported in their training, while also meeting the interests of young people. The Hub will make a positive difference to all involved." ●

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HIGH-SPEED WORKOUTS



Jayne Irving of Big Shot Productions talks to Kate Cracknell about Tabata, the workout that promises results in just four minutes

What is Tabata?

Tabata is a clinically proven way to get fit in just four minutes. The Tabata™ Protocol consists of 20 seconds of intense exercise followed by 10 seconds of rest, repeated eight times. It's scientifically proven to be a highly effective way to increase both aerobic and anaerobic fitness.

The protocol is now being adapted into a group exercise format, and is ideal for small group training programmes.

Where did the idea come from?

The system was developed by a Japanese scientist, professor Tabata, while he was working as an advisor for the Japanese Olympic speed skating team in the early 1990s. The head coach had developed a training technique that involved the athletes exercising in short bursts of

high intensity; professor Tabata was asked to analyse the effectiveness of this training regime. He compared various HIT (high-intensity interval training) systems and found this technique to be the best at improving fitness levels.

What's the science behind it?

Research suggests that just one four-minute Tabata workout gets you fitter than an hour's moderate workout on an exercise bike.

Professor Tabata's original research involved two different trials. The first was conducted among moderately fit young students majoring in physical education and playing university sport. One group cycled at a moderate speed for an hour: 70 RPM and at 70 per cent of their VO₂ max. Another group took part in the so-called Tabata Protocol: 20 seconds of high intensity exercise, then

10 seconds of rest, repeated eight times and lasting a total of four minutes. This group cycled at 170 per cent of their VO₂ max. Both groups carried out their routines five times a week.

By the end of the six-week trial, fitness levels in the four-minute group had improved more markedly than in the hour-long group. Both groups saw an improvement in aerobic fitness: VO₂ max in the four-minute group improved by 7ml.kg⁻¹ min⁻¹, compared to 5ml.kg⁻¹ min⁻¹ in the hour-long group. However, while the hour-long group saw no improvement in anaerobic fitness levels, this went up by 28 per cent in the four-minute group.

Professor Tabata then conducted a second experiment comparing the Tabata Protocol with another form of HIT that involved 30 seconds of even higher intensity – 200 per cent of VO₂ max – with two minutes' rest in between. Again, the Tabata Protocol improved both aerobic and anaerobic fitness, whereas the other HIT system saw no significant improvement in either measure: subjects only reached 67 per cent of their anaerobic capacity and an oxygen uptake much lower than their VO₂ max.

"This is the first fitness system born in a lab, not a gym. It hasn't been made up by a fitness instructor or dancer"

Left: Tabata is well suited to small group classes

Below: This is the first time Professor Tabata has given his backing to an official Tabata system



Although the two studies were carried out over a number of weeks, results were actually seen after just one week of doing the Tabata Protocol.

Professor Tabata has also conducted a new experiment – due to be published this year – looking at EPOC (Excess Post Exercise Oxygen Consumption). Results indicate that Tabata continues to burn calories in the 12 hours after a workout – a reported additional 150 calories.

Research on rats also suggests Tabata could have beneficial effects for diabetes sufferers, with improvements noted in four of the key markers for diabetes prevention: the mechanisms by which glucose is transported around the body became more efficient as a result of the Tabata Protocol.

How can gyms get involved?

Tabata is fast, effective and credible, hence our key message: 'Four-minute fitness, scientifically proven.' In a time-pressured society, that's a great hook to get your members and prospects interested.

A REPs-accredited Tabata instructor training programme is due to be launched in the UK within the next three months, with an accredited

Bodyweight moves inspired by Capoeira and primal training have been incorporated into the plan

programme also in the pipeline for the US. This will ensure the protocol can be delivered correctly in gyms. Group exercise and small group training programmes will also be available.

No special equipment is required, although there are plans to use small hand weights at some stage in the development of the programme.

This is the first fitness system born in a lab, not a gym. It hasn't been made up by a fitness instructor or dancer – it's the result of an internationally renowned scientist's clinical findings. Professor Tabata has also approved all of the exercises in the programme.

How does the gym-based offering work?

The group exercise classes will go on for 20 minutes, but to stay true to the

authentic Tabata methodology only four minutes will be all-out. There will also be a 10-minute warm-up – four minutes of mobilisation and then six minutes to run through the Tabata exercises that will follow in the main four-minute section. Finally there will be a six-minute cool-down and stretch. Gyms can therefore easily schedule two classes in the space of one hour, and members can fit a workout into their lunch break.

