

health club management

APRIL 2011

Medical Wellness

widening the net

Exercise referral
best practice


a leisure media
company
publication

POSITIVE AGEING

Overcoming stereotypes
to appeal to older people

INTERVIEW

Dr Art Curtis

The IHRSA chair and Millennium
Partners' head of club M&A on
the sector's opportunity to evolve

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT...

MEDICAL WELLNESS

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creating fans

The fitness industry has a new weapon in its battle to improve retention levels: the Net Promoter Score (NPS)[®]. A customer survey based on one simple question – “how likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?” – respondents are categorised based on the score they award out of 10. Awarding a nine or 10 makes you a ‘promoter’, seven or eight and you’re a ‘passive’, and nought to six categorises you as a ‘detractor’.

The percentage of detractors is subtracted from the percentage of promoters to obtain the NPS.

Results of the first such survey in the fitness industry – carried out by Leisure-net Solutions in conjunction with The Retention People – were released last month and reveal an industry average NPS of 21 per cent. Local authorities scored 27 per cent, trusts 12 per cent, and private multi-site operators minus 16 per cent. Compare this to the 50–80 per cent NPS recorded by some of the

fastest-growing companies in their respective sectors – companies such as Google, Apple and several of the top hotel chains – and it’s clear there’s vast room for improvement.

Overall these results are unsurprising: the regularity with which we discuss poor retention rates is proof that we know we haven’t yet done enough to turn regular members into fans. The good news is that NPS gives clubs the tools to do something about this by providing a simple customer loyalty measure that can be tracked over time.

Interestingly, in the recent fitness industry survey, 45 per cent of respondents were

It’s about delivering a ‘wow’ experience, sending members away buzzing. We need to look not only at empowering our employees to do this, but also at linking incentives to its consistent delivery

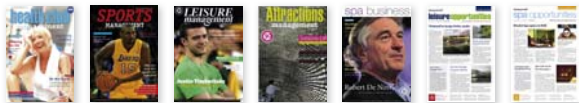
‘passives’ – it seems many of our members don’t feel passionately about us one way or the other. Clubs may therefore be running the risk of members drifting out of the door without an alarm bell even being sounded, not because they’re dissatisfied but simply because they don’t see the club as an integral part of their life. Mere satisfaction, a sentiment felt by many passives, is not enough to guarantee loyalty.

On a more positive note, someone scoring their club a seven or eight out is just a step or two from being a ‘promoter’. A few improvements in service levels, for example, could transform the business.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car is a great example of a company that recognised the value of enthusiasts. Customers who gave the highest rating were found to be three times more likely to rent again than those awarding the second-highest grade. Those reporting a neutral or negative experience – potential ‘detractors’ – were passed on to managers trained in how to apologise, identify the issue and resolve it. As a next step, staff rewards were linked to survey performance, whereby managers were not eligible for promotion unless their branch matched or exceeded the company’s average scores. This effectively gave customers the power of veto over pay raises. Scores continued to rise, and the company attributes this linking of customer feedback to employee reward as one of the key reasons for its steady growth.

Ultimately, it’s about delivering a ‘wow’ experience, sending members away from every visit buzzing about the time they’ve just spent with us. So perhaps we need to start looking not only at empowering our employees to do this, but also at linking staff incentives to the consistent delivery of this experience.

Kate Cracknell, editor
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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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Proof that Popeye was right, competition to throw a toilet seat, Street Snooker, and weight loss-related interest rates in Japan

History in the making

Keeping members engaged keeps members. The adage is easy to remember and the principle difficult to argue against, but the challenge of retaining members remains a persistent one for the fitness industry.

While regular, meaningful interaction between gym staff and members remains the ideal, in reality most members spend the majority of their time engaging with the equipment. As a result, there is a continual onus on equipment providers to help deliver higher levels of member satisfaction. History demonstrates that manufacturers have responded admirably, with the periodic introduction of new machine categories including the treadmill, the elliptical and the user-defined trainer. However, having spent the past few decades conceiving these new categories, arguably the scope for innovation, and the probability of a genuinely new category being launched, is diminishing. This perhaps explains why manufacturers are increasingly turning towards technology as a point of differentiation.

Designing for the future

2007 marked the end of one journey for Precor and the beginning of another. Since its inception in 1980, Precor had made a number of significant impacts on the fitness industry's timeline of innovation, in particular introducing the first Elliptical Fitness Crosstrainer in 1995. Twelve years later, this success was replicated with the launch of its Adaptive Motion Trainer® (AMT®). However, as the project to bring the AMT to market was completed in late 2007, Precor began a new and exciting project – to develop a new generation of the CV equipment console.

'Member experience', and helping exercisers reach their goals have always been of paramount importance to Precor and so a 'blank canvas' approach was taken, in order to fully understand the scope of members' needs. From the very beginning of the project, a wide variety of exercisers were invited to the newly-created 'Experience Development Center' (the 'XDC') in Seattle, USA, where they were interviewed on exactly what they desired from their fitness experience. While research continued in the Seattle-based laboratories, Precor also began to consult with a variety of operators, to further understand how consoles could best support their business needs.

A touching experience

Interactive, 'touch screen' devices are increasingly part of people's everyday lives. Precor quickly recognised that this type of technology is essential for the premium member experience of the future, but were also mindful of the fact that it must withstand the rigours of the modern gym environment. Therefore, Precor opted for a tough, industrial-grade 'capacitive' touch screen, the type already used for a variety of demanding, high-use commercial purposes, including bank 'ATMs', airport check-in terminals, and casino gaming machines. While most manufacturers have adopted 'resistive' touch screens, Precor recognised that the more robust capacitive screen would also allow users to perform 'gesture motions', such as sliding across different screen panels in the same way that users

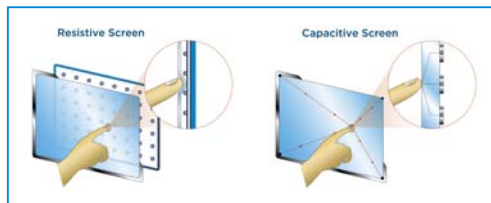


Precor's award-winning AMT with the new intuitive P80 console

can control leading phone and entertainment devices.

Development of the console (now named the 'P80') continued throughout 2008, and all manner of exercisers continued to attend the XDC, where their interactions with the evolving prototypes were carefully studied. While the P80 console became more sophisticated with every month that passed, the development team's overriding principle remained to create a console that would be accessible for even the most inexperienced gym member. Research shows that 76%* of exercisers experience some degree of boredom while using cardio equipment, and so the design team were also focussed on creating functionality which would provide a much more stimulating workout, including full iPod®/iPhone® compatibility and customisable stats and media options. Dave Flynt, Principal Interaction Designer at Precor, comments: "The User Interface is simple and intuitive, and large, off-screen 'Motion Controls' enable exercisers to perform basic functions such as adjustments in resistance, speed and incline quickly and easily. From the onset, the design philosophy has been 'fitness is

Precor's new P80 console features a tough, industrial-grade 'capacitive' touch screen.





Understandably the whole industry is excited by the prospect of networked fitness

foremost'. Complementary features, such as the library of workout guides, also help to promote this goal for the benefit of members and clubs alike."

Research and Development (R&D), combined with rigorous testing, continued for a majority of 2009, with the P80 console being honed according to ongoing user and customer input. Then, in November 2009, a small corner of Seattle became a big landmark in the project, as the first 'test club' installation took place. The ensuing success was undoubtedly a consequence of the extensive two-year R&D process, and further installations took place in quick succession throughout 2010.

Networked Fitness

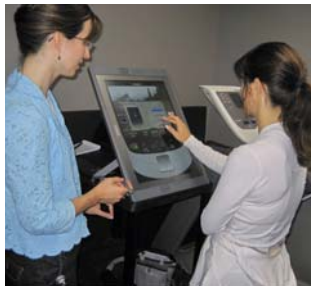
While the P80 console is a breakthrough in its own right, there is also a further, highly significant dimension. Each console features an Ethernet connection, enabling the console to be networked. Brent Brooks, Vice President of Networked

Precor invested in three and a half years of R&D (right) before launching the new P80 console (above).

Fitness at Precor, comments, "The internet now shapes so many aspects of our daily lives and so understandably the whole industry is excited by the prospect of networked fitness. It is evident that this type of technology opens up extensive benefits to both the exerciser and club owners, and Precor is delighted to now begin delivering these benefits to its customers."

The future's here

The spring of 2011 marks the official launch of the P80 console and the conclusion of an extensive three and a half year research, development and testing process. Brent Brooks concludes: "The beauty of the P80 console really is in the simplicity – users are discovering the joys of a premium interactive design, combined with a fully integrated media



experience that will satisfy even the most demanding member's needs. With the almost limitless possibilities of a networked fitness experience, the launch signifies a huge step-change for both Precor and the industry." And, ultimately, that will result in many more highly-engaged members.

FOR MORE DETAILS

Tel: 01276 404900
Email: info@precor.com
www.precor.com

*Research source: Attitude and Perceptions of Consumers towards CV Equipment - January 2010 - Leisure-net Solutions.

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



Education: Do PTs get the right training to be able to succeed?

personal training – the real reality check

I applaud the recognition that all is not 'roses' in the PT industry (*HCM* March II, p24). However, I believe the problem lies with the education. I feel PTs leave our industry quickly because Level 2 and Level 3 are 'off target' for PTs, leading to an anecdotal 20 per cent chance of remaining in the industry after three months.

The industry has introduced National Occupational Standards, but this has halted the homogenisation of PTs, stifling innovation in the mainstream. There are still plenty of great personal trainers out there, but too many are entering the industry with generic qualifications; their product is therefore weak.

It is time for educators to break the mould – give PTs superlative, differentiated education products. Up the standards. I can name at least one training provider who was teaching

the highlighted communication skills, interaction, small group training – 15 years ago! Nothing new here.

PT graduates also need mentors as they learn their trade during those first three months after qualification. Training providers must use more active and successful personal trainers to teach people how to survive and flourish – people who know how to succeed because they are doing it every day.

This way PTs can look forward to becoming very good at what they do – getting to 20-plus sessions a week before even thinking about multiple income streams. It will take some brave innovation from educators in the industry to achieve these changes, but that quiet revolution is already underway.

peter banbury
md, faster health and fitness

tenpilates – an integrated approach to clinical pilates

It was interesting to read the piece on clinical pilates (*HCM* Mar II, p39).

At TenPilates, we follow a similar approach, combining physio with pilates as part of the rehab process. Three specialities – TenPilates, TenPhysio and Ten Personal Training – also work together to offer clients a seamless, continuous progression of physio, rehab, corrective and functional exercise.

But what sets us apart is not just what we do, but how we do it. We teach dynamic pilates which, like classic pilates, is excellent for rehab and corrective exercise, but it also offers a more intense, results-driven full-body workout. Sessions are usually class-based, but our PT arm creates bespoke programmes to support any aspect of a client's treatment, rehab or training.

More importantly, it's an inherently integrated whole life approach. Therapists and trainers share knowledge, insights and client history, and work together to apply the right mix of complementary skills, experience and expertise at each stage of the client's treatment and training.


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justin rogers
creative director, tenpilates



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health clubs upbeat over 2010 financial results

TOM WALKER

The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) has announced the results of its November and December Monthly Trends Surveys.

Survey results show that most IHRSA members taking part in the survey, representing more than 300 locations, significantly improved performance in 2010 when compared with 2009. More than half (53.9 per cent) of clubs saw membership traffic increase during 2010, while 66.3 per cent posted increased total revenue.



Project includes the redevelopment of the pool

work begins on £3m kingswood leisure centre

TOM WALKER

Refurbishment works have begun to upgrade the facilities at Kingswood Leisure Centre in Bristol.

The £3m refurbishment, which is being carried out by contractor ISG Pearce, will include a 38-week programme of work that encompasses the development of the main pool to eventually incorporate a learner pool, upgrading the changing areas, a new Active Fitness gym and general improvements to the remaining facilities. Stage one of the revamp involves the main pool.

miserable nps score for sector

TOM WALKER

Health and fitness operators have "much work to do" if they want to improve member satisfaction, according to the first ever national Net Promoter Score (NPS) study conducted on the sector by Leisure-net Solutions in partnership with The Retention People.

Leisure-net carried out a survey using the NPS method to measure satisfaction and loyalty levels among members. This involved asking health club members just one question: "How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?"

The results reveal that the industry's overall score was just 21 per cent. There were also significant differences between sectors, with local authority sites scoring highest at 27 per cent, followed by the trusts at just 12 per cent.

However, the most worrying statistic is that private multi-site operators recorded a dire



A vast majority of members would not recommend their club to others

-16 per cent. According to NPS benchmarks, companies with the most efficient growth engines operate at NPS efficiency ratings of 50 to 80 per cent. Any company or industry sector that has a negative NPS means that they are "creating more detractors than promoters [and] are unable to deliver profitable, sustainable growth, no matter how aggressively they expand."

Thirty operators took part in this inaugural survey, with 159 sites and more than 19,000 members represented.

tone leisure to open second feel good site

TOM WALKER

Leisure trust Tone has begun building work on the second of its Feel Good Factory-branded ladies-only gym spaces. Based at Ivybridge Leisure Centre in Devon, the fitness and weight-loss centre will house equipment supplied by Shapemaster and Powertone, as well as the new range of Easytone machines.

The Ivybridge Feel Good Factory will have its own entrance and reception that will separate it from the main facility. It will be targeted at females who are overweight and/or who have limited mobility.

The centre follows on from the success of the first Feel Good Factory at Blackbrook Pavilion in Somerset, which was launched as a pilot



Tone now plans to roll out its women-only concept

scheme in 2010. The popularity of the concept has led Tone to draw up plans to roll out the model across the portfolio of centres which it operates on behalf of local authorities.

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details of quest format revealed

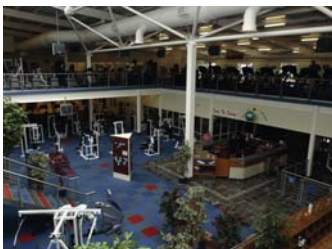
TOM WALKER

The new format for the Quest assessment scheme has been revealed ahead of its launch date of 1 June.

There are significant changes to the way leisure centres are assessed by Quest, with the aim of making the process more flexible.

Three new levels have been introduced: Quest Entry is a one-day, operational assessment aimed at smaller and community sites; Quest Plus is a two-day process, which includes a one-day operational assessment; while Quest Stretch will feature an unannounced day-one assessment, plus a second day focusing on a centre's approach to measuring impact and outcomes.

According to Caroline Constantine, Quest operations director, there will also be a renewed focus on health and safety.



There are significant changes to the way each club is assessed by Quest

"Another new element is that we are introducing a health and safety threshold score," she says. "If sites don't pass this, they won't pass their assessment. They'll also have to know the impact their changes have made. For the first time, Quest will ask sites to measure the difference they make to their customers' lives."

exergaming 'better' than traditional fitness

TOM WALKER

An academic study has outlined the benefits of interactive digital gaming (exergaming) and suggested that it could form an alternative to traditional, supervised exercise for children. A study conducted at GoKids Boston – the youth fitness research and training centre at the University of Massachusetts, US – found that all games used in the study elevated energy expenditure of children to moderate or vigorous intensity.

The report, *Energy Cost of Exergaming*, concludes: "Exergaming has the potential to increase physical activity and has a favourable influence on energy balance. It may be a viable alternative to traditional fitness activities for all children."



The study calls for more emphasis to be placed on exergaming

The games used in the study included six products: Dance Dance Revolution, LightSpace (Bug Invasion), Nintendo Wii Boxing, Cybex Trazer (Goalie Wars), Sportwall and Xavix (J-Mat).

£600k overhaul for high peak leisure centres

TOM WALKER

High Peak District Council (HPDC) and operator DC Leisure are to embark on a £600,000 revamp of Glossop and New Mills leisure centres next month. Due to run until late July, the 16-week project will provide a number

of new and refurbished facilities at both sites, including new-look fitness suites and group exercise studios. Glossop Leisure Centre will also feature a new disabled changing room on the lower floor, a revamp of the changing rooms and upgraded access to the upper floor.

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Chris Lovelock
General Manager
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fitness job 'ban' for non-eu migrants

TOM WALKER

UK companies will find it increasingly hard to recruit non-EU immigrants as fitness instructors and exercise staff.

A review of the country's skill shortages by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) has recommended changes in the current points system, with a number of fitness-related jobs being affected. MAC has concluded that many jobs within the sector are "non-skilled" and therefore do not qualify for Tier 2 status, making it harder for immigrants to get work permits.



Refurbishment will transform the ageing facility

isle of wight leisure centre set for revamp

PETE HAYMAN

Plans for the refurbishment of Heights Leisure Centre in Sandown, Isle of Wight, have been given the green light.

Isle of Wight Council (IWC) says its decision to approve the project was a 'business-driven' one, designed to enhance leisure provision and reduce running costs. A new Tone Zone will be constructed to the rear of the building; two squash courts are set to be converted into activity space; and the remainder of the centre will be overhauled.

gll launches jump start scheme

PETE HAYMAN

Leisure trust GLL has launched a healthy living campaign targeting residents in Tower Hamlets, one of the most deprived areas in London.

The 'Jump Start' scheme is a new physical activity referral scheme delivered in partnership between GLL, NHS Tower Hamlets and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It will see local health professionals refer patients with existing health conditions – such as coronary heart disease, stroke and asthma – as well as those at risk of developing health conditions – to attend tailor-made, low-cost, personal exercise programmes including circuit training, aqua classes, healthy walks and gym-based sessions.

Once a patient is referred to Jump Start, a dedicated team of GLL exercise



The scheme aims to increase the number of exercise referrals in the area

specialists will assess them on a regular basis, as well as being on-hand to offer advice on exercise, diet and healthy lifestyles. All progress is monitored and GLL will take account of current fitness levels and special requirements when devising individual programmes.

weight loss franchise to launch in the uk

TOM WALKER

Fitness industry veteran Nic Jarvis is to launch the Swedish weight-loss programme Xtravaganza in the UK.

The Xtravaganza model is based on helping clients to achieve long-term behavioural change, resulting in permanent weight loss.

Using the principle of four 'guiding stars' for lifestyle change – Mind Training, Mental Nourishment, Good Energy and Joy by Movement – the programme is aimed at equipping members with lifestyle and wellness skills. Jarvis, who has more than 28 years' fitness industry experience, says he is targeting health clubs to take up Xtravaganza and add it to their services.



The concept will be introduced to the UK by Nic Jarvis

"Health clubs, like most businesses in the UK, are feeling the pinch of the economic climate and need to be looking at alternative avenues to bring in profits," he says.

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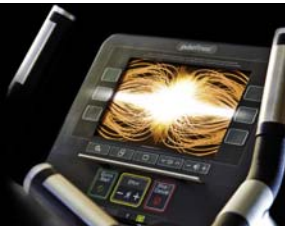


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kiss gyms launches in mk

PETE HAYMAN

Kiss Gyms, a new privately-owned health club concept led by chief executive officer Rupert McKenzie-Hill, has opened its doors to the public in Milton Keynes.

Launched in January, the gym – remodelled from a children's activity play centre by design company Createability – is one of the first 24-hour facilities in the region and offers a monthly membership of £14.99 with no contract.

Members can access the 1,449sq m (15,600sq ft) gym at Knowlhill using a PIN code, while 24-hour CCTV security and assistance is also available. Matrix has supplied more than 120 pieces of CV and strength equipment, while a free weights area is also on offer.

McKenzie-Hill, one of the group's owners, has revealed plans to open a further 10



The Milton Keynes club will offer members 24-hour access to facilities

Kiss Gyms across the UK, backed by a combination of private, bank and venture capital funding over the next two years. He says possible future locations include London, Reading, Basingstoke, Swindon, Cheltenham and Gloucester.

morgan's wellbeing launches truro club

TOM WALKER

Health Club operator Morgan's Wellbeing has launched a 1,600sq m (17,000sq ft) fitness facility in Truro, Cornwall.

The site, the third centre for the independently owned and operated brand, is located in an area of outstanding beauty and offers both indoor and outdoor exercise options for members.

The club offers a fitness suite including two large areas for stretching, a 280sq m (3,000 sq ft) dance and aerobic studio, a relaxation zone and a healthy eating café. The studio is fully air-conditioned and is kitted out with steps, BodyPump sets, boxing bags, bars and dumbbells. The club offers more than 40 classes a week including yoga, BodyPump, BodyCombat.



The club's large fitness areas have been equipped by Precor

John Williams, managing director of Morgan's Wellbeing, says: "The centre at Truro signifies a major step forward for the expansion of the brand, and follows the refurbishment of our two other sites."

former footballer opens new physio facility

PETE HAYMAN

Former professional footballer Kristian Hackett has expanded his Sheffield-based Anston Physiotherapy business with a new facility at Doncaster's Keepmoat Stadium. Anston Physiotherapy first launched in 2008

and offers services including musculoskeletal and paediatric physiotherapy, sports massage, acupuncture and hypnotherapy.

The opening of the clinic at the Keepmoat Stadium will add to the existing facilities already on offer at Stadium Fitness.

SUPPLIER & TRAINING

precor reveals experience line

TOM WALKER

Precor has revealed the details of its new Experience Series range of CV equipment, which will be available this spring.

The new series – combining cardio units with a new choice of consoles – was officially launched at IHRSA last month. The European debut will take place at FIBO in April.

The new product line consists of three consoles – the P80, P30 and P20 – and promises to offer Precor customers a broader choice, as well as a significantly enhanced workout experience for users.

The flagship P80 is the most radical development from Precor's existing console offerings, featuring a robust touch-screen similar to those used on iPhones and iPads. The screen allows users to perform 'gesture motions', such as sweeping across different screens.



The new Experience equipment includes large, robust touch-screens

The P80 console has also been designed to promote new workout programmes to users when they first engage with the equipment, rather than simply pressing 'quick start'. Research conducted after early installations suggests that 40 per cent of users try a new workout as a direct result.

ehfa launches leadership programme

TOM WALKER

The European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) is to host its first executive leadership programme in Barcelona this summer. Taking place at the IESE Business School from 6–10 June, the interactive and intensive one-week programme has been specifically designed to help health and fitness professionals sharpen their leadership skills and broaden their vision of the sector.

The programme will be operated under the EHFA University banner and will see a group of 35 international industry leaders experience learning through interactive, dynamic learning methods, including case studies, discussions, simulations and small group activities.



The EHFA event will take place at the IESE Business School in Barcelona

The learning modules include what EHFA calls an 'execugame' – a motivational activity in which teams compete in a virtual marketplace and solve real management dilemmas typical of the sector.

asa launches new swimming scheme

TOM WALKER

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) has created a new swimming programme – called Swimfit – which it hopes will motivate more people to take up the activity as a way of keeping fit.

Using gym-style training cards and an online schedule, swimmers can choose what programme they want to follow.

There are currently four Swimfit variations, designed to appeal to swimmers looking to achieve a range of health goals.

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in brief...

third club for hard candy

Madonna's third Hard Candy Fitness club will be located in St Petersburg, Russia, it has been confirmed.

The 4,830sq m site in the centre of the city is projected to open in mid-2011. The announcement follows the recent opening of the Mexico City Hard Candy Fitness and confirmation of plans for a Hard Candy Fitness centre in Moscow.

The Moscow and St Petersburg clubs will be in partnership with Irina Razumova, founder of Russian health club chain Planet Fitness.

Options are now being explored for Hard Candy locations in Italy, the UK, Canada, France, Australia, Argentina and Brazil. Fans have been asked to voice their choice for the next location by going to www.madonna.com/hardcandyfitness and voting on the interactive map.

polish fc chooses star trac

In Poland, Lech Poznan FC – the football club that won the Polish League Championships in 2010 – opened its new fitness facility at the end of last month.

An independent club for use by the footballers only, the new facility is located on-site at the football club. The offering comprises two halls, one of which houses the gym, with the other designated to football-specific training.

All equipment – both cardiovascular and resistance – has been supplied by Star Trac, with the exception of a selection of benches manufactured by Escape. This includes the full Star Trac HumanSport cable line (six units).

Lech Poznan FC chose Star Trac to equip its club following a trial of the equipment during a recent training camp in Spain.

dir's snow cycling class

The Grau Roig ski resort in Andorra was the backdrop to the first SpinDIR session in the snow, which took place in February. With a live Red Bull DJ and leading DiR instructors, 50 people took part in the extreme 30-minute class.

california gets extreme fit

Extreme Fit, a new outdoor fitness offering, launched in February in Novato, California, US.

Currently offered at two locations in the city, the business has been set up by qualified personal trainers Johnny May and Kyle Sammons. The three-tiered



Extreme Fit: A fun but results-focused offering for California

system caters for all fitness levels, and is designed to be fun, but also is based on the understanding that a goal can only be achieved through hard work, and by those who truly want it.

Programmes include strength and conditioning, endurance and stamina, weight management and 'fat incineration', and flexibility and toning. Exercises are based on natural movements and are constantly updated to keep participants progressing.

Home-made equipment includes items such as sand- or water-filled PVC pipes, with a small amount of space left to create an unstable lift and engage the core.

Fees start at US\$99 a month (20 classes) or US\$15 per class on a drop-in basis. Indoor facilities are also available in the case of bad weather.

viva.fit opens first singapore club

Singapore's first Vivafit club opens this month in the Tanjong Pagar Plaza shopping centre.

The site of the new club was formerly occupied by a retail store. The club will open following a full refurbishment of the site, offering the usual Vivafit offering – hydraulic circuit plus pilates, Body Vive and Body Balance classes – all designed to cater for women only.

The club is owned by Vivafit's local master franchisee, Belgian-born Cecile Jamoulle-Ogren, who has been in Singapore for 14 years. A second site is already scheduled to open this year, with plans for 25 clubs over the next three years and 100 in the next six years.



Jamoulle-Ogren (left) with Vivafit CEO Pedro Ruiz in Singapore

anytime fitness expands into the middle-east

Anytime Fitness will open clubs in the Middle East following an Area Development Agreement with Qatar-based Almuftah Group – a privately held company based in Doha, Qatar.

Three clubs are already planned for Qatar under the ownership of Almuftah Marketing, a division of the Almuftah Group. The first is expected to open by July.

The Almuftah Group is involved in a wide variety of business ventures, including restaurant franchising,

consumer retail products, car sales, and manufacturing and engineering.

"Our long-term goal is to open an Anytime Fitness club in each town in Qatar, to make fitness accessible to everybody," says Ali A Al Muftah, director of the Al Muftah Group. "We're also planning to open new clubs in the neighbouring countries in the Middle East region."

Anytime Fitness now has more than 1,000,000 members across almost 1,500 clubs in eight countries.



The concept for the multi-disciplinary centre will now be rolled out

pellikaan's new medical centre

The Pellikaan Health & Racquet Club in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, held the grand opening for its new Medical Health Clinic in February.

The multi-disciplinary centre is operated in conjunction with sports physiotherapy company Daan Spanjersberg. Pellikaan has worked with Spanjersberg for a number of years, but until now this has been a case of renting out treatment rooms within the facility.

The new eight-room clinic – open to members and the public – is used by physiotherapists, dieticians, orthopaedic specialists, a kids' physiotherapist, GP, occupational health expert and so on. Regular meetings between Spanjersberg

and Pellikaan staff ensure full integration between club and medical centre.

Designed as a concept for 'total health' via three Cs (cure, care and control), the clinic offers everything from treatment – supported by health insurance – through rehab and dietary advice to a focus on healthy lifestyle and the notion of 'exercise is medicine', encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own health. Special programmes are also available for the over-50s, over-70s, anti-obesity and smoking cessation. V-Check (see *HCM* Oct 10, p29) is used as a screening and coaching tool.

The concept will now be rolled out across the Pellikaan estate.

21 centrale partners' acquisitions

21 Centrale Partners, in association with SEC Partners – a local partner in Switzerland – has acquired Silhouette, the Swiss market leader.

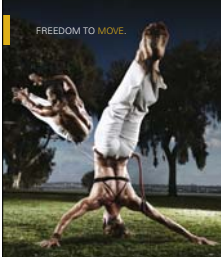
The Silhouette estate acquired by 21 Centrale Partners comprises 22 member clubs in Geneva, Zurich and Brussels – catering for with 37,000 members – as well as two corporate clubs.

In 2008, 21 Centrale Partners acquired Club Med Gym (CMG) from Club Méditerranée. CMG is the leading brand in the French fitness market, with 70,000 members across 22 clubs in Paris. It also

operates 32 corporate clubs and runs fitness industry training provider IMF.

Together, CMG and Silhouette operate 44 clubs in three countries and represent a global customer base of 107,000 members. They are expected to generate aggregated revenue of €80m and consolidate their position through the opening of new clubs. CMG's CEO, Franck Gueguen, becomes CEO across the combined business.

21 Partners is an international private equity group dedicated to growth buyouts in the Italian and French mid-markets.



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Rudkin will be responsible for all UK operations

new uk country manager for life fitness

PETE HAYMAN

Fitness equipment supplier Life Fitness has revealed that former UK sales director Murray Rudkin has been promoted to the role of UK country manager.

Rudkin will now take over responsibility for the growth and profitability of the group in the UK, a role previously held by Dan Wille. Wille is now set to return to the US as vice president for marketing/brand management and strategic planning as part of a restructuring strategy at Life Fitness.

Life Fitness president Chris Clawson says: "The UK market continues to offer both opportunities and challenges, and with more than 12 years of experience within the industry, we are confident that Murray is more than qualified to grow the business and provide great leadership in the region. I have no doubt that both Murray and Dan will be very successful in their new roles and will help drive our global business to ensure we meet our targets in 2011 and beyond."

british swimming appoints new development coach

TOM WALKER

British Swimming has appointed Mark Perry as its new development coach.

Perry, the current open water performance manager, has been appointed to a new dual role which will see him incorporate the development role into his current remit.

Michael Scott, national performance director for British Swimming, says: "This is an important position in the run-up to the 2016 Olympics in Rio, opening up opportunities for the next generation of British swimmers."

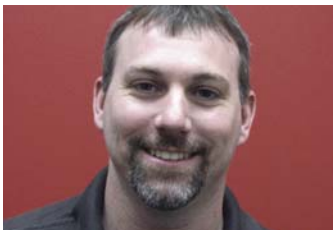
grosz named star trac president

PETE HAYMAN

Dustin Grosz has been confirmed as the new president and COO of fitness equipment supplier Star Trac, with immediate effect. Grosz – the former COO of Core Fitness, which trades as StairMaster – has been appointed to succeed Mike Leveque.

In his new role with Star Trac, Grosz will aim to streamline the business and reposition it from the manufacturing of products towards managing a global supply chain. Processes will be changed and new lines of communications opened as part of the move, as well as leading a company-wide effort to strengthen customer service.

Grosz says: "Being profitable will allow us to deliver on our promises and ultimately help us win back customers by providing better customer service."



Dustin Grosz will take over the role from the departing Mike Leveque

"We need to grow revenue in a way that benefits Star Trac as a company, but that also benefits our customers."

Star Trac chair and chief executive officer Michael Bruno adds: "We have emerged from the ABC process as a stable company – one that is better positioned to take care of our customers."

millennium partners reshuffles top team

TOM WALKER

US-based Millennium Partners Sports Club Management (MPSCM), operator of the Reebok Sports Club New York and The Sports Club brands, has made changes to its strategic leadership team.

Chief executive officer Art Curtis moves to MPSCM's parent company, Millennium Partners, to focus on mergers and acquisitions of health club properties (see interview, p28).

He is replaced as MPSCM chief executive by Smaiyra Million, who is promoted from her position of chief operating officer.

With more than 30 years' experience in the sector, Curtis is the current chair of IHRSA.



Curtis, a 30-year industry veteran, is currently chair of IHRSA

Million, another industry veteran with more than 25 years of experience, has overseen the operations of the company's six premier health clubs during her tenure as COO.

precor adds to international sales team

TOM WALKER

Precor has strengthened its sales and account management team by adding Alex Perrior and Ray Redman as internal sales representatives.

Having joined Precor with a background in customer service, Perrior has spent the

last three years working for the company as customer service representative.

Redman joins Precor after spending seven years in the fitness industry in various roles, including time as a personal trainer and fitness manager at a private health club.

PEOPLE PROFILE

INDEPENDENT OPERATOR FOCUS



andy fowler

Fowler has had to battle the odds to keep his Define Fitness club open. Diagnosed with cancer after the launch, he fought the illness off but then lost his girlfriend and business partner Helen to cystic fibrosis

How many years have you worked within the fitness industry?
11 years.

What was your first job in fitness?
Working as a fitness instructor at David Lloyd Leisure in Kidbrooke.

What made you decide to pursue a career in fitness?
After I completed my A levels, I had a gap year before going off to college. In that year I started training in a local gym and thought how amazing it would be to work in a fitness environment.

Tell us about your club
Helen Barrett and I opened Define Fitness on 1 April 2006. It's a club for personal trainers to work with clients in a private gym, so no distractions or queues or groups of people. The emphasis is on being able to offer a personal trainer for any goal.

Everything at Define Fitness is aimed at giving personal trainers everything they need so they can work to the best of their ability. The studio has no fees for the client except what the trainer charges. The trainer pays an hourly rate, or discounted monthly rate if they hit a certain amount of hours.

Who are your clients?
We have a wide range of clients, from people looking to lose weight to bodybuilders and yoga enthusiasts. We have such a wide range of trainers that nobody is left out.

Could you tell our readers about the challenges you have faced?
About two years after we opened the club, I was diagnosed with testicular cancer. It was a bad type so, after an operation to remove the testicle, I had to have three months of intensive chemotherapy.

Did the illness change you?
It didn't change me very much apart from making me realise quite how important it is

to keep fit; my doctor told me my recovery from chemotherapy was much quicker because my fitness level was very good.

How was it to return to work after getting the all-clear?
Returning to work was wonderful; my clients were, and still are, so brilliant. They're very understanding and, as long as I still pushed them very, very hard, I had no problems.

Do you plan to open a second club?
Define Fitness works really well and I would like to open another one, but would set it up quite some way from the current site. People come quite far to see our personal trainers and I wouldn't want to cannibalise on our current business.

What drives you?
Working as a personal trainer is a fantastic lifestyle - I couldn't sit behind a desk for eight hours a day. I enjoy the energy of training my clients, as well as running and improving the studio.

What are your goals and ambitions?
My main goal is to make Define Fitness the first place people think of when they want to hit any type of health and fitness target.

What do you think is the next big thing in fitness?
I think there will be an increase in group personal training as it's more affordable and the client still achieves big goals. Also, people love any type of exercise that's fun.

What's your favourite motto/quote?
The quote I hear myself saying to clients is 'Leave negativity at the door', but my late girlfriend/business partner used to say: "Life is fragile, every day is a blessing".

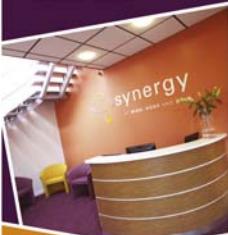
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let's get moving



The FIA has taken an innovative approach that rethinks the pathway to physical activity, based on the latest evidence around behavioural change. David Stalker, the FIA's executive director, reports

Physical inactivity is currently costing Essex plc £264m in lost working hours, sickness absence and premature mortality. And now, in partnership with behaviour change specialists Scintillate, the FIA has been commissioned – by a consortium of five Essex Primary Care Trusts – to deliver a physical activity care pathway based around the government's 'Let's Get Moving' framework.

Let's Get Moving is an evidence-based behaviour intervention model used by healthcare commissioners to embed the promotion of physical activity at the very core of the NHS. It's based on the notion that physical activity can be used effectively by the NHS to manage and prevent over 20 conditions and diseases, and reflects the commitment of the coalition to rebalance the relationship between the prevention and treatment of chronic disease.

The programme was piloted by the Department of Health, evaluated by the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity & Health at Loughborough University, and is underpinned by NICE's review of physical activity interventions.

behavioural change

Based on motivational interviewing techniques (see *HCM* Sept 08, p38), the new programme is designed to assist healthcare practitioners in guiding inactive adults, aged 16–74, towards becoming more active through five key steps: recruit, screen, intervene, active participation, and review. Screening is based on PCT patient lists, selecting those with pre-existing health conditions such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

The project's distinctive approach is based on four key elements to achieving sustainable behaviour change: minimising attrition, behavioural change theory, behavioural change techniques and



PHOTO: WWW.BITCOINPHOTO.COM

Motivate: Let's Get Moving is an evidence-based behaviour intervention model

stakeholder engagement. Attrition is one of the biggest failings of a project of this type, so patient motivation is managed throughout the journey via telephone calls, emails, SMS and letters designed to remind and encourage.

The programme comprises an initial assessment by a healthcare professional, followed by a physical activity-specific motivational interview with a clinical exercise practitioner. There are then a number of appointments to monitor progress – the latest accelerometers are used to capture users' activity data and eliminate the misreporting of physical activity – with the exit route being a sustained programme of physical activity.

The FIA has begun implementation of the programme in the Essex area by working alongside GP surgeries – in Halstead, Southend-on-Sea, Clacton-on-Sea, Basildon, Harlow and Colchester. A team of qualified exercise instructors from among the FIA's membership has been recruited to assume the role of clinical exercise practitioners; the team has received training to develop the skills required to deliver a safe and

effective programme that will motivate patients into habitual activity.

Over the coming months, FIA members in the Essex area will also be asked to provide an affordable, short-term membership or non membership-based option to enable participants to make a smooth transition and maintain the level of physical activity or sport on completion of the intervention.

shaping opinion

However, with NHS reforms changing the face of healthcare commissioning, GPs are the primary stakeholder in the initiative; engagement with them is fundamental to the success of this project.

The FIA has successfully developed a range of effective techniques to drive engagement with primary care practitioners and strengthening this will be a focus of the coming year. Indeed, with the introduction of GP consortia adopting a phased approach until April 2013, our industry must seize this opportunity to shape future healthcare commissioners' opinions around physical activity and health.

SHAPE



MOVE



POWER



BALANCE



FUN



SPORT



The six aspirations of Club 2.0

Know your Members

Proven Solutions to drive retention

Growing trends in the industry shows the need to interact with members, understand their aspirations and motivations in order to increase the length of their membership.

Technogym has specifically developed a number of products and services that offer clubs the Total Wellness Solution for managing member interactions and to improve retention.

Contact Manager is the essential

solution for any operator wanting to improve retention, based on Technogym's and FIA retention principles. It is able to predict each member's risk of dropping out, thanks to an algorithm that considers frequency, compliance, age, membership

length, trend results and other data. By using a simple Who's In page a trainer can prioritise which members to interact with. A unique feature of Contact Manager is the ability to profile groups of members and provide a service plan that is based around their group. In alignment with training and consultancy, Technogym can ensure the profiles and service plans are specifically tailored to the club.

Club 2.0, based on a software application called the Aspiration finder, allows clubs to establish peoples aspirations and understand the way in which they live and move.

Scientifically validated by the University of Milan, the aspiration finder is based around six core aspirations.

By using a combination of **Club 2.0** and **Contact Manager**, clubs are able to understand members better and plan effective interactions by following simple aspiration focussed communication and training guidelines.

Technogym are able to offer a unique combination of consultancy, soft skills training, software and support programmes to ensure each club has a bespoke solution customised to their members, business needs and service plan mechanisms. Know your members... drive your retention.

CASE STUDY

- 8.5% increase in 12 month retention
- 2% reduction in year-on-year attrition
- Increasing length of membership by 2.5 months with no minimum contract term (now 17.5 months)

North Herts Leisure Centre

(managed by SLL on behalf of North Herts. District Council) implemented Contact Manager in 2009, and the club has seen significant improvements in customer service.

The system helps to track the member journey, particularly for new joiners, and triggers actions for low attendance and program renewals. Staff also cited the "Who's in" screen, surveys, and reports as being very useful bonus features

North Herts' twelve month member retention increased from 50.7% to 59.2%. Conversely, the 1,500 member

club has seen a dramatic reduction in average monthly attrition (drop-out) from 9% down to below 6%.

Even more impressive is that SLL do not mandate a minimum contract term, and yet membership length is also increasing. Average length of membership increased by 2.5 months, to 17.5 months.

"Retention improvements with Contact Manager are clear to see", says Mark Jennings, Gym Manager at North Herts. "Instructors are directed to contact high priority members, rather than regulars. It is also a massive help with instructors' time management"



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APRIL

13-16 ACSM's 15th Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition

Venue Anaheim, California, US
Summary

This event bridges the gap between the science of sports medicine and its practice for the fitness professional. Through educational sessions and workouts, attendees are presented with cutting-edge information on hot topics.
Web www.acsm.org/summit

14-17 FIBO 2011

Venue Essen, Germany
Summary

More than 560 companies – including all the key players from more than 35 countries – showcase products, concepts and solutions for the fitness, wellness and health industries at this annual fitness convention. The show comprises a variety of distinct areas catering for training equipment, products and services, sports nutrition, wellness and beauty and medical fitness. The show attracts around 53,000 visitors from 60 countries. (See p56)
Web www.fibo.de

15-17 Australian Fitness & Health Expo

Venue Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia
Summary

Exhibitions, seminars and training for the Australasian fitness industry.
Web www.fitnessexpo.com.au

MAY

4-7 SPATEC Europe

Venue Budapest, Hungary
Summary

A two-day forum of face-to-face meetings, with UK and European spa owners, directors and senior personnel meeting with more than 70 leading international spa suppliers.
Web www.spateceu.com

FIBO includes demonstrations and group events on the show floor

8-9 BeautyUK

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK
Summary

The Midlands' largest beauty trade exhibition and training congress, featuring the UK Nail Tech competition. Held alongside the Holistic Health show and congress.
Web www.beautyserve.com

21-22 BodyPower

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK
Summary

Focused on sports including strongman, wrestling, boxing, MMA, gymnastics, cycling and athletics, this exhibition incorporates sports nutrition, equipment, clothing and associated products. There are also seminars from sports personalities. (See p66)
Web www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk

25-26 SIBEC UK

Venue: Forest of Arden Marriott, Birmingham, UK
Summary

SIBEC UK brings together 120 of the most influential suppliers and buyers of the UK leisure, health and fitness sector from the local authority, trust and education markets. It offers two days of face-to-face meetings, forums and networking opportunities.
Web www.sibec.co.uk

JUNE

2-5 Festival del Fitness

Venue Parco del Foro Italico, Rome, Italy
Summary

The 23rd exhibition for the Italian fitness industry. Around 250,000 participants attend this outdoor event, which encompasses everything from parkour to hip hop dance sessions, beach rugby to fitness challenges and car-pushing.
Web www.fitfestival.com

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competitive edge

22 MAY 2011

thames bridges bike ride

Get a group of family, friends or work colleagues together to take part in this event, which raises money to help the 250,000 people who are currently living with the effects of a stroke in the UK.

More than 2,000 cyclists are expected to take part in the 33-mile ride, which follows the River Thames over 14 of London's famous bridges. The beautiful surroundings of Battersea and Richmond parks can be enjoyed along the way. The entry fee is £21 and the fundraising target is £70. Details: www.stroke.org.uk/thamesbridges



Bike along the River Thames and over 14 of its famous bridges

23 OCTOBER 2011

the venice marathon

The Venice Marathon is considered to follow one of the most beautiful routes in a unique city – and a temporary bridge is even built over the Grand Canal for the occasion. What's more, the course is almost entirely flat, which makes it an appealing option for those who want to set a personal best. Venice in Peril – a charity fighting for the preservation of the city – has a number of places available for you cultured runners out there. Details: www.veniceinperil.com



A scenic and flat marathon

MAY 2012

the médocaine

The Médocaine one-day hiking and cycling event in France (translated as Cycle Through the Vines) is so popular that the 6,500 places for 2011 are already full. However, you can register your interest for 2012.

Now in its 13th year, the event includes 20, 25, 30, 35, 50 and 80km walking and biking routes across some of the greatest wine regions and vineyards in the Gironde area of south-west France.

Along the way there are wine tasting stations and 25 live bands. Fancy dress is encouraged. More of a fun-filled event than for serious time-setters. Details: www.medocainevt.com



Fancy dress is optional but encouraged

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everyone's talking about . . .

Medical Wellness

medical wellness

Should the industry now be delivering medical wellness? Do we really want to embrace this change, what will it involve and will consumers go for it?

The medics are physiological experts, yet few habitually prescribe exercise – even though, in many cases, it can be more effective than drugs.

In my own personal experience, the chasm between GP and gym can lead to patients falling between two stools. When I found out I had high blood pressure, the first reaction of the doctor was to prescribe drugs; exercise wasn't even mentioned. When the medication caused side-effects and I wanted to manage my blood pressure through exercise alone, he seemed surprised but pleased. However, the gym was nervous about this and wanted

to refer me back to my doctor, which I knew would be pointless. I therefore had to take responsibility myself. But many people wouldn't be comfortable with this; it would be more reassuring if the two sides were somehow joined-up.

So can the fitness industry move closer to the medical profession and bridge this gap? Many experts claim that it must, it can, and indeed that it is starting to do so (see below).

Nick Burrows, former MD of Nuffield Health, Fitness and Wellbeing – now chair of leisure brand creation business Brand Spirit – is convinced his former company will be successful in delivering medical wellness, due to highly trained

staff and genuine medical credentials. However, he is unsure whether the sector as a whole can do this. Burrows argues that the wider industry must realise that delivering medical wellness involves much more than marginal upskilling. He also questions whether consumers in some markets actually want to see their club change from a social space to a more medical one.

Would moving in this direction put pressure on the bottom line? Cause liability issues? Take the fun out of the club? Or is it important for the industry to break out of being mainly cosmetic and start to really impact on the nation's health? We ask the experts.

CAN WE REALLY DELIVER MEDICAL WELLNESS? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

dr john searle

fia • chief medical officer



Absolutely the industry can deliver medical wellness. The question is, does it want to?

I think there are three areas to get involved with. Firstly, using exercise as part of the management of chronic diseases. To this end, I chair a group from the fitness sector and the medical Royal Colleges. We're producing

professional and operational standards in the area of working with patients. These will be completed in the autumn.

Secondly, we should be helping people to have an independent and healthy old age. We have the product and a growing market, but currently only 5 per cent of members are over the age of 65. Are gyms really interested in working with older people?

Finally, are we going to be more imaginative and creative in our bid to attract more people to our gyms and promote the benefits of activity for health within the general population? Encouragingly, some gyms are now starting to reach out in this way, by running sessions in community halls, for example.

One barrier is our customer care issue. To move into medical wellness, members can't be left to their own devices – staff would always need to be on-hand for support.”

niki keene

director international wellness • curves



There is no doubt that we should be delivering medical wellness. The health service doesn't have the resources to deliver everything and GPs don't understand exercise.

First of all we need to define and agree on what we mean by medical wellness. Is it increasing activity levels? Improving health and moving people

from illness to wellness? Or is it preventing illness and disease? Each aspect takes different skills and I don't believe that currently many organisations could effectively deliver on all parts, but many could and do already support some elements.

Robust reporting and feedback to health bodies and the government, with evidence of an increase in activity and health improvement, will be critical to our impact. Common measures, such as waist circumference and BMI, must be identified.

The industry will need to understand audit and evaluation: demonstrating evidence, measuring outcomes and feedback data, proving adherence to clinical guidelines and value for money for fitness prescriptions. Few clubs can currently give a health outcome-focused summary – one of many standards to be achieved. But I'm sure we can make it happen. We have to!”



Are clubs and leisure centres willing and able to offer medical wellness? Or should the focus be on promoting health?

jean-ann marnoch

reps • registrar



“We can help with the treatment and management of disease, and now that we have a formal register of exercise professionals, the medical profession can trust us. But instructors need to upskill to at least Level 3 Exercise Referral and employers need to find ways to incentivise them to do so.

There’s a relatively new range of Level 4 qualifications, currently all dealing with specialist medical conditions: cardiac disease, falls prevention, stroke, mental health, lower back pain, obesity and diabetes. Cancer and COPD are in the pipeline. They’re very niche – only about 750 REPs members have these and are called Level 4 Specialist Exercise Instructors. Level 3 Exercise Referral is a more generalist qualification and, from September, will be a prerequisite to doing a Level 4 course. If we truly want to be a resource for the medical profession, we need a broad spread of expertise within our sector.

I think the industry needs to make more links with the medical profession. We need to be pro-active, getting engaged with existing schemes or helping set up new ones. The standards currently being created by the Joint Consultative Forum, on which REPs is represented, will help here.”

eric dunmore

the third space • ceo



“I don’t think it is the role of the industry to deliver ‘medical’ wellness: that implies treating a range of issues which are outside the scope of the industry, such as cancer and mental illness. But we can promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing, and play an integral role in promoting prevention rather than cure with health issues.

The Third Space was established with health at its core. We were the first to have a medical centre as an integral part of our offering. Our team of 35 practitioners encompasses everything from GPs to acupuncturists, physiotherapists and osteopaths, as well as nutrition, counselling, and pre- and post-natal services. This enables us to offer a wide range of pro-active and reactive medical services to our members. All new members have a free session in the medical centre as part of their induction.

“We are a true ‘health’ club, looking after all our members’ requirements under one roof, and the flow of information from the medical centre to the fitness team – with the patient’s consent – enables us to offer a fantastic rehabilitation service. However, it is an expensive process, requiring careful administration and excellent and open-minded practitioners.”

Millennium Partners' head of club M&A and new club development, and the chair of IHRSA, talks to Kate Cracknell about combining skills with passion and the fitness industry's opportunity to evolve



DR ART CURTIS

WORLD
FOCUS

You almost need an entire feature just to cover the full diversity of Art Curtis' CV. Or should I say – and this rather illustrates my point – Dr Art Curtis.

"My undergraduate degree was in business administration, while my graduate degrees were in applied physiology, which has always been my passion," he explains. "Fortunately I'm one of those lucky people whose interests and skills merge together, and I've worked in a field that I've really enjoyed for over 35 years.

"My career breaks down into a couple of distinct phases. I spent most of the 1970s in an academic environment, first as a graduate student and research assistant, then as a professor. I was involved in the sports medicine centre at the University of Maryland, for example, where we did a lot of work for organisations such as the Washington Redskins – the local professional football team. This was back in the early 70s, when the amount of science applied to training was minimal, but we essentially served them in the role – before it really existed – of strength and conditioning coach, taking physiological measurements and developing training programmes for the players."

beyond the ivory tower

He continues: "My first foray outside of academia was into corporate fitness, a field that was just starting to open up. I joined a company called The American Health Management and Consulting Corporation, which built, managed and operated large, in-house fitness facilities.

"I was then recruited by US Health Inc, which owned brands such as Holiday Spa and Holiday Health Clubs and which was eventually bought by Bally Total Fitness. I served as director of education and research programme development, helping to conceptualise new club models and prototypes – generally a bit bigger and more sophisticated in terms of the programmes and training we were offering. We grew the estate by 25 sites in the space of four or five years.

"After that I wanted to get into an operating role, so in the early 80s I joined The Columbia Association."

A large planned community located between Baltimore and Washington, Columbia was created in 1967 by James Rouse and was based on the idea that a city could enhance its residents' quality of life. "Rouse was an interesting individual – not only a rather brilliant real estate person, but also very socially conscious. He was trying to create a diverse utopian community," explains Curtis. "As part of this, there was a huge infrastructure of recreational facilities: over 20 swimming pools, three athletic clubs when I was there – I think today they have four – plus tennis clubs, golf courses, a marvellous indoor aquatics facility and so on. I ran the division that operated all of those facilities.

"Then, in the late 80s, I went to work for a company called Club Sports International, which later became known as Wellbridge, joining them to launch a new club in Atlanta. In fact, we opened three large clubs down there in the space of 30 days, and I stayed with the

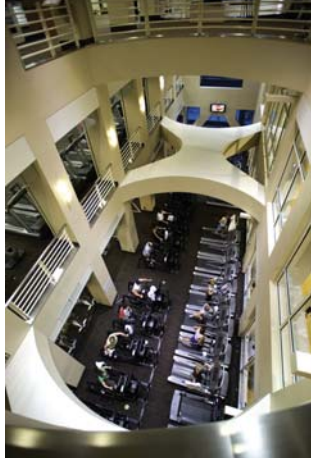
company for almost 15 years, eventually becoming COO and overseeing 48 clubs in 16 states across the US.

"My first opportunity to become CEO was with a company called Stonewater, a spa venture underwritten by a private equity firm called Falconhead Capital, which was acquiring day spas around the US to form a much larger company. I came in to replace the founding CEO and helped get the business organised, put systems in place and improve the overall financial performance in order to ultimately merge it with a much larger company. That took me up to 2005, which is when I came on board with Millennium Partners."

a new millennium

"Millennium Partners is first and foremost a real estate development company, in business since around 1991. The three founding partners had all worked together previously and had an idea of something they wanted to do in New York City. They were able to acquire a slightly run-down area just to the west of Central Park and turned it into an urban kind of mentisified environment: high-rise condominium towers along with street-level theatres, restaurants, entertainment, high-end retail. It takes up most of three city blocks.

"One critical component of the project was a very significant athletic club – the Reebok Sports Club New York, a 13,940sq m (150,000sq ft) club spread over seven floors. The Sports Club Company developed and operated



The Reebok Sports Club in New York was the first health club created by Millennium Partners, and was then replicated elsewhere

the club and was the tenant, Reebok was originally an equity investor and Millennium the landlord."

Off the back of the success of the New York project, Millennium Partners replicated the model in other cities: Boston, San Francisco, Miami and Washington DC. With high-rise condominium developments at the heart of each project, along with a five-star hotel and street-level retail, some also encompass entertainment complexes, theatres and restaurants. All include a large-format athletic club, generally between 9,290sq m and 10,680sq m (100,000sq ft–115,000sq ft), to which both hotel guests and condominium inhabitants have direct elevator access. The latter also get slightly preferential membership rates.

Curtis continues: "In the early to mid-2000s, The Sports Club Company wanted to sell off a number of assets, but there wasn't really anyone willing or able to step in and acquire all of the clubs. Millennium became concerned by the prospect of a number of different operators coming in to what were very important pieces of real estate for them – they feared the quality of the operations might not be consistently maintained. So it decided to look at acquiring the businesses from The Sports Club Company itself.

"I came on board to work on due diligence, along with another gentleman by the name of Nick Winter, and



Our business model looks much more like what you would see in a five-star hotel

ultimately we came to the conclusion that acquisition was indeed the best option. Millennium then asked me to stay on to be CEO of the operating company running those assets, which became known as Millennium Partners Sports Club Management (MPSCM).

"In January 2006, we completed the deal and acquired six of The Sports Club Company's 10 locations – The Reebok Sports Club and five of the Sports Club LA facilities.

"The clubs all operate at the highest end of the market – we're typically

US\$30–40 more expensive per month than our nearest competitor – and in fact our business model, and the way we train our people, looks much more like what you would see in a five-star hotel than in a typical athletic or health club.

"We also have spas in all our clubs and run them ourselves in all but one. We hire GMs who are able to oversee both club and spa, and we have one person at a corporate level overseeing all of our spas, developing menus, buying products, standardising marketing. It makes for a better overhead structure than ▶



► someone independently running a similar-sized spa.

"The sports club business is really the only operating business that Millennium Partners has – hotels, for example, are all done under management agreements – and there are more people by a factor of probably 10 or 15 working for MPSCM than for the whole of Millennium. It represents a little over \$100m in annual revenue, which is small in the overall scheme of things, but it adds a lot of value to the other projects and is an important piece of the overall development puzzle.

"Saying that, the important thing that differentiates us from a lot of other real estate companies is the expectation that a business has to stand on its own. If there were no Millennium Partners, MPSCM would still be a good business generating quite reasonable returns. It's not there as a loss leader."

expansion plans

Having led the MPSCM business for the last few years, Curtis has now made a sideways move into the parent company.

"In January, we made a significant organisational change. Smayira Million has moved up from COO to take over my role as CEO of MPSCM, and I've moved over to Millennium Partners to focus 100 per cent of my time on mergers and acquisitions to develop our club business.

"What we're looking to do now is expand our footprint in the markets we're already in – major international gateway cities such as Boston, New York, Washington DC, Miami, San Francisco. We want to move out from the city centres to the next ring of residential areas and do some smaller format clubs there. Six to eight locations per city could create a very powerful network, in conjunction with the existing property that's been in operation for a number of years.

"We would also consider going into new markets, but most likely that would involve either a large-scale project similar to those done previously, including a sports club – in fact, there's a project like that on the drawing board now, although I'd rather not give details yet – or via acquisition. Buying a local or regional chain of clubs would give us sufficient critical mass, but to go and just do one club in a new marketplace is a very inefficient way to operate. If we were to go into a new

Luxury: The Sports Club LA in Miami (above) and in Washington DC (below left). All clubs are high-end with pools, spas and well equipped gyms

market, we would want to have an immediate large presence there."

best foot forward

As if all this weren't enough to keep him busy, Curtis is also currently chair of global trade association IHRSA, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary; he's been involved with the organisation since its inception.

"The single biggest thing we're working on right now is our revenue model. The association, and the industry, are very different from how they were 30 years ago, and particularly in tough economic times you find out how sensitive a revenue model is. There's a saying 'when suppliers get a cold, an association gets pneumonia', because our largest single source of revenue currently comes from our convention and trade show.

"We've got through a really difficult period, with some very hard decisions made on staffing and so on, and now we have to look at how to make it less painful for ourselves were we to be faced with similar market conditions again. Do we have the right value propositions for our members? The membership base is so much more heterogeneous today than it ever was ►





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**High rise perspective:
The Sports Club LA in
Boston offers a rooftop
terrace with views of the city**

► before, with so many different types of club concepts compared to even just 10 years ago. The growth of the industry internationally has also been enormous recently, but do we have the right value proposition for the international member versus what we can do for the North American member?

"Now is the time to ask a lot of the hard questions and decide how to move forward into the next decade of the association – what services are no longer relevant, what new services need to be developed, how and what will we fine-tune? All of this needs to be done while still staying true to our mission: to grow, protect and promote the industry."

The FIA was clear in its message to the EHFA national associations forum in November: that any association truly wanting to get more people more active, should embrace all sectors – private and public (see *HCM* Jan 11, p76). Might IHRSA move away from its traditional standpoint of representing for-profit clubs only?

"That's a good question. It's always been not only a cornerstone for IHRSA but an emotional issue in the US in particular, but also in Canada. But it's interesting – when I've gone to the UK for example, the involvement of the public sector there is a given. It's part of the fabric of the industry.



"Already, over recent years, one of the things IHRSA has done is become part of large coalitions that include organisations such as the YMCA, working together to influence public policy and promote healthier lifestyles. It's baby steps, but if we can get comfortable with that, maybe it will lead to other things.

"At the end of the day, if as an industry we're really going to have an impact on healthcare reform, we have to set aside a lot of these competitive differences, as well as some philosophical differences, and focus on the things we hold in common. We have to evolve and become a more inclusive, co-operative industry to grow the market. And I believe that ultimately everyone will then benefit and get their share of the pie.

"If we don't do that, I think we'll be condemned to moving around the same core group of members – people who'll shift from one club to the next – without really creating any substantial new marketplace.

"We have a long way to go in terms of standards and professionalism



to be accepted by the medical profession, and clubs wanting to get involved in the issue will need to be fully committed. But I think it's an interesting opportunity for clubs that may be currently be struggling, caught in the middle ground, to differentiate themselves and broaden their market."

a need to plan

Curtis continues: "The problem is, I think as an industry we still tend to be more reactive than we are forward-thinking. The sector's pretty creative – it's good at evolving and developing new products and services to fit diverse customer needs. But, although operators are very good at taking something from ground zero up to a certain point, they then tend to get content and stop moving forward until a new threat arrives.

"There can also be a bit of a herd mentality. The momentum starts going one way – budget clubs, for example, which no question is a very active sector – and everyone jumps on-board without really thinking through the consequences. We need to look ahead more, because things won't be the same in five or six years' time and you have to chart your course now, before problems arise. That's something the industry as a whole could do a lot better."

**As an industry we have to set
aside competitive differences as
well as philosophical differences**



kate cracknell
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

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Medical Wellness

In a bid to gain the trust of the medical community, and break traditional penetration and retention rates, MedFit has introduced the European model of physiotherapy clinic-meets-gym to its home town of Dublin



BUILDING BRIDGES

It was disillusionment that drove Barry Walsh and John Murphy to create Medfit Wellness and Rehabilitation in Dublin – disillusionment at the lack of respect they felt the medical community had for the fitness industry, and a desire to improve its credibility.

"I've been perplexed as to why the fitness industry hadn't been utilised more by medical professionals," says Walsh. "Speaking to GPs, they think it's an unregulated industry with such a varying degree of qualifications that, even though they agree that fitness is important and can help treat many conditions, they don't think it's credible enough to refer on their clientele. You can't help but take it very personally.

"I'm very passionate about our industry and feel we have a wonderful opportunity to improve people's lives."

Walsh, a former manager for both David Lloyd Leisure and Westwood, now runs the successful 1escape city centre fitness club in Dublin, as well as Medfit, and is vice president of the Irish Fitness Federation and vice president of ILAM (the Irish leisure industry body).

Likewise Murphy, one of Ireland's leading chartered physiotherapists, was

frustrated. Even though he did refer his patients on to a gym, the connection between the two services was poor. "Either my patients just didn't go, or they went once and didn't like it, or they went a few times but lost motivation because the gym didn't capture them. More often than not, they'd end up back on my physio table within six months," he says.

the vision

Walsh and Murphy are friends – football buddies of 12 years. They had been knocking about the idea of combining their experience for some time, based on disgruntled conversations about the seeming inability of their professions to work together. Eventually they decided to give it a go and set out on a research mission, visiting successful integrated clubs in Germany and researching other models internationally.

"We visited these amazing rehab clinics based in hospitals which were also public gyms. One, in Munich, had a full rehabilitation programme, a pool, a rehab pool, physiotherapists, sports scientists and a fully operational gym for the general public," says Walsh.

"The GPs and surgeons in Germany have a lot more faith in fitness, especially

in the sports scientists, and they actually work together to develop programmes to treat patients. Post-operative patients there were seen by the fitness team.

"This relationship and level of trust is what we want to bring to Ireland and the UK. At the moment, there's a huge volume of work the industry has to do to bridge this gap. When Nuffield took over Cannons, I thought that might be the start of a change and REPs is definitely a stepping stone – at least now we have a minimum level of qualification. But I'd like to see this whole area progressing."

the offering

Medfit opened in February of this year, in a 372sq m (4,000sq ft) converted office building on a business park. Its location was carefully picked for its proximity to two of Ireland's largest private hospitals – to be near the medical professionals Walsh and Murphy hope to win over.

Its offering is essentially a rehabilitation spinal centre combined with a public gym, offering a hi-tech solution for both – they use a David circuit on the medical side and a milon circuit in the gym (more detail later).

Says Murphy: "For our physio clients, we conduct very detailed



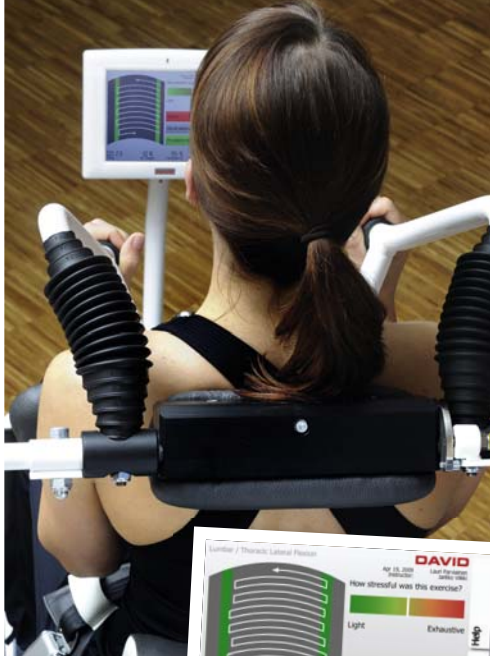
The David Spine Concept assesses a patient's spinal muscles and then treats weaknesses with a specialised circuit of equipment

spinal assessments and design bespoke rehabilitation and conditioning programmes. We have state of the art spinal conditioning equipment in a superb facility. We have a team of specialists, all experts in their fields, offering medical supervision, conditioning physiotherapy and exercise physiology to provide the very best standard of care in management of back pain."

The operation is overseen by a clinical director, who works with two physiotherapists (one is also a sports scientist and one is an intern), two further sports scientists and one strength and conditioning coach. The minimum qualification is a degree in sports science. There's also a business manager and an admin/operations person.

Rehab clients are currently referred from Murphy's own physiotherapy clinic or by medics and physios who know and trust him – and there are many – but the aim is to expand this reach once relationships with local physiotherapists, GPs and surgeons have been developed.

Clients include people with back pain, injuries and movement dysfunction as well as post-operative patients. The clinic also offers services for pregnancy care and for osteoporosis and age-related issues.

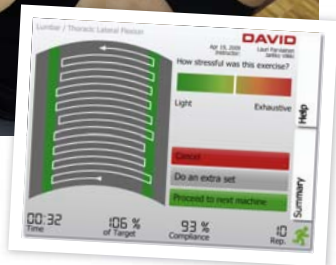


Once the physiotherapist is satisfied that the client has achieved a certain level of strength in their back through use of the David Spine Concept equipment, they fuse this rehabilitation with fitness – and the client moves on to the milon fitness circuit. The physio works with the strength and conditioning coach to develop a programme, overseen by the sports scientist who acts as a link between the medical and fitness worlds. The gym is also open to the public.

technology

The David Spine Concept, from Finland, measures and assesses the condition of the muscles around the spine. A circuit of five stations is then used to treat the client's specific issues – in a programme individually designed by the club's clinical director and supervised by the physiotherapists. The circuit looks and works much like gym equipment but is, of course, much more specialised.

Murphy explains: "As a physiotherapist I can only get clients to 80 or 85 per cent, but they need to exercise to get the rest of the way. I wanted to offer our clients the very best for their journey



towards achieving function and I can't do that with traditional gym equipment. That's why David was essential."

In the gym, the milon circuit is the only kit apart from some functional pieces from Jordan and FreeMotion and some Bosu balls. It's a 34-minute, 12-station circuit, slightly modified and medically certified. "The reason we chose it," says Walsh, "is because it's completely controllable. Users need a card to activate the circuit and this card is programmed with the exact workout designed for this member. It sets the seat height, the weight and the range to minimise misuse and therefore any danger of getting injured."

Adds Murphy: "It's ideal because it's fast, efficient and safe, and it can record everything so you can track the development month on month.

"Many of my clients are afraid of gyms and exercise, but the milon circuit is so easy to use they want to work out on it." ▶



The milon concept: A circuit of pre-programmable machines that are safe and easy to use



► bucking the trend

By creating this new style of offering within the fitness world, Walsh hopes to buck the 12 per cent penetration rate and also traditional retention rates.

"One of our main goals was to increase the penetration rate – the percentage of consumers including fitness as part of their lifestyle. Current statistics in the fitness industry suggest penetration rates have not moved for some considerable time. We also looked at how we could improve the current fitness offering and buck the trend of poor retention rates within clubs."

Medfit currently has 100 gym members and 70 medical clients, with capacity for 800 fitness and 600 medical. It may sound like a slow start, but this was deliberate. "Our tactic was strategic, with the plan to build slower and aim for higher sales conversions and better retention statistics," explains Walsh. This they will do, he says, through their own 'Five Pillars

to Success' model: "Quality, service, technology, innovation and people."

It seems to be working. Medfit's gym has a tour to sales conversion of 94 per cent. Murphy says: "People can see that we care. We offer hands-on personal care like no other gym – we're here to help them achieve a lifetime of health. And if we help our members, they will help us."

Holm Hofmann, director for milon, supplies his equipment to 700 clubs in Europe and is familiar with the medical fitness concept that's so successful on the continent. He says it can be lucrative: "This model targets a segment of the population who would never consider joining a health club – for example, people who are getting older or people who don't think gyms could help with their medical problems. So not only are you opening up a completely new market, but you also have three revenue streams: the rehab clinic, the

milon fitness training for these rehab clients, and then the public gym."

It is by tapping into these revenue streams that Walsh and Murphy believe they will buck the sector's current trends.

the challenge

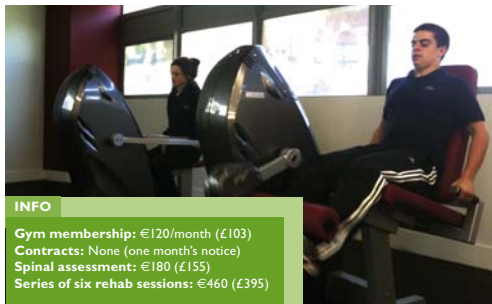
Rather than competing with other gyms, Walsh believes Medfit's challenge is much broader. "There aren't too many similar concepts in Ireland or the UK, so our challenge lies in marketing it and getting prospects to try it out. We're aiming to challenge conventional wisdom around retention and penetration in the fitness industry, and so far our sales conversions are phenomenal in comparison to other health club models."

"We also need to challenge the fallacies that exist around fitness clubs as perceived by the general public, and we must meet the challenge of the pharmaceutical industry by promoting exercise as medicine."

Just a few challenges then! Yet Walsh and Murphy's goals are currently "fluid": "We want our model to be evolving; dynamic enough to adapt to any market and rigid enough to deliver consistency and understanding. We will measure our success by the improvements we make to our clients' lives," says Walsh.

"Our vision is long-term and on a continuum. We want to define our product and market and, once we are confident of our model, we will identify new international markets to expand our brand."

It will be exciting to see if this optimistic pair achieve their goals.



INFO

Gym membership: €120/month (£103)
Contracts: None (one month's notice)
Spinal assessment: €180 (£155)
Series of six rehab sessions: €460 (£395)



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BEST IN CLASS

Phillip Mills looks at ways in which clubs can develop the best possible group exercise offering, and investigates the impact this can have on profitability

It beats football. It beats tennis. And it beats golf. In fact, when it comes to popularity, going to the gym tops all of these sporting activities combined.

In recent years, health club attendance has become the western world's biggest adult 'sport'. Yet despite such popularity, in the developed world no more than 17 per cent of adults belong to health clubs in any single country, with market share much lower in most places – all of which means there's still plenty of scope for growth.

Developing world-class group fitness can be one of the fastest ways to propel this growth. As thousands of health clubs across the globe will attest to, group fitness is the most established way of creating a sense of community and excitement in a club. Providing leading-edge group fitness will not only drive more members into your club, but will also help you hold on to them and, as a result, improve your bottom line.

But is it as easy as it sounds? I believe there to be some key elements that are very easy to implement and that will help you get it right. Best of all, none of these need to be particularly costly to engage, yet they can most certainly pave the way for increased profit.

Create a scorecard

If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Establishing a scorecard system for your management team and instructors is one of the simplest, most effective ways of motivating your people and ensuring that they're helping you play to win. It all comes down to setting clearly defined attendance goals and counting attendance at every class.

Maximise your timetable

Timetable design is the unsung hero of successful group fitness operations. Increasing weekly attendance by giving more classes to your most popular teachers and programmes, and fewer to

the less popular, is a simple way to help drive consistent attendance growth and keep members coming back for more. For most clubs, it's as easy as letting your members vote with their feet. This again means collecting and reviewing class attendance data on a very regular basis to ensure that members are getting the classes they want.

Recruit world-class instructors – and keep them

There's no doubt that 'rock star' instructors are like magnets. A single great instructor can bring hundreds of members to your club, so imagine what a team of great instructors could do. If you hunt out and build a team of rock star instructors, you will see your retention levels improve and your group fitness attendance grow before your eyes. The idea is to recruit for excellence, even if it takes time. The ability to connect with members, inspirational technique, great coaching



skills and a knack for creating 'fitness magic' is what you need to look for.

Once you've secured some top instructor talent, incentivising world-class performance and retaining your top instructors is equally imperative.

C2K Fitness and Aquatic Centre in Sydney, Australia, has shown that establishing a system that combines financial and non-financial rewards is one of the most effective ways to get top-notch instructors queuing up to be part of the team. As a way of attracting and retaining top talent, C2K pays at, or above, market rates. It also subsidises instructor training by reimbursing DVD and CD costs, as well as subsidising the cost of attending various industry events. It also stages in-house training and makes its instructors feel appreciated via specific group fitness awards, such as 'Instructor of the Year'. As a result it has attracted – and held on to – a bevy of world-class instructors and picked up a suite of industry awards along the way.

Organise great instructor training

Like any sports team, an instructor team needs to constantly train towards mastery if it wants to win championships. Ongoing instructor training is absolutely key to offering in-class experiences that transform members into fans.

Clubs around the globe are already showing how creating a training schedule (leveraging key industry training opportunities and events), supporting ongoing development and using regular coaching to build instructor strengths can cultivate a team of motivated, passionate professionals. It is these passionate individuals who will inspire and encourage your members to return class after class.

Develop the best studio you can afford

If you want to offer an incredible fitness experience that gets people coming back for more, you need to create a 'wow'

Get the best: Investing in the best design and technology, and recruiting and motivating 'rock star' instructors, will win members over

group fitness space. Do some research and establish the status quo – then take things up a level. Create the best studio you can afford: get professional design input and invest in a groovy space with great sound, lighting and décor.

This is something that Fitness in Motion in Queensland, Australia, did in February 2010. With the goal of creating a 'club within a club', it invested in brightly-coloured décor, a large stage area and nightclub-inspired lighting. Club owners Richard and Sharon Cessford believe it changed the whole feel of the place and lifted the vibe immediately. Twelve months on, total club attendance is up by 8 per cent and group fitness attendance has also increased – it accounts for up 46 per cent of total visits to the club. ▶

“ Create a ‘wow’ group fitness space:
investigate the status quo in the
market and then take it up a level ”



► Create a group fitness marketing plan

Savvy marketing will boost attendance, retain members and propel your club to even greater success. Just ask Feiko Boonstra and his son Erwin, from Sportschool Ursus in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. This privately-owned independent club has found that a marketing plan focused around quarterly re-launch events for its Les Mills programmes – trying in with the release of each new routine – is the secret to acquiring new members, as well as keeping current members happy.

It has enjoyed the greatest success by implementing a diverse advertising mix for two weeks prior to each event – verbal in-class promotion, profiling the event in the club newsletter and on the website, banners throughout the facility and point-of-sale flyers. With all of the advertising encouraging members to bring a guest, the club ensures every space in each event class is pre-booked. Staff also track which members bring a friend and reward the member with one month's free membership.

Ambitiously, at one recent event, the club left half of the studio capacity available for guests. Yet it paid off, with plenty of guests attending and 42 per cent of the 200 attendees on the day signing up as new members, creating annualised revenue of around €35,700. Not a bad return on investment given that the club spent only around €500, providing food and drink to make a real occasion of the event.

Invest: The 'club within a club' at Fitness in Motion, Queensland. Group fitness now accounts for 46 per cent of total club visits

Of course, this switched-on Dutch club certainly isn't the only facility enjoying real returns from quarterly events. There are thousands of clubs around the world that successfully host similar re-launch events and sell anywhere between 20 and 200 new memberships each time.

Plan and budget

If you want your business to continue to value and invest in group fitness, having a comprehensive plan is the way to go. Plus, with a road map to success and measurable milestones along the way, you'll foster a sense of camaraderie and purpose which leads to increased passion and effectiveness from the whole team.

Appoint (or become) a world-class group fitness manager

Just as a great instructor can bring in hundreds of members over time, a great group fitness manager will build a team that will bring in thousands. Put simply, recruiting a passionate and driven group fitness manager can change the future of your club. Tania Wilson from the Portsmouth Naval Base in the UK has proven this. Despite the unique setting, Wilson set out to target naval staff who were not exercising and successfully



launched group fitness at the base's fitness centre. Now there are hundreds of staff and civilians who can't get enough of the centre's classes.

A final word

I have seen first-hand the world over that, if you combine these eight key elements along with world-leading group fitness programmes, your group fitness operation will be set for success. If you're interested in learning the arcane art of group fitness management in more detail, I recommend a Les Mills Group Fitness Management course, which you can attend for free in most countries. You can find details through www.lesmills.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phillip Mills is founder and chief executive of Les Mills International, the world's leading group fitness brand (www.lesmills.com). He is a former international athlete and New Zealand's 2004 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year.

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We round up some of the latest innovations in group exercise

ALL TOGETHER NOW



ICG circuits for all

The Indoorcycling Group (ICG) has launched its new I.C.E Cyclewell education programme following pilot schemes in 2010. Providing instructors with the tools to create 'the ultimate combination class' – a fusion of functional strength, conditioning and cardio in a circuit training approach – the course offers a practical framework, with ways to adapt the circuits to allow sports- and fitness-focused consumers to train alongside those with special requirements or medical conditions.

The class uses equipment such as bands, hand weights, kettlebells, body bars and Swiss balls, as well as incorporating body weight exercises, but its USP is the application of the Cyclewell Adaptor – a patented accessory that transforms the Tomahawk and Livestrong cycles into a much more upright position. In combination with an optional extra wide saddle, this increases participants' comfort and riding safety through enhanced back support, core stability and sense of space, making it ideal for use by pregnant women, GP referral clients, the deconditioned, seniors and other special populations.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: **icg**

Roc It fusion

Pendle Wavelengths leisure centre in Nelson, Lancashire, has launched the country's first 'Roc It Spin' class, a circuit-based fitness class that combines exercises on resistance machines with a high intensity cardiovascular workout.

The twice weekly, 45-minute instructor-led class is designed to encourage women to incorporate strength training into their exercise regime: it alternates 10 minutes of cycling with a 10-minute circuit on Hoist Roc It's ride-orientated resistance machines, which move with the user to simulate a free weights workout – a natural, whole-body motion.

John Rawcliffe, health and fitness manager at Pendle Wavelengths, says: "Some women feel uncomfortable doing weights in the main gym, or fear



they will build big muscles. This class encourages them to take up some level of strength training and is also great for fat burning, so members can expect quick results."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS: **roc it**

Standing circuits

The new SMS (Standing Movement Solutions) circuit system from NessFit is based around a set of 10 moveable, selectorised stations to work the whole body from a natural standing position. There are no seats or start positions to adjust, allowing for fast transitions from one machine to the next.

While the SMS is primarily designed as a fast-paced toning circuit, the natural standing posture has also proved very popular for functional training among older users. The selectorised nature of the units means each user can choose the intensity of their own workout, allowing for a mix of young and old, fit and deconditioned in the same class.

Class structure is also straightforward: choose a soundtrack, set a time per station (usually from 30 seconds to two minutes), and add a warm-up and cool-down stretch. To create a larger circuit or to add a more aerobic element to the session, the circuit can be interspersed with FitWalker treadmills (right).



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: **nessfit**

Webracing

This month sees the launch of the Webracing multiplayer software, which allows a single PC unit to wirelessly control a room full of equipment, bringing virtual reality to the group exercise studio.

Self-powered indoor bikes – with the user's energy output powering the screen and brakes – will be launched this year. With the option to link units to each other, a full class will therefore be able to race or train together in the virtual world, with visuals projected on large screens. Competition will become possible within the studio or even across the internet, racing another studio halfway around the world.

Users will feel the resistance levels of going up a hill or slip-streaming



behind a competitor, and can talk to the competitors they see live on screen.

Close behind the launch of the Webracing bike, rowing machines – Water Rower, Concept2 and Fluid Rower – will be capable of multi-player race training by the end of 2011.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: **instyle**

New cardio kit from Keiser



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: **keiser**

The M3 Total Body Trainer, launched at IHRSA last month, can be used to complement Keiser's existing M3 Bike and M5 Elliptical as part of a circuit class. The multi-functional piece of equipment offers users the option of exercising the lower body only, the upper body only, or combining both for a total body workout.

As with the rest of the Keiser M series, the M3 Total Body Trainer is compact and light, and therefore easy to move. It's also suitable for users of all levels and abilities: users can choose their own level of resistance, meaning that mixed ability classes can be offered.

Get fit walking

The FitWalker and FitWalker Advanced are small footprint group workout treadmills that can be used by all ages and fitness levels; the less fit in the group can choose a lower intensity setting but still engage in the same workout as the fitter members.

FitWalkers can be easily wheeled and stored in less space than group cycling bikes, and carry a similar price point. Side-to-side and combination movements, both on and off the oversized deck, enhance motivation and entertainment value. Add in the hydraulic incline adjustment on the Advanced machine and a whole new dimension of intensity levels can be built in to the workout.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: **hessfit**

MVe – don't sit still

The MVe (Maximum Versatility Exercise) Chair offers versatile programming options for a fitness or leisure club studio, appealing to all ages, abilities and demographics. Its flexible pre-designed workouts – led by an instructor and with the chair used along with other studio props and accessories – creates a pilates-based fusion circuit training experience, all set to music: a pilates class with the energy of Spinning.

Newport Council and Nuffield Health have noticed a 50/50 split of men to women in their classes, proving it's a great way to get men into pilates.

The MVe Fitness Chair package is provided by Peak Pilates' UK distributors Star Trac and includes a range of equipment, instructor training, pre-designed group class templates, audio/visual materials and marketing support.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS: **star trac**

adidas cycling at DLL



David Lloyd Leisure introduced adidas Zone Cycling-branded indoor classes at its sites across the UK in January.

The freestyle classes, which have an indoor cycling theme based around the velodrome training drills of Chris Hoy and Victoria Pendleton, use Keiser M3 bikes and the adidas miCoach – the interactive, personalised interval training device based on colour-coded heart rate zones. Instructors gradually increase members' heart rates through The Ride In (warm-up) to prepare for the main workout block – The Velodrome – where heart rates move up to the highest (red) zone.

Music – created with FitPro – and verbal cues are used to raise adrenaline levels and help participants feel the exhilaration of winning their 'race'. Some classes also include special video footage to fully immerse them in the experience.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: **adidas**

An idea whose genius lies in its simplicity, payasUgym has flown off the starting blocks, with companies including GLL, LivingWell and Fit4Less buying into the concept. Neil Harmsworth, one of its co-founders, speaks to Kath Hudson

PAY & PLAY

What is the background to the company?

PayasUgym was created by me, Jamie Ward and Michael Blake. I trained in leisure management some years ago and then started working in the City. Jamie and I worked together at a couple of companies and for a while bounced ideas around until we hit on this one. We then asked Michael, an experienced web developer, to come on-board as we knew how important it would be to carry out all of the development in house.

How did the idea come about?

Through frustration! Jamie and I travelled a lot with work and found it challenging not to be able to get to a gym on a regular basis. We felt there had to be a more flexible way of using a gym – one that would attract more people to the market – and conversations with friends validated those views.

We quit our jobs at the end of 2009 and spent a lot of time talking to each other and to other people, running surveys and doing market assessments to work out the reasons why people weren't currently going to the gym, and what would make them go. We believe technology is the answer, using it to better effect – with online booking for example, particularly via smart phones, as well as social media networking and marketing. From there, we've really refined and enhanced the idea.

Start-up: The payasUgym founders, (left to right) Jamie Ward, Michael Blake and Neil Harmsworth



So what's the concept?

As a payasUgym customer, you can create an account online for free and top up an e-wallet with credit, just like topping up a pay-as-you-go phone. The minimum upload is £10. Users can then look at the gyms on the website and buy a pass to whichever one they want to visit. They're sent a unique eight-digit voucher code, either by text or email, and they hand that over to the gym reception, where it's validated.

The pay-as-you-go concept of pre-loading an account has been there for some time; this concept brings it to the leisure industry using technology such as smart phones.

The customer is required to complete a health disclaimer as part of the purchase process to ensure they're fit and ready to use the gym, saving the gyms the paperwork.

And once they've used a gym, they can leave feedback on their experience, a bit like TripAdvisor for hotels. It gives the power of information to users.

Who is the target audience?

I think there will be a couple of groups of users: those who live and work in different places, who might already use a couple of gyms, and those who want to use gyms occasionally to back up their outdoor training.

Other feedback we've had is that some people find it a bit frustrating always going to the same gym and seeing the same scenery and same people. PayasUgym allows them to vary their workout by location and price too. We offer everything from functional, no-frills gyms to large, luxury sites with sauna, pool and spa. This programme offers the flexibility of easily swapping from one to the other, which is very appealing.

Our research has shown it will also appeal to casual gym users and non-participants: people who don't go to the gym, but who tell us they would if it could be done on a more flexible basis.

What is the pricing structure?

Each gym has its own price and we work with them to get that price right. It has to be attractive to the target audience of people who don't go to that gym, but who might do if it offered more flexible options, but it should still make it cost-effective to be a member. That way, if people start going on a regular basis, we help maintain the membership model.

We want payasUgym to open up a whole new audience. The thing that operators are recognising more than ever before



Variety: payasUgym offers access to clubs of all levels, from budget to exclusive. Pictured above is Jubilee Hall in Covent Garden, London

is that there are a lot of people out there who would use the gym, but who aren't currently doing so – all of which suggests that, if you can find a way of motivating them with the right kind of facilities, the right location and the right price, then people will start coming.

Why is this better than gyms just running their own pay-as-you-go programmes?

One of the big attractions of using payasUgym.com is that users can vary the type of facility they use. We already work with many gym operators that offer pay-as-you-go at multiple sites; we're able to raise their profile by communicating with a wider payasUgym audience. Social networking and mobile technology has really not been utilised well enough by the industry to date and payasUgym.com will change that.

What's the response been?

Really positive. Operators are looking at different ways to get people into their gyms and looking at what other industries have done. They all buy into this kind of consolidated pay-as-you-go platform, which uses technology, social networking and marketing. Since www.payasUgym.com went live on 22 January, we've been inundated with gyms asking how they can get their businesses on there.

All the gym operators recognise the fact that, by doing this, they could double their audience. Indeed, our market research showed that penetration levels among potential gym-goers in the US are twice as high as the penetration levels



among potential gym-goers in the UK. So there's still a lot of opportunity to grow the UK market. We believe that, if you can provide a wider variety of offers, more people will go.

Is it based on an existing business model?

There's always been a pay-as-you-go offer in the gym market, but this differs in that we've pulled it all together in one place. An online wallet is a first for the gym industry, as is giving people the opportunity to buy passes through their mobile phones, when they're on the move. It takes the best of a lot of other business ideas that are out there and pulls them all together.

The iPhone app was launched last month, quickly followed by Android and Blackberry. The iPhone app is like a mini version of the website, where users can create an account, load their card and find their gyms via a map function. ▶



Flexible: Clissord Leisure Centre, in Hackney, (above) has signed up to payasUgym. Users can book online for a single gym session or a class

► How is it being marketed?

It's being PR-led. We're working with a lot of partners to pull together interesting offers, and working with our partner gyms to communicate the message to their catchment areas. We'll mainly do online marketing, PR and social networking – for example, spotlights on gyms on Facebook and Twitter. As we're an amalgamation of a lot of different operators, we can talk to and attract a wider audience than any one single operator can.

How do you make money?

We make commission on each pass that's redeemed, so for the gyms there's no cost unless they get a new customer.

Where will you be targeting outside of London and the south-east?

We're already getting a lot of gyms signing up in other parts of the country – gyms that are prepared to wait a few months. As soon as we've got London up and running, we'll extend to the other major cities: Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield. I think it will take us a year to find our feet in the key cities of the UK, but ultimately we do want it to be a national service, open to as many people as possible in as many areas as possible.

How many gyms do you hope to have on-board by the end of year?

Our initial targets were quite modest: 150. We're already on course to smash that – we currently have 125 on-board just in London and the south-east. Our customers – the general public – are also coming to us and asking us to get particular gyms on-board and we're responding to that.



Where might it go?

We'd love to take it beyond the UK: I think it would work well in Germany and the US. We'll stay with gyms and get that right first, and from there move on to connected services like Power Plate studios, yoga and pilates classes and personal trainers. It could work in other sectors, but we're not actively pursuing them. We're focusing on the gym industry and getting that right first.

What's been the best thing about this start-up?

This is the best job I've ever had – I love working with these people. It's new and exciting, with a goal of getting more people fit and healthy. It supports the goals of the customers, the gyms and the FIA, so I'm very proud to be part of it.



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The CEO of the US's Council on Active Aging, Colin Milner, looks at how we need to change our perception of ageing to capture this booming market

POSITIVE AGEING

Increased life expectancy is one of the most significant success stories of our times. Yet this tribute to modern science is also now considered one of the greatest global challenges, according to Laura Carstensen, PhD, founding director of the Stanford Center on Longevity. How could this happen? Two simple words: age apathy.

At a global level, the indifference to population ageing is creating a concern that a lack of preparation by governments, businesses (including the fitness industry), families and individuals will lead to its mismanagement.

So what about the fitness industry? How will we respond to this seismic demographic shift? And, most importantly, how do we ensure that our industry, like the rest of society, does not mismanage the opportunities presented by population ageing? One of the first places to start, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on an Ageing Society, is to change the way society – that's us – currently views ageing.

changing perceptions

How do we change our views of ageing? First, we need to realise how we came to have these views in the first place. They are based on our life experiences – what we have come to expect from ageing – and also by the media and marketing executives, who in many cases have focused significantly on the

negative aspects of ageing, namely 'decline and decay'. Such negative views can create low expectations of ageing.

In 2004 Unilever, the parent company of the Dove personal care brand, challenged these negative stereotypes of ageing in its Dove 'Campaign for Real Beauty'. One of the campaign's billboards featured Irene Sinclair, aged 95, and posed the question: "Wrinkled? Wonderful?" Viewers were invited to log on to the campaign website and cast their vote. The ad proved a tremendous success, largely by tapping into society's negative expectations of ageing and making people reconsider them.

Millions of Baby Boomers, who are starting to turn 65 this year, have taken up this mantle, seeing themselves not as a burden to society but as contributors to its success. This group is also demanding products and services that meet their



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To capture the older market, we need to change our perception of ageing and then adapt our offering and marketing as a result

needs, dreams, desires, expectations and capabilities. Examples of this appetite for more relevant products range from food that's beneficial to older people's health, through complementary and alternative medicine, to a wider choice of wellness products and services. Most importantly, Boomers and their parents are speaking with their bulging wallets, every year spending US\$2 trillion globally on wellness offerings.

To capture this market, we need to change what we have come to expect of ageing and address our offering and marketing in a more truthful and positive way. According to marketing expert Robert Snyder: "The topic of ageing is durably encapsulated in a layer of myths in our society. Like most myths, those about ageing include a confusing blend of truth and fancy."

Here are three of the most effective ways to change our perceptions of ageing, according to Snyder.

1. eliminate the myths

Set out to have your customers, staff, suppliers and partners understand that many ageing myths are just that: myths.

When we hear the word "ageing", many automatically think: you get sick; you lose interest in intimacy; you're unwilling to try anything new; you lose control of your bodily functions; you can't function in the workplace; you can't understand technology; you have no social life; you can't fully participate or pull your own weight; and you need help to make decisions.

How can you challenge these myths? Evidence-based information can help people reconsider their perceptions, so think about including research in your communications on bulletin boards, your website and in newsletters. You can also help people develop a fuller, more realistic picture of ageing by providing stories of what real-life older adults have achieved.

Some companies have gone the extra step and involved older adults as spokespeople and role models. For



Baby Boomers see themselves not as a burden to society but as contributors to its success

example INJOY, a chain of sports and wellness clubs in Germany, hired Charles Eugster, a 91-year-old competitive rower and bodybuilder, to promote the company and the benefits of physical fitness training in later life.

As well as encouraging members to look twice at the myths on ageing, you should challenge the myths yourself: for example don't assume older members won't be able to use your technology.

Projects orchestrated by Microsoft in Miami and New York have shown that, given the opportunity, older adults will embrace technology. One of those projects – New York City's Virtual Senior Center – allowed homebound

individuals, ranging in age from 67 to 103 years, to participate in fitness programming offered at Benjamin Rosenthal Senior Center in Flushing, Queens. The participants connected with the centre using standard computers and simple software.

The lesson to learn here is that putting technology in your club won't necessarily alienate older members, if you help them learn how to use it.

2. focus on the positive

It's important for your older members' health and wellbeing to focus on the positive, as studies show that older people with positive perceptions of

► ageing live an average 7.5 years longer than those with negative images of growing older. In addition, it's possible to reduce cardiovascular stress and other adverse health conditions among older adults by promoting positive attitudes toward ageing.

So instead of illness, think wellness; instead of anti-ageing, think active ageing; instead of decline, think potential; instead of 'providing for', think responsible and independent.

The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty is a good example of how you can ask customers to focus on the positive instead of the negative. The campaign asked "What do you think?", offering the public a choice: Wrinkled or Wonderful? Grey or Gorgeous? Flawed or Flawless? Oversized or Outstanding? Focusing on the positive was good for business: Dove sales increased by 700 per cent during the first half of 2004, the year the campaign started.

Another example of focusing on the positive aspects of ageing is Active Aging Week, an initiative spearheaded by the US-based International Council on Active Aging (ICAA). To inspire individuals aged 50 and older to become active, host sites of this annual health promotion event offer fun, free wellness activities in encouraging environments.

Promotional materials provided by the ICAA include posters that show healthy-looking older people engaged in various kinds of activity. Superimposed is a series of phrases representing the behaviour change model – starting with "I can't" and ending with "I am". Since

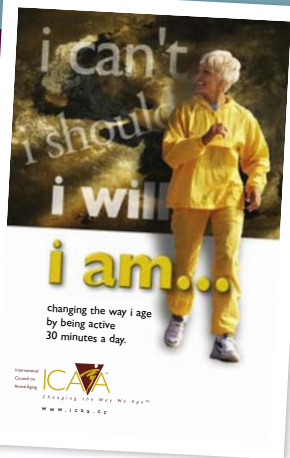
Yes, you can: The ICAA's Active Aging Week promotes a positive attitude towards fitness

it began in 2003, Active Aging Week has reached millions of older adults with its positive message about leading a full, active and healthy life at any age.

There is no reason why health clubs and leisure centres in the UK couldn't adopt a similar programme of their own design for older people. A positive focus encourages people to reconsider their attitudes to physical activity in later life, so think of ways you could apply this theme of positivity in your marketing materials and club environment. For example, staff members could wear badges that say "I am. Ask me how you can!" to pique interest and spur interaction.

3. stamp out ageism

There is widespread evidence, across geographic and cultural boundaries, of ageism in society – that is, a resistance to including an ageing



perspective into decision-making and design, and a tendency to prioritise the perspectives of the young.

Is it any wonder that 71 per cent of adults over the age of 55 feel that advertising does not reflect their lifestyle and are turned off by the marketing messages that do target them?

To stamp out ageism in your company, promote ageless concepts. "No-one buys anything or uses a product or service solely because of age," explains marketer Richard Ambrosius. "They buy to satisfy wants, address needs and enjoy experiences. By accepting factoids that have their roots in either ageing stereotypes or Boomer myths and misconceptions, companies will continue to waste billions using the wrong words and sending the wrong messages to potential older clients."

One way to promote 'ageless' fitness is to concentrate on promoting fitness for all ages and abilities; make sure you're not just targeting younger people. For some fitness organisations, this might mean a culture change. The fitness industry has traditionally focused on the 18–49-year-old age group in marketing, programming, environments and equipment – all areas where adjustments will create a more ageless appeal.

From turning down the volume on music, to reconfiguring workout spaces to provide more room around equipment, to ensuring universal design in your physical environment and equipment: these kinds of changes will



“ Staff and management should support an “I can” attitude among older members ”

make your club more accessible and appealing to older members without alienating younger members.

It's vital, too, to recognise that ageing occurs over the whole of our life. We need to educate people of all ages how the things we do at each stage of our life affect our health and wellbeing.

For example, in our younger years, physical activity is important for developing strong bones and building a 'bone bank' or reserve for later life. In our later years, physical activity helps minimise bone loss and keep bones strong. Think about holding seminars and bringing experts to your club to help members, guests and staff better understand ageing over the life course and how to optimise their health at every age – whether young, middle-aged or older.

You can also counter ageism by becoming aware of how certain attitudes and actions towards older individuals may promote or reinforce negative perceptions of ageing, then strive to change them. Ageing expert Jan Montague suggests a move from a paternalistic, 'tell and command' approach towards older members to a 'listen and learn' approach that promotes self-efficacy. Rather than focusing on what's wrong with individuals and trying

to change them, Montague suggests clubs could focus on what's going right for them to help them maximise these positive areas and feel valued as successful, active individuals.

These strategies for staff and management rely on a very simple philosophy: support an "I can" rather than an "I can't" attitude among older members. This will enable them to move from being a passive recipient to an active, engaged user of your services – and in turn will help them want to stay involved.

summary

Before you start changing things, your perceptions included, answer this question: Do I really want the business of the fastest-growing segment of the population? A segment that has money, and that spends a huge amount of it on their health and wellbeing?

If you answered 'yes', the process of transformation can start now. It will enable you to tap into the US\$2 trillion global wellness industry.

But few of these opportunities will truly take root unless we change the expectations we have of growing old. We must move away from the idea of decline and decay, towards the concept of untapped human potential and capital.

Let's start now, shall we?

GETTY IMAGES



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin Milner is the founder and CEO of the US-based International Council on Active Ageing (www.icaa.cc). He has acted as an adviser to organisations including the World Economic Forum's Network of Global Agenda Councils, the European Commission Directorate-General for Health, the Canadian Senate Committee on Ageing, the US Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Institute on Ageing. Prior to this he managed health clubs, founded Canada's first national fitness trade magazine, was VP of sales and marketing at Keiser, COO of the Keiser Institute on Aging and president of IDEA.

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Terms of REFERENCE

Kate Cracknell investigates the challenges of exercise referral and takes a look at some best practice schemes

Exercise referral in the UK is not currently where it needs to be, with conflicting advice and a huge diversity of practice – this is the verdict of Dr John Searle, chief medical officer for the FIA.

There are without doubt some hugely successful, well-implemented exercise referral schemes out there – more of these later. However, in large part thanks to a lack of agreed standards, there's no consistency in structure, delivery or outcomes. Indeed, the British Heart Foundation's (BHF) exercise referral toolkit – based on an assessment of 158 exercise referral schemes and published in March 2010 to highlight the issues and offer some

guidance – threw up some startling facts. Some scheme completion rates were as low as 20 per cent. Ten per cent of programmes had no exit strategy, while 31 per cent undertook little or no evaluation of their usefulness. And 15 per cent made little or no use of the National Quality Assurance Framework to inform their scheme development.

Also noted were a lack of appropriate qualifications among those delivering exercise referral, with one in five schemes using Level 2 instructors to work with patients; inconsistency in terms of the length of the referral period, which varied from four weeks to as much as one year; and general

confusion over who should qualify for referral in the first place, with big differences in terms of inclusion/exclusion criteria.

building credibility

It's perhaps not fair to point the finger exclusively at our sector: in many cases, GPs aren't confident in prescribing exercise, resulting at best in nebulous referrals. "We need proper, well-informed referrals from GPs so it's clear what's expected of us," says Searle.

Funding is also an issue. Governmental Skills Funding Agency funding is not currently available for the Level 3 Exercise Referral qualification, so operators wishing to deliver exercise referral schemes in their facilities – and needing to upskill their staff to do so – would have to pay for the training themselves. Particularly in these times of belt-tightening, this isn't always feasible.

However, we're not doing ourselves any favours. In addition to the BHF findings, it's also the case that – while high quality training is certainly available within the fitness industry, including specialist Level 3 and 4 qualifications – those working in exercise referral remain the only group of people working with patients who don't have to be accredited on a regular basis: CPD is all that's required to keep practising. "I know that doctors are not happy with this," observes Searle.

Not really surprising, then, that the medical sector has yet to be convinced of our credibility in this area. Indeed, in a 2006 report, NICE went so far as to suggest that there was

HEELERS (see p55): The team sees around 750 new patients every year





“ Exercise referral can work. What we need now is to deliver consistently, and consistently well ”

“insufficient evidence to recommend the use of exercise referral schemes to promote physical activity other than as part of research studies where their effectiveness can be evaluated”.

This in spite of a growing body of robust evidence which proves that disease-specific exercise can reduce symptoms across a wide range of conditions. Further evidence has been provided by the recent Health Wales Exercise Referral Study, which tracked 2,160 patients and which showed that, if you follow up with referred patients over the course of 12 months, a significant proportion will achieve and sustain the '5 x 30' activity guidelines.

setting standards

So exercise referral can work. What we need now is to deliver consistently, and

consistently well. And in order to do this, as Searle explains, we need an agreed set of standards.

“In 2001, a national quality assurance framework for exercise referral set out a professional, operational and legal framework for exercise referral schemes,” he explains. “But these only applied to publicly-funded schemes.

“In the light of the BHF findings, our new Joint Consultative Forum [the FIA working in conjunction with the various royal colleges of medicine – see *HCM* Jan 11, p20] identified a need to revisit the whole thing and create professional and operational standards for the whole sector – for all exercise professionals working with patients. We’re developing these at the moment and will publish them in the autumn.

Those working in exercise referral don't currently need to be regularly accredited – an issue for GPs

“These standards will speak to a number of groups: to medics, building the credibility of our sector with them; to the fitness sector, setting out what we need to achieve; and to the new GP consortia health service commissioners, providing them with a set of criteria against which to measure exercise referral schemes and make decisions on funding.”

It seems we can look forward to a new, regulated, standardised approach to exercise referral, driving a consistently high quality approach to these schemes across our industry. In the meantime, we take a look [over the page] at existing schemes that are leading by example. ▶



Holistic: I-Greatlife addresses exercise, nutrition and the mental challenge of lifestyle change

Case Study I-Greatlife

I-Greatlife positions itself not as exercise referral but as an evolving lifestyle modification programme. Developed over five years as a collaboration between Georgina Jupp's CK Academy and Basildon-based GP Dr Robert Colby – thereby integrating medical and fitness expertise – it adopts a holistic approach, addressing not only nutrition and exercise but also the intellectual challenge associated with achieving effective lifestyle change. The incorporation of this mental/motivational aspect, which can be so crucial to overcoming initial barriers, as well as to adherence and ultimately success, is what the I-Greatlife team believes sets this scheme apart.

Addressing a diverse range of factors – including stress management, wellbeing management, confidence building and personal development alongside physical activity and nutritional education – I-Greatlife caters for the obese/overweight, those with joint pain or mobility problems due to musculoskeletal conditions, and those with mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and hopelessness around the possibility of making significant lifestyle change.

Delivered by high-level, specially trained fitness professionals – known as 'lifestyle advisors' – I-Greatlife focuses on one-to-one attention and constantly evolving personalised plans based on detailed assessment. But crucially it also focuses on the inter-personal element: forming and maintaining relationships with each patient, providing a 'warm, accepting and understanding environment' and seeking to continually increase each patient's enjoyment of the process.

Exercise referral specialists are used for case management from point of referral, surgery-based one-to-one assessments using shared primary care electronic records, group education via seminars, group functional physical activity sessions, coaching and support resources – and of course the development of the aforementioned 'therapeutic relationships'.

statistics & savings

In 2007, I-Greatlife won a formal tender by NHS South West Essex (NHS SWE) PCT. Nearly 700 patients have since undergone detailed assessment in surgeries, 600 patients have participated in the 12-week introductory course and 300 patients have taken part in the eight-week maintenance course.

In autumn 2009, NHS SWE performed a statistical analysis of the scheme's data, including the following KPIs: activity levels based on FITT scores (frequency, intensity, time – ie duration – and type of physical activity), waist circumference, exercise tolerance (using the 'sit to stand' measure) and HAD scores for depression. The FITT, waist and tolerance results can be seen in the table below. In addition, HAD scores decreased by 50 per cent.

Not only that, but an independent source calculated the cost savings, in terms of reduced in-patient spells and outpatient attendances, to be over £300 per patient. Primary care consultations were also reduced: 36 per cent fewer GP consultations and an 11 per cent reduction in practice nurse consultations.

The scheme as a whole achieved a 70 per cent retention rate – those embarking and remaining on the course – with a GP survey suggesting that "significant benefits" had been noted in patients who had been referred to I-Greatlife, and that "lifestyle modification should be a top priority" going forward.

Three packages are currently available within the I-Greatlife programme: the preferred introductory 12-week course (24 physical activity sessions, six weekly educational seminars and three surgery assessments, at a cost of £480 per patient); an eight-week introductory course for those under budgetary restraints (a possible 16 physical activity sessions, eight educational seminars and two surgery assessments, at a cost of £325 per patient); and an eight-week follow-on maintenance course (a possible eight physical activity sessions, two educational seminars and one surgery assessment, at a cost of £275 per patient).

The analysis of I-Greatlife's data by NHS SWE

ACTIVITY LEVELS

"FITT" Scores	Before	After	Difference	% increase
Introduction course	1.44	3.13	1.69	117.35
Maintenance course	3.22	4.28	1.06	32.76

WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE (CMS)

	Before	After	Difference	% increase
Introduction course	118.98	115.15	-3.83	-3.22
Maintenance course	112.39	111.04	-2.18	-1.94

EXERCISE TOLERANCE

	Before	After	Difference	% increase
Introduction course	20.79	25.46	5.92	28.46
Maintenance course	22.46	25.38	3.67	16.32

Case Study - Heelers

An exercise referral scheme launched in East Lindsey in May 2007, HEELERS has to date helped almost 3,000 local people tackle their health-related problems.

Run by East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) in partnership with NHS Lincolnshire, the programme was introduced to help people with a high BMI to become more active, cutting their risk of Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis, as well as associated issues such as arthritis, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. People with a BMI of over 30 – or over 28 plus a health issue such as back problems, mental illness or hypertension – qualify for the scheme. GPs, nurses and other health professionals can refer people onto the programme, which consists of 20 free exercise sessions and one-to-one support from a health trainer.

Crucially there's also a joined-up approach, with the whole ELDC team working seamlessly to offer not only HEELERS but also a wide range of related services, ensuring each patient receives a bespoke health improvement plan.

Health trainers are located in the community, working directly with hard-to-reach families via open days and educational sessions, as well as operating within the health information room at the Marisco Medical Practice GP surgery. Food for Life offers healthy cooking lessons, taster sessions and even workshops on growing your own vegetables. Mapped-out walking routes encourage people to be more active in everyday life. And community exercise sessions and children's programme Fit Kids are also available.

Tasty: The scheme includes healthy cooking lessons



The lady above lost half her bodyweight on HEELERS; 70 per cent of patients improve their diet



Health trainers are also used to support the HEELERS team – for example, conducting patient follow-up phone calls.

feedback & results

An impressive 68 per cent of all those who have started on the scheme are now still exercising on their own, using local facilities, with 80 per cent of these patients achieving the goals set at their initial meeting.

Meanwhile, a survey conducted among a random sample of HEELERS clients found that:

- 27.5 per cent reported a reduction or change in prescribed medication
 - 27.5 per cent reported a reduction in the number of visits to their GP
 - 82.5 per cent reported an improvement in their physical mobility
 - 57.5 per cent reported an improvement in joint and muscular pain
 - 77.5 per cent reported a general sense of improvement in their health
 - 70 per cent said they had made improvements to their diet
 - 80 per cent reported positive changes in their self-esteem and confidence
- Jane Goult, practice manager at the Marisco Medical Practice in East Lindsey, says: "In 2007, the practice moved to purpose-built premises which offered,

among other things, a fitness suite. HEELERS was rolled out to more than 2,000 eligible patients and the uptake has been exceptional."

Indeed, HEELERS outgrew the space initially provided, and within the past 18 months has moved into a fully-equipped fitness suite with additional equipment and Wii screens, partly funded by the practice's GPs, who fully support the scheme.

"Patient feedback tells us that they feel comfortable within the environment of the surgery premises. They can work in small groups, or one-to-one with the trainers, and do not feel embarrassed as they may do in a commercial gym setting," Goult continues. "Patients who have worked together have built up strong friendships and have taken encouragement from each other. All GPs, nurse practitioners, practice nurses and healthcare assistants refer patients into the process and the team sees approximately 750 new patients each year. The scheme's popularity is due to the HEELERS team, who have shown such commitment."



kate cracknell

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show preview



FIBO 2011

The leading international trade show for fitness, wellness and health takes place this month – the show's 26th year

Fitness and health are growing closer together – a trend that will be reflected in this year's FIBO, which takes place from 14–17 April at the Essen Exhibition Centre in Essen, Germany.

Exhibitors will showcase an increasingly diverse range of products and services for the health sector: more than 560 exhibitors from 35 countries, spread across 12 halls, will play host to over 53,000 visitors from 100 countries. The event will showcase a unique variety of equipment and services for the fitness sector, as well as stage shows, conventions and conference sessions.

Health as a focal theme will be developed further with the FIBOmed concept (www.fibo-med.de), which covers everything from diagnostic equipment and functional therapy through to professional health consulting.

Showcase: FIBO includes lively fitness demos and classes



easier, cheaper, quicker

Visitors coming to FIBO by plane can take a shuttle service from Düsseldorf airport, which runs to the Essen Exhibition Centre and back.

The trade show is also active online: news about FIBO is continuously posted on Facebook and Twitter, and the FIBO homepage now records 1.6 million visitors from across the globe each year. Meanwhile new, easy-to-use services for exhibitors and visitors include the visit planner with a log-in function. Especially useful for international visitors, when you search the exhibitors, one click allows you to see what languages are spoken at each stand.

The online ticketing system makes registration and ticket buying – both in advance and on-site – easier, faster and more convenient. What's more, visitors can save money by registering online and buying their tickets in advance – visit www.fibo.de. A combination ticket is available, for €2 extra, that also covers bus and train rides in the local area.

conventions and competitions

FIBOactive offers everything from the fields of 'fashion, music, fun and action', with a comprehensive range of products supplemented by a large number of join-in programmes and stage shows.

In Hall 5, the emphasis will be on the international DFAV Convention, where participants will learn the latest

Overview of events

Fit for Fun Cycling Festival:

16–17 April, Room Deutschland, South Entrance

Cycling Tour of Hope:

15 April, Room Deutschland, South Entrance

International DFAV Convention:

All days, Hall 5

Innovation Award:

15 April, 3.00pm, Hall 7

Stage shows: Halls 6, 10/11 and 12 across all days of the show

choreographies – including ZUMBA – from the top presenters. The Fit for Fun Cycling Festival follows one of the latest trends in group fitness: Kranking.