Team Tabata has worked for over a year to create exciting new bodyweight moves for trainers and gym operators to take back to their clients: moves like the 'skiva', which is adapted from Capoeira, or the 'cockroach', which is a take on primal training.

The key is to make sure these moves are being performed at the correct intensity level to have a true Tabata ▶





Research shows Tabata can bring about improvements in both aerobic and anaerobic fitness

► effect. Indeed, professor Tabata's main motivation in creating these routines was that he saw lots of people doing so-called Tabata routines incorrectly on YouTube – the exercises weren't true to his research and wouldn't get the results published in his trials. In their Tabata training, instructors will be taught how to avoid this and make sure their clients are working at the correct level.

Who's the target market?

The great benefit of Tabata is that people of completely different fitness levels can share a class and reap benefits from it. Team Tabata has developed a system of levels within the workout, with adaptations of exercises to suit beginners as well as advanced clients. Many of the bodyweight moves, for example, will involve jumping for the fit, but not for the beginner. Every class will have an easier option for less fit participants.

What are your top tips to ensure gyms deliver Tabata properly?

Training is crucial to ensure Tabata is delivered correctly. Also constant

"Trainers must stick to the moves that bring the authentic Tabata result, otherwise it won't be any different from other circuit or HIT classes"

quality control: although trainers will be encouraged to use the moves in the main Tabata section in any order they like, there's sometimes a tendency for these exercises to be adapted in a way that will no longer bring about the benefits clients want. Trainers must stick to the moves that bring about the authentic Tabata result, otherwise it won't be any different from other circuit or HIT classes.

Why is Tabata really only now coming to the forefront?

Professor Tabata has never given his backing to an official Tabata exercise system before. Until now, it has just been gyms interpreting his research – and getting it wrong a lot of the time.

Professor Tabata wants to see his clinically proven research used in a way

that will really benefit the population. He's already been approached by the Japanese government to help tackle the obesity epidemic there, and is keen to see Tabata used in other markets too – in the correct way – to help combat this growing global crisis.

What's Tabata's relationship with Universal?

Universal Pictures International Entertainment (UPIE) joined forces with fitness programme producers Big Shot Productions to license the Tabata exercise system based on professor Tabata's research findings. Universal had for some time been looking to find a fitness system that it believed had global potential – in the Tabata Protocol, it felt had found something with precisely that worldwide appeal. ●

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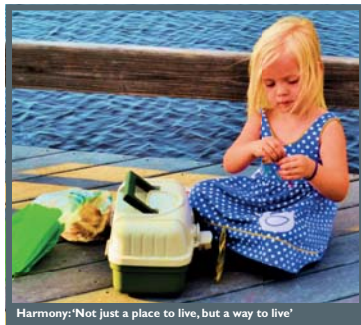
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Since 2008, Harmony Development, whose parent company is Starwood Capital Group, has commissioned WTS International – one of the world's largest leisure consulting and management firms – to manage day-to-day lifestyle operations, including programming for all ages and integrating lifestyle into the sales and marketing process to increase the sales of homes.

Harmony FL is an award-winning, green-certified residential community located outside of Orlando, Florida, US (www.harmonyfl.com). It offers over 1,000 acres of freshwater lakes, 13 miles of natural hiking trails and a championship golf course, all within one luxurious setting. Facilities include: a retail centre with a grocery store, doctor's surgery, wine bar, nail salon and multiple dining options; schools; and a community garden.

There are also two community pools, boats that are free for residents to use, multiple parks, playgrounds and dog-walking areas. Harmony offers a wide array of lifestyle activities – such as yoga, movie nights, resident mixers, coffee socials, resident trips and sailing instruction – as well as a dynamic social scene for people of all ages.

In addition to the daily lifestyle activities, WTS works with the developer to plan and execute three large-scale festivals a year at Harmony. Harmony is a Dark Sky Compliant Community, which means the streets and homes have low-level outdoor lighting to allow for a clearer view of the night sky. The Dark Sky Festival is therefore the community's signature festival – an evening event featuring a large number of telescopes for public viewing, a variety of speakers, planetarium shows, space and astronomy displays and much more.



Harmony: 'Not just a place to live, but a way to live'



Harmony has
1,000 acres of
freshwater lakes

Since WTS started to work with Harmony on the Dark Sky Festival, attendance has increased by over 700 per cent.

Other festivals include the two-day Harmony Arts and Music Festival and the Harmony Winter Carnival, where snow is shipped in to the town square of Harmony, along with snow slides, games and music.