FIBO POWER is the meeting place for the bodybuilding and weight training community in Europe. It includes the FIBO Strongman Classics, the FIBO Powerlifting Challenge and the Miss FIBO POWER Beauty competition – www.fibo-power.de

From Power Plate's launch of a brand new vibration training bike, through Multipower's introduction of a brand new product line, to Technogym showcasing new training equipment designed especially for medical fitness: this year's FIBO will be the FIBO of innovations.

One product will receive The Innovation Award, an annual prize presented by FIBO, TÜV Rheinland Product Safety GmbH and the magazine *Fit FOR FUN*. Previous winners have included Power Plate (2002), the Nautilus Treadclimber (2006) and Technogym's Cardio Wave (2007).

FIBO 2011 - THE FACTS

Dates: 14–17 April

Venue: Essen Exhibition Centre – Essen, Germany

Tickets: Discounts available on advance purchases – visit www.fibo.de

New-build: The Gym Group's club in Nottingham. The chain was the first to build brand new budget clubs, in 2008



What budget chains are out there, how much do they cost, what facilities do they offer and how do they differ? And what's in store for the low-cost sector generally – which operations will last, which may fail, and what comes next? Jo Talbot investigates the ins and outs of the UK's budget club boom

Battle of the budget clubs

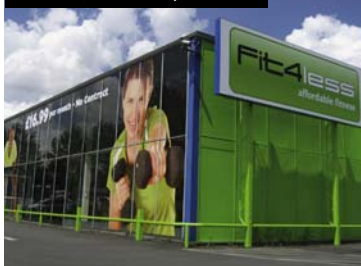
With the rapid emergence of budget clubs in the UK over the last five years, the low-cost market is now well established and still growing, with easyGym due to open its first club within the next few months. Over the page, we take a look at what exactly is out there right now and how the different offerings compare – including some pre-opening details from easyGym.

But first we talk to Ray Algar, the managing director of Oxygen Consulting – who in 2010 published his *UK Low-cost Gym Sector Report* – to get his analysis of the sector and his predictions for its future.



Ray Algar

Boom times: energie's Fit4less brand has 11 clubs, with 10 more planned



Q: Ray, what do you see happening in the UK budget club market at the moment?

A: I see the private UK low-cost operators pursuing two distinct strategic paths: new-build clubs versus the conversion of 'legacy' clubs. In 2006, FitSpace launched the UK's first truly low-cost gym by acquiring and converting an existing independent club in Bournemouth. In 2008, The Gym Group launched into the market based on a different strategy. Theirs was to exclusively focus on developing new gyms with no fitness history or 'legacy'.

Q: What do you think of the different offerings?

A: I think some of the companies have a deep understanding around creating and delivering a remarkable low-cost gym experience. To me, this is about narrowing the 'traditional' club proposition so that what remains is a gym experience that consumers rave about. The ones that have it right are those that have thought through the entire member experience from website to workout. Some brands have created a beautifully simple proposition and it's this simplicity that consumers find appealing, along with great value memberships.

Q: Which model do you think will last? Which will fail?

A: Back in 2009, I was asked about industry predictions for 2010. I thought we would see the first low-cost business fail because I believed too many companies were rushing in, assuming it was just about serving up a low price. Nuyuu Fitness then failed at the end of last year, after missing

CLUB	Cost	Contract?	Sq ft	Launched	Owner / MD/CEO	USPs
easyGym	£15–£20	Monthly and annual prepayment contracts	15,000–20,000	2011	Fore Fitness Limited / Keith Burnet & Paul Lorimer-Wing	Well understood value brand, innovative and technologically driven to provide a unique customer experience.
Fit4Less (énergie)	£14.99 (contract) £19.99 (no contract)	None	5,000	2008	energie group / Jan Spaticchia	Smaller, convenient, low-cost gyms filling local gaps in the market. Fingerprint entry.
Fitness4 Less	£14.99	None	16,000	2007	Neil Edwards, Emma Edwards, Matthew Harris	A full range of facilities / ladies-only gyms and classes. "The friendly face of budget fitness" – members are welcomed on their way in and out.
FitSpace	£12	Monthly (no contract), or an 18-month contract	10,000–20,000	2006	Private group / Kenny McAndrew	The first budget gym chain in the UK. Low price.
Gym4all	£10.99–£19.99 subject to site, contract and classes	None or 12-month	12,500–17,500	2009	MD Erik van Meeteren, directors Joost van Hassel and Hans Breukhoven	Friendly staff with state-of-the-art facilities. Classes offered in some gyms.
Pure Gym	£16.99	None	15,000–22,000	2009	Pure Gym Ltd / Peter Roberts	No contract, 24/7 opening, pay monthly, free induction, money-back guarantee, price for life, use of all gyms for one price
The Gym Group	£15.99 (or £10.99 pre-opening)	None	16,000–18,000	2008	Bridges Ventures & John Treharne / John Treharne	Price, no membership contract, 24/7 opening.
Trugym	£9.99–£17.99	No contract, or several options from one to 24 months	10,000 & 21,000	2010	Parm Singh	Free classes, numerous price options, a franchise business model.
Xercise4 Less	£14.99	None, 12-month and 24-month	20,000 & 27,000	2009	Jon Wright	Larger staffing, full class timetable.

- subscription targets at its five clubs and over-spending on conversion costs. [nuyu was sold to énergie in October 2010, just 12 months after it was jointly founded by *Dragons' Den* star James Caan and Ben Silcox, a former LA Fitness national sales manager.] To the onlooker, a low-cost gym business may look simple, but this simplicity requires meticulous execution.

Q: What do you think will come next?

A: As new low-cost entrants come along, there'll be the inevitable tendency to change the 'recipe'. This means that various low-cost hybrids start to develop, adding back some of the elements that were first eliminated such as steam, sauna and sunbeds, or even a café. It's done under the guise of differentiation, but just ends up confusing the proposition. To me, complexity is the enemy of low-cost operators. This is why Aldi, for example, focuses on just 1,000 product lines rather than the 40,000 found in a typical Tesco.

Q: What are your predictions for the future of the sector?

A: Those that continue to pursue a consistent low-cost strategy will flourish. McFit in Germany, which is the world's largest low-cost gym business, is now more than 13 years old. In fact, when you look at some of the world's most successful low-cost businesses, they are surprisingly well established. easyJet's inaugural flight, for example, was more than 15 years ago and Zara has been serving up low-cost fashion for more than 35 years. So I do not buy the argument that, when the economy rebounds and consumers feel more prosperous, they will trade-up.

Pure Gym: An investment of £1m in fitting out each new club, not including equipment



What's in the gym?	Included	Extras	No. of UK sites	New UK sites in 2011	Opening hours	Classes per week	Floor staff at any one time
"Full range of state of the art equipment"	Gym	PT, vending, sunbeds	1st to open end of Q2 2011	Rollout as and when sites secured	6am-10pm daily	TBC	1
10-12 resistance; free weights; 20-30 CV	Gym facilities, changing rooms	PT, énergie empower programme	11	8-10	7am-10pm; 8am-6pm weekends	0	1
Over 150 stations	Gym facilities, classes, induction, free PT session, changing rooms	PT, specialist classes (street dance, pole-dancing), tanning, nail bar	7	2-4	6.30am-10pm; 9am-6pm weekends	35, on average	Receptionist & cleaners
150 stations 40-60 free weights; CV. Includes main gym, quiet gym, and ladies-only area	Gym facilities, induction, changing rooms, access to all clubs	PT sessions	8	10-12	6.30am-10pm	0	2
150-200 stations - top of the range equipment. Air-conditioned. Latest audio visual equipment.	Unlimited use of gym, changing rooms, showers, classes in higher priced membership	N/A	5	2	6am-11pm daily	30	2-3
180-220 stations	Gym facilities, changing rooms	PT	14	12	24/7	50	12-14
An average of 170 stations	Gym facilities	PT, vending	17	12-15	24/7	0 (but PTs run circuits & running club)	2-3 + PTs
100-150 stations, studio for classes and group cycling	Unlimited use of gym, showers and changing facilities, classes, inductions	Sports massage, personal training	2	4	24/7	49	1 + PTs; unmanned off-peak
Over 200 stations	Gym, all classes, changing, parking	PT, vending, sunbeds	2	2 or 3 a year for 5 years	6am-10pm; 9am-8pm weekends	30	6 PTs (self-employed); receptionist, sales team

Q: What will be the cause of any changes in the market?

A: Expansion finance should become more accessible as brands deliver trading evidence. This may then prompt the first wave of consolidation. However, acquisitions will only take place if there remains a consistency around the enlarged business. Also, I'm looking forward to the opening of the first easyGym and tracking their progress. It'll be interesting to see the value that consumers place on the 'easy' brand when choosing a low-cost gym to join.

Ray Algar's UK Low-cost Gym Sector Report can be downloaded for free at: <http://budgetgymresearch.ning.com>



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research round-up

New research shows that resistance training offers additional cardiovascular benefits compared to aerobic exercise

strengthen up

Research conducted at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, US – and published in *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research** – has shown that resistance exercise, such as lifting weights, has a different impact on blood vessels from aerobic exercise.

The results are significant as they show that aerobic exercise isn't the only way that a person can improve their cardiovascular health.

Dr Scott Collier, the lead investigator of the study, says: "Aerobic exercise is the American Heart Association's preferred exercise for decreasing cardiovascular risk. However, there are a lot of people with orthopaedic or obesity limitations who can't walk or run long distances. For them, that type of exercise would be contra-indicated."

the study

Collier and his team measured blood vessel widening in response to arterial stiffness and increased blood flow in men who took part in moderate intensity resistance and aerobic workouts on three separate occasions. Both greater blood flow and decreased arterial stiffness are key factors in cardiovascular health.

The subjects were aged between 21 and 29 years and did not engage in any strenuous physical activity 48 hours before the tests. Tests were also conducted at least 72 hours apart.

The resistance test included a maximum of 10 repetitions of various sets of exercises – bench press, bent-over row, close-grip bench press for triceps and abdominal crunches. The exercises were performed at 100 per cent and there were 90-second rests between the sets.



Women who resistance train can help protect themselves against osteoporosis

The aerobic test was a 30-minute session on an upright cycle performed at 65 per cent of peak oxygen uptake.

Arterial stiffness was measured just before exercise and 40 and 60 minutes after, and blood flow was measured before and 60 minutes after exercise.

the results

It was found that, after resistance exercise, arterial stiffness actually increased by 9.8 per cent at 40 and 60 minutes, whereas it decreased by 8 per cent 60 minutes after aerobic exercise.

However, the rise in blood flow was much greater after resistance exercise – it increased significantly to 38 per cent – compared to aerobic activity where no significant change was found at all.

It was also found that the beneficial effects of resistance training continued

about 30 minutes after the exercise had ended, and as long as 24 hours in individuals who trained for 30–45 minutes three times a week.

In addition, it was discovered that resistance training resulted in as much as a 20 per cent decrease in a person's blood pressure, which is as good as – or better than – the benefits of taking anti-hypertensive medication. "And exercise has no adverse side effects," Collier notes.

He adds that women who use resistance training with a view to reducing blood pressure could in fact gain even more benefits. "Resistance training helps protect against or treat osteoporosis," he says, adding: "It also helps increase metabolism, as well as providing social and psychological benefits."

* Collier, SR et al. Changes in Arterial Distensibility and Flow-Mediated Dilation After Acute Resistance vs Aerobic Exercise. *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, Vol 24, No. 10, p2846-2852, October 2010.

Connecting: Using the right staff to speak to the right members makes for strong touch points



making an IMPACT

Jon Nasta looks at ways in which operators can cut through today's 'information overload' and create meaningful touch points with members

People – our members included – are increasingly complaining about 'information overload'. That's hardly surprising given that, during 2009, 90 trillion emails were sent globally – that's 247 billion every day – with a projected total of 507 billion by 2013. There are currently 1.5 billion email accounts held globally, with 74 per cent of these held by individual consumers. In the UK alone, a staggering 7 billion emails are sent every day, and more than 100 billion texts a year (sources: Radicati Group and the Mobile Data Association).

When well presented, some of the information that reaches us is beneficial, able to enhance our day, lives or a certain project; if it gets past the spam filter, it has the ability to positively impact on our perception of the source, making us more likely to employ that source. Unfortunately though, in large

part due to sheer volume, a majority of the information we receive is quickly filed away in our brains' recycle bin and the sources spammed.

So how can we bring about the contact we need to drive retention among our members? Staff-member interactions within the four walls of our clubs are often unachievable, simply due to the time it takes to speak to each individual, while our emails and texts may well be perceived as 'interruption overload'. What are we to do?

strengthen your touch points

A touch point is defined as the interface of a product, service or brand with customers, non-customers, employees and other stakeholders – both in business-to-business and business-to-consumer arenas – before, during and after a transaction. So how

can you ensure the touch points with your members are as strong as they can possibly be?

Research and experience tells us that having the right resource allocated to the right job is the most efficient and effective way to maximise your return on investment (ROI). Here are four golden rules used by our more successful health club partners:

1. Take a look at your channels of communication: Do you employ the strongest synergies between face-to-face, text, print, social media, email and so on? Do you truly have an up-to-date and efficient protocol in place to ensure each communication channel is at its strongest?

Topnotch Health Clubs wanted to maximise its efficiency and ROI from its customer touch points. A strong protocol for interacting with members while on-site was already in place, while



Specialist systems ensure we have the right people delivering in the strongest combination



► the company's websites were already providing steady leads, as well as increasingly being used by members to keep up to date with club information. However, there was nothing bridging the gap between these two touch points: between the personalised contact available on-site versus customers' more one-sided use of the internet.

Operations director Steve Bradley identified an opportunity to create more synergy in Topnotch's marketing by embracing web technology as a direct, interactive communications tool – bringing the personal touch of on-site interaction into the digital arena. Topnotch therefore approached Retention Management.

"Retention Management monitors individual members' attendance and sends emails based on this to

Topnotch saw attrition fall by 6 per cent after linking touch points



encourage people to adhere to their exercise programmes," Bradley explains.

"We believe that keeping the email specific to the individual member's attendance patterns – including relevant health tips, club information and special promotions – makes the message more welcome when it appears in their inbox.

"With Retention Management, we've also been able to automate much of our new member integration programme, reducing costs and increasing touch points and usage."

Attrition levels at Topnotch are down by at least 6 per cent annually since the new system was implemented.

2. Look at the strengths of your people: How should they be used to make your touch points with your public as strong as they can possibly be?

If your communication channels cannot be maximised by your in-house team, consider enlisting the support of an outside agency.

Halo Leisure trust recently tackled this issue from two angles. Operations director Scott Rolfe could see some great interactions taking place between staff and members, but wondered if these were targeting those members who most needed attention, ensuring the best use of time.

Rolfe employed the services of The Retention People to allow the team members with the strongest people skills to quickly identify and prioritise which members within the facility most

needed attention. Touch points have therefore been strengthened within the facilities by using the strongest staff to communicate with the right members at the right time.

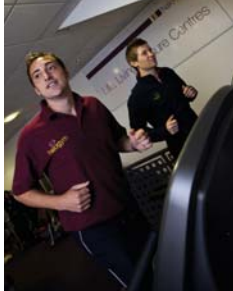
Rolfe also employed Retention Management to reach out beyond the walls of the clubs via email-based communication. Bringing specialist skills on board in this way has ensured that strong touch points are in place for all members, whether high or low users. "Combining specialised systems with our own expertise has helped us ensure that we have the right people delivering in the strongest combination to ensure success for our members," says Rolfe.

And it seems to be working – independent analysis recently carried out by GG Fit showed an increase in use of at least 10 per cent at centres run by Halo.

3. Recognise weaknesses – then make sure staff are not spending disproportionate amounts of time working on touch points they are not good at and do not enjoy.

God did not create all fitness staff equally, and some of the tasks that have to be carried out to deliver a truly efficient club do not fill all team members with enthusiasm. This can make delivery of the touch point weak.

For example, few fitness staff relish calling members over the phone, be it to encourage more visits, adherence to a PT programme or a group exercise class.



Reaching out: Halo Leisure (all pictures) employed two companies to help improve retention and has seen a 10 per cent increase in usage

Eze Fitness has been working with Corequest for the last three years on a number of member communication strategies, including improving phone techniques. It found that the staff making the strongest touch points via phone all made use of an array of customer testimonials. The staff with the strongest testimonials felt great about the service they offered, and this followed through in their phone manner.

Staff who weren't as adept on the phone were therefore prompted to ask for testimonials, resulting in a confidence boost as they realised the good work they had done for members, and how much members valued their work. This confidence boost – understanding how their customers valued their work – helped the weaker members of staff improve their phone manner, strengthening a previously weak touch point for a significant number of staff.

PT revenues have increased significantly since giving the instructors a belief in the service they deliver; now more than 25 per cent of members sign up for personal training following completion of their induction programme, as the instructors' belief in what they offer now shines through.

4. Never despair! Creating the correct synergy of touch points to deliver communications strong enough to break through is possible provided you keep your message relevant, interesting and strong.

We're seeing a huge growth in the number of clubs using a Facebook page and Twitter account to create touch points with their members, but this can easily be lost in the 'white noise' of social media communications. The more notable successes have come when there has been a natural fit between the demographics of a club's membership and the typical user profile of the communication channel.

Pure Gym has over 3,000 friends on its Facebook page, which is used to regularly update members with offers and club information. Alaine McNamee, marketing manager for Pure Gym, says they are only just scratching the surface of what could be done using Facebook, but that the medium has already delivered. For example, many new recruits were attracted to Pure Gym's Belfast site recently by joining the university's Facebook page and making the students aware of the special joining offers. Further successes have come by running joint promotions in conjunction with favoured nightspots in the towns and cities in which Pure Gym operates. "We're an online operation, so the synergy is there to be used," says McNamee. She adds: "This creates value, and delivering value is the crux of excellent member retention and future member recruitment."

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Connect bolts on to a club's till system, updating nightly and reporting monthly

Operator develops software

Aquaterra Leisure has developed a retention package called Connect – the only software system on the market developed solely by an operator.

Connect bolts on to a club's till system and every night analyses information on members, giving each one a risk rating which appears on-

screen when they swipe in. It can also display how many times a person has been interacted with, any information a club wishes to add, plus birthdays. The product also enables gym floor staff to log interactions, and it sends daily and monthly feedback and reports. Visit www.makingretentionsimple.co.uk

Two new products for TRP

The Retention People (TRP) has launched a system that analyses Net Promoter Scores (NPS) – a proven statistical model based on a survey of members, asking if they would recommend the club to their friends. The scores can be compared against a number of benchmarks, including other sectors, regions or clubs within the operator's own group. Subscribers receive full training on the theory, product and ways to improve.

The second product, Commit 2 Success, is a sales and retention programme based on a method used in drug and alcohol rehab. The member must sign a declaration of commitment to achieve a certain number of visits and the gym then tracks them remotely, contacting them to encourage them. It also has a smart online referral tool.

Club 2.0 success

Technogym's Club 2.0 is an add-on to the Wellness System. The 'Aspiration Finder' quizzes members on what they want to achieve, with programmes created automatically. Sites using Club 2.0 report positive results: customer satisfaction increased by 15 per cent at Sadus in Spain, while iClub San Marco in Italy saw 35 per cent more spontaneous visits.

Clarity partners with The Retention People

Clarity has joined The Retention People's (TRP) Certified Retention Partner Programme. The deal enables Clarity to share TRP's latest retention research with its clients on a quarterly basis, as well as the option to offer educational workshops.

RETENTION MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Retention Management has launched into Scandinavia.

Björn Johansson, CEO of Fitness Invest AB, has been appointed to manage sales in Sweden and Norway, with Balance Clubs and Life Clubs among the first health club chains to sign up. "I am delighted to be working with Retention Management," says Johansson.

"After launching our service to the UK in January 2008, we have been delighted by the response," adds Retention Management UK's managing

director, Jon Nasta. "This is a natural progression for us and I am looking forward to the fresh opportunities these markets present."

The service was officially made available in March, after a successful introduction to the Scandinavian fitness industry at the MBM conference held in Gothenburg, Sweden, last year.

In the UK, Retention Management has been adopted by eight more LivingWell Clubs, while Oldham Community Leisure has also added further sites.



software for *Life*

show preview



The all-in-one health, fitness and nutrition expo is back, and this year it's bigger and better than ever before

BODY POWER 2011

BodyPower Expo 2011 is being held at the NEC Birmingham on 21 and 22 May. Moving into its third successive year, the show has gone from strength to strength and this year will offer visitors an array of different features.

The two-day event, which is set to showcase more than 150 leading UK and international exhibitors, will also offer a range of programmes, products and competitions designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of people.

zoning in

The Zone Theatre will offer all visitors unrivalled access to top athletes, dietitians and coaches to learn about different forms of training, nutrition and fitness needs. This year's speakers will include Ramona Braganza, an American trainer who has helped Halle Berry, Ryan Reynolds and Zac Efron achieve their fitness goals.

The Healthy Eating Kitchen will feature leading nutritionists including Caroline Pearce and Matt Lovell, who will talk about and cook up a range of healthy meals. Pearce is an ex-GB athlete while Lovell is best known for his long association with the England

rugby team. The Healthy Eating Kitchen nutritionists will suggest meals that work better at particular times of the day and specifically show you how to optimise your training or exercise programmes with proper nutrition.

Head straight to the Fitness Zone to find out about the latest trends and most popular gym classes. Hosted by fitness presenter Delvin Clarke, you will be able to take in demonstrations of Pole Fitness, Hydro Vibe, Vibe Power, Freestyle Pump and Zumba.

The Amateur Boxing Association of England will be running a range of drills and amateur boxing matches in the Combat Zone. The winner will be crowned BodyPower Amateur Boxing Champion 2011. The Combat Zone will also be the perfect place to witness BodyPower's own MMA tournament, live workshops and clinics with various stars.

working out

The Workout Zone is an interactive urban playground where visitors can test their strength, flexibility and fitness. This is also the home of the 100 Rep Challenge, an open challenge for any visitor. For more information, visit its Facebook Group or website.

The main BodyPower Stage will play host to a range of fun strength challenges. The World's Strongest Man, Zydrunas Savickas, will be in attendance and there will be an Open Strongman competition on the Sunday.

The Super Theatre Programme will be the centrepiece and offers visitors a range of exclusive headline acts, many of whom will not return to the UK again this year. Ronnie Coleman, eight times Mr Olympia, will appear alongside the current Mr Olympia, Jay Cutler. Go along to learn their training secrets, get advice on how to become a world beater and listen to their insights into the industry.

BodyPower Expo this year offers all attendees an unmissable opportunity to see fitness and nutrition in action.

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The Entertainment Experience

Julie Fisher takes a look at some of the recent innovations in the area of in-club entertainment

Research conducted by Leisure-net Solutions found that 78 per cent of us experience some boredom when exercising on CV equipment – but with the advancements of entertainment technology at our fingertips, surely this doesn't have to be the case? How are manufacturers helping to keep fitness enthusiasts engaged and motivated?

IMMERSION OR DISTRACTION?

According to Duncan Lawson, owner of Instyle Fitness: "It's all about 'mental engagement'. If we engage the brain in an activity while working out and have fun at the same time, we can get fit. It's that simple."

Michael Rice, CEO and founder of Trixter, agrees: "Consumers want something fun, different and engaging. They want to be motivated – stimulated both mentally and physically – and they want social interaction. We're living in an increasingly less social environment, and our fitness regimes need to offer something more than solitary training."

Introducing competition allows operators and suppliers to incorporate this sort of social element. Clubs such as Virgin Active and SLM are using Trixter Xdream bikes to run race nights and inter-club challenges – a

cost-effective way for operators to engage with members and keep them motivated at the same time.

Meanwhile, following five years of development, Instyle has launched WebRacing software and a bespoke bike to showcase it. The app is compatible with any CV equipment, including rowers and cross-trainers, with features so realistic that you can not only see and feel the terrain, but also the changes in resistance as you slipstream behind and then overtake another racer. Equipment can either have its own touch-screen PC or connect wirelessly to a server, providing virtual racing within a club or inter-club live over the web.

However, Rice is quick to point out that easing boredom must not distract from the workout itself. "By distracting people we dull the brain, thus dulling the physical effort put into the workout. Just distracting them won't make them work harder," he says. "Virtual sport is the true future for the gym, when people are engaged and involved – even immersed – in sporting simulation and where each workout is a competition against yourself." ▶

Above: Precor's new touchscreen, and (left) Trixter's Xdream bike that can race bikes in other clubs

- ▶ On the other hand, Daniel Clayton, vice president of international development for Matrix Fitness, comments: "Demands are being placed on health clubs – and ultimately on manufacturers – to create fitness equipment that allows users to enter into an entertainment experience that takes their mind off the task at hand as much as possible."

Fair to say that different people will be motivated in different ways – something Lawson noted in his research into what motivates people to exercise. "There are those who need mental engagement – fun and distraction – and those who require integration of data: the ability to analyse and dissect performance," he says. "Connectivity via the web is paramount to both."

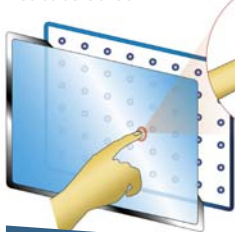
CONNECTIVITY

Innovations in technology move at an incredible pace and, with interactive home fitness now a global entertainment phenomenon thanks to the likes of WiiFit, it's no wonder gym-goers expect some degree of interactivity when they are exercising.

According to Darryl Taylor, Precor EMEA's entertainment and services manager: "Entertainment and technology are intrinsically linked, and the future of club entertainment will naturally mirror the vanguard of entertainment technology.

"Networked fitness [equipment that's linked together – in club or even across a number of clubs – via the internet] opens a whole world of possibilities and promises to satisfy the ever-increasing demands of members, who rightly expect to enjoy a choice of media while working out."

Resistive Screen



Precor's P80 console features a capacitive screen – the same sort of screen as on an iPhone



Daniel R Wille, vice president of global marketing, product and business development for Life Fitness, agrees: "The concept of connectivity is revolutionising club entertainment. Users today want options for maximising their workout: they want immediate access to their progress, workout plans, music and video. And connectivity is going mobile. Club members want on-the-go entertainment and access to their personalised content."

The Life Fitness Virtual Trainer website, an online workout programme and results tracker, has seen a 53 per cent increase in global use over the last year; its recently launched Facebook application, which allows users to post their workout results to their Facebook profile, has already led to a further doubling of daily visits to the website. The company also introduced a Smartphone app at IHRSA, enabling exercisers to update their workout results via their mobile devices.

ZigZag's Espresso internet-linked bikes also have software that links the gym floor with social media: riders can share their milestones on Facebook and

Twitter, challenging their online friends to beat their scores.

CAPTIVATING CONSOLES

Following three and a half years of developmental research, Precor launched its new Experience Series CV range at IHRSA last month, combining award-winning cardio units with a new range of consoles, most notably the P80.

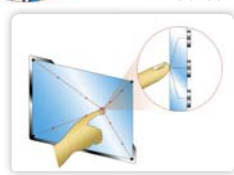
The P80 console incorporates a highly robust, commercial grade 'capacitive' touch-screen, much like an iPhone or iPad – the user simply glides a finger across the unit and the screen adjusts instantly (see illustration, left). Capacitive screens are widely considered to offer greater sensitivity than a resistive screen – which requires pressure to be applied to push on-screen buttons, for example – as well as being more robust and reliable.

The new console delivers a fully integrated media experience, with a host of features from an upright viewing angle for correct posture, through new easy-to-use motion controls, to high quality graphics. It also has iPod connectivity and provides a gateway to networked fitness, providing limitless entertainment options.

Taylor points out that education can also be entertaining. Fitness is foremost for Precor and the P80 features a series of tutorial videos designed to help users get the most from their training, along with a vast array of workouts, all with descriptive photography and all designed to encourage the user to try different programmes with specific goals instead of pressing the 'quick start' button. Research conducted during a trial of the new equipment found that, as a result, more than 40 per cent of users chose a new programme.

Meanwhile, Technogym's Visioweb can be used to email personalised messages

Capacitive Screen





Hi-tech: Pulse's SmartCentre (left), the MyRide v3 with inbuilt coach (above) and (right) taking part in WebRacing



to members, helping to motivate and encourage. Craig Swyer, product manager for Technogym, comments: "The growing trend for club entertainment is to tailor the user interface to each individual member to offer motivation, and each member's requirements are different. "One of Visioweb's key successes is the range of services and information offered, such as the ability to read emails, access online communities and read the news in real time, as well as the ability to modify the interface to choose the information as required by the user."

TRACKING & COACHING

Tracking progress is an important motivational tool, with many manufacturers now offering exercise management software to accompany their equipment.

Pulse's SmartCentre technology, for example, allows the user to upload not only data from gym workouts, but also from external activities – such as swimming, jogging or even walking the dog – to provide a full picture of their fitness regime.

Andy Sayle, marketing director for Pulse, explains: "The next upgrade will feature a colour-coded motivational reporting system, giving the user instant feedback on performance against targets and allowing the gym instructor to react quickly to any drop in performance."

But its not just tracking that motivates members to achieve their goals. Coaching is as important – and virtual training is a sign of the times, with a proliferation of offerings now available including Star Trac Coach and Life Fitness' Virtual Trainer.

Another product in this category is MyRide v3. This virtual cycling product from the Indoor Cycling Group (ICG) – which partners with Matrix – embeds audio coaching into inspirational high

definition road and trail footage from around the world. The inbuilt coach tells you when to adjust resistance, ride position and energy zones to maximise the workout, as well as providing vocal encouragement. Visual aids as you ride the terrain also prompt you to make these adjustments.

Meanwhile, MyRide Studio Workouts feature seven English-, Spanish- and German-speaking instructors who coach just as they would a real-life indoor cycling class, providing stimulation and motivation. The user can build their own workout from the thousands of high definition options available.

MyRide Plus will also launch later this year – a class experience that will enable instructors to have total control of the content and the ability to 'transport' a group of riders anywhere in the world. The virtual experience will also allow operators to provide a custom-built virtual class that, once programmed, can run itself.

3D GYM OF THE FUTURE

Looking forward, Trixter is partnering with Sony to produce an interactive bike for the Playstation 3, due to be unveiled later this year; WebRacing tracks are already available in 3D; and both Gary Warren, product and brand director of ICG, and Instyle's Lawson are talking about 3D virtual gyms.

According to Lawson: "Instyle will this year be delivering virtual racing that can be projected – in a large format across multiple individual flatscreen TVs, located around the room to effectively create a huge curved screen – whereby, if participants wear special 3D glasses, they will see in 3D."

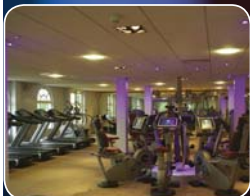
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Elite physiotherapist Don Gatherer has created a groundbreaking piece of strength-measuring equipment – the GP Analysis Suite. He talks to Kath Hudson about the ways in which it could help bridge the gap between the fitness industry and the medical profession

DON GATHERER

What is your background?

I've been a chartered physiotherapist for 40 years. In 1978, I started my own private practice and moved into research. I have been the physio for the England rugby team, for the GB athletics team and for Commonwealth Games England, and I was chief physio to the Olympics.

What inspired you to create the GP Analysis Suite?

About 10 years ago, working with the England rugby team, I was constantly being presented with players with neck injuries and weaknesses in the arms. To get a guy back to playing rugby, we needed to know how strong he was and how much force we could safely apply to the neck without damaging the underlying bone structure, ligament and nerve – but I never knew what I was up against, because there was no objective analysis for measuring strength. So I decided to design my own system that was easy, mobile and cost-effective. It was finally launched last October.

Data is analysed and presented in an easy-to-read graph format



So what does it do?

It measures strength and endurance: how quickly the muscle fatigues. Both sides of the body are measured so subtle imbalances can be picked up, helping to detect injuries before they develop. It can be used to test the back, neck, triceps, quads, abductors and hip flexors – in fact, the whole body.

Once identified and defined, imbalances can be analysed to ascertain their adverse biomechanical influence on functional body activity and the resultant, acquired compensatory movement patterns. Specific bespoke programming can then be targeted to the affected region or action; re-testing will then define clinical progress and effectiveness.

How did you go about designing it?

I looked at all the technologies available for measuring force and load. That led me to look at load cells – devices that are used to convert a force into an electrical signal. Those electrical signals are then presented in a graph format for ease of interpretation. Load cells are used by the Formula One industry, which is where I sourced all the hardware.

But in order to test endurance, we needed to design software too. I worked closely with the technicians to create software that's user-friendly: the data is analysed and displayed as a graph. You don't have to be a medic to use it; a gym instructor can use it after completing the training.

I've been doing research at Edinburgh University, where the system's been validated.

Who will use it?

The Gatherer Partnership is now based at the Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital in Aylesbury, an international spinal injury rehab centre, and the new system is being used to analyse and rehabilitate spinal injuries and neurological trauma – in stroke victims, for example.

We also have interest from national and club-level rugby teams, and I think it has a huge part to play in health clubs too. It would be great for post-op rehabilitation, for example. Everything can be tested, with accurate measurements given, plus it offers peace of mind – you know how much weight you can safely put on someone.

Why would it be useful for a health club?

This is a great way to help the fitness industry move closer to the medical sector, because both professions can read the data and it provides objective analysis. GPs could safely refer on to clubs – the system tells you how strong a patient is, so you know their capabilities and can give them an appropriate, safe workout programme.

All members could be tested every six to eight weeks, so people can track their improvements. This would help the professionalism of the industry, because people do like to see how they're getting on (see also *HCM* March 11, p50). Clubs could also create their own database of members to get an idea about similarities in profile – developing a typical profile for a 45-year-old female member, for example – to help ensure the right services and programming are in place.

There isn't really anything else available to measure strength, and this system is inexpensive – it only costs £6,000 – and it's also really easy to use.

What training is needed to use it?

The training is really easy. It's done at the Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital and takes a day to learn the set-up positions. The software has been made very simple, all features are automatically saved, and anything accidentally deleted can be recovered from the hard drive. It also tells you if you're not using it properly.

What challenges did you face?

Do you have a couple of weeks?! It's taken 10 years to develop and has been very challenging. Several times I thought I

Clubs could structure their time into segments – a back morning, a leg afternoon – so it runs like a rehabilitation gym

couldn't carry on. It took a lot of doggedness and persistence. Funding was an issue too: people don't want to know in the early days, but when it starts showing positive signs, they all want to put funds in.

What's the best way to integrate fitness and physiotherapy in a normal health club?

The best thing is co-ordination and you get that through working groups, seminars and representatives, so everyone can then sing from the same song sheet. But it shouldn't be dominated by one of those professions – it needs to be a joint project, with mutual respect and understanding. If you have systems of analysis that you can both understand, then you have a common feature to work from.

I think clubs need to structure their time into segments – for example, a back morning, a leg afternoon – so it runs like a rehabilitation gym. Bring in specialists from the healthcare side, create specialist groups and get input from specialists in order to build up templates that everyone can work from.

I believe it's waiting to happen. The fitness industry working in collaboration with healthcare could work really well.



kath hudson

healthclub@leisuremedia.com

The system measures strength and endurance – how quickly a muscle fatigues – and picks up imbalances





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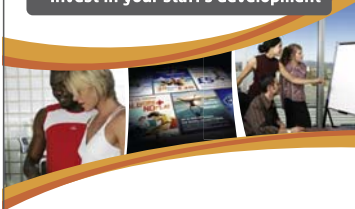
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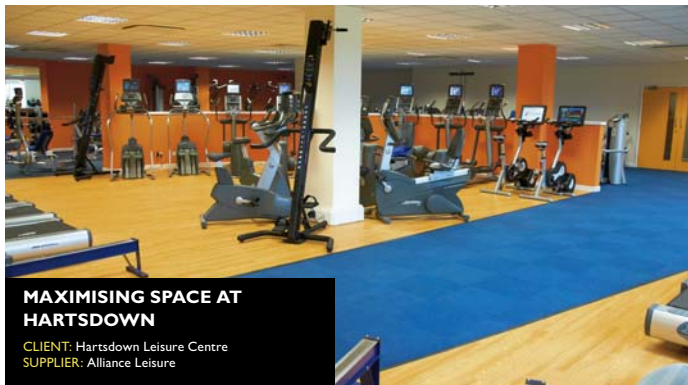
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PROJECT BRIEFINGS

SUPPLIERS PROFILE SOME OF THEIR RECENT REDEVELOPMENTS



MAXIMISING SPACE AT HARTSDOWN

CLIENT: Hartsdown Leisure Centre
SUPPLIER: Alliance Leisure

Hartsdown Leisure Centre opened its doors to the local community of Thanet, Kent, in April 2010. World record holder and British Olympian Mark Foster unveiled the new and improved facilities.

Extensive retail and leisure development in the local area had resulted in significant competition for Hartsdown Leisure Centre, and the decision was made to drastically improve the swimming pool and leisure facilities, to provide accessibility for people with disabilities and to create a family-friendly environment. From an operational perspective, the new facilities also needed to increase sales revenue through additional