Nevertheless, Harmony was keen to bring even more weight behind its stated ambition of being "not just a place to live, but a way to live". WTS International therefore came on-board through its COMMUNITYlife™ and RESORTLife™ divisions, which provide clients with services that support the development and execution of innovative lifestyle programmes, concierge services and leisure amenities management.

Part of the COMMUNITYlife offering is the WTS Lifestyles 360° – a signature programme offered exclusively to WTS-affiliated properties. This provides the structure, systems and resources to create a wide variety of programmes, lifestyle activities and events for community residents of all ages and interests. WTS Lifestyles 360° incorporates a comprehensive menu of programmes in specific categories, including fitness and wellness, concierge, aquatics, spa, sports, youth and teen programmes, camps, life enrichment, social programmes, tennis and outdoor adventure.

"Our company is engaged by residential developments, hotels and resorts, private clubs and real estate projects worldwide to create activities and programmes that will spark an enthusiastic response and participation from residents, guests and private club members," says Kellie Corbin, VP of recreation & leisure at WTS International. "The services we can provide include operational reviews, concept and brand development, planning and design assistance, pre-opening services, and daily management including staff solutions."

For more information: www.wtsinternational.com



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fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Powerblock



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This barbell weights system features a new 'gator' fastening mechanism for speedy weight transitions: the retractable teeth lock up to three plates in place at each end in a single manoeuvre, allowing users to quickly drop weights in the middle of a set. The ergonomic, handle-like design of the weight plates means they can also be used in the same way as dumbbells and kettlebells, adjusting in 1kg increments.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

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New Curl Barbells from Jordan Fitness

Jordan Fitness' new Curl Barbells complement its range of straight bar barbells with solid rubber ends. Stylish and durable, they have an odourless black rubber finish that virtually eliminates the 'clanking' of barbells. The Curl Barbells feature chrome easy-grip handles, raised number weight identification and a J-lock system that helps prevent loosening of the barbell head. The product has an internal handle length of 110cm, with the barbells available in 10kg to 60kg weights.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Jordan

Jatomi employs Escape weights and expertise

Escape Fitness and its partners have helped equip Jatomi Fitness club The Weld in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Escape and Jatomi chose equipment to appeal to every member from beginners to experienced users.

The result is an area kitted out with soft core bags, brightly coloured and co-ordinated dumbbells, and bumper discs and plates to focus training on functional movements. Escape SBX T600 dumbbells were also installed.

In addition, Escape training partner Ushomi has created education programmes in line with Jatomi's retention aims: fun, fast, functional training sessions are on offer at the club using bumper plates.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Escape



Concept Fitness provides a complete weights fit-out

Concept Fitness International was chosen to supply Fit4Less in East Kilbride, UK. The Fit4Less site opted for a complete range of TKO free weights, studio and functional training equipment, along with group cycling bikes and plate-loaded equipment. A large free weights area includes urethane dumbbells, eight benches, barbells, Olympic bars and a huge range of weight discs. Concept Fitness International also supplied functional training equipment including kettlebells, medicine balls, powerbags, suspension trainers and VIPR.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Concept**



York Fitness' free weights an Ab Salute fit

York Fitness, free weights supplier of more than 80 years, was recently chosen for a new equipment installation at Ab Salute Gym in Brentwood, UK. The gym chose the York range of power racks with bars and Olympic discs. York also manufactures dumbbells, plates, strength equipment, and functional studio and boxing equipment. Colin Hall of Ab Salute Gym says: "The York range is so well made. Communication from order to purchase to installation was fantastic, and I was able to get the stock quickly." Fitness Ambition installed the range.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **York**



Kamagon Ball 'uses more muscles vs static weights'

Functional equipment supplier Physical Company is now the UK distributor for The Kamagon Ball by Hedstrom Fitness. The Kamagon Ball is an over-sized rubber medicine ball with two handles that can be filled with water to create variable, shifting loads up to 20kg. The ball uses hydro-inertia technology to recruit more muscle fibres than when performing the exercise with a static weight.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

Physical Company



Full range of free weights from iRobic

iRobic offers a range of free weights including dumbbells, barbells, Olympic discs, Olympic bars, kettlebells and racks. The dumbbells come in an easy to clean, durable black rubber finish with easy grip chrome handles in 2.5–25kg, 27.5–37.5kg and 40–50kg sets in 2.5kg increments; 1–10kg sets in 1kg increments; and 2–20kg sets in 2kg increments. It also offers Rubber Hex and Chrome dumbbell sets.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

iRobic

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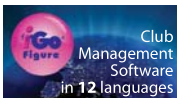
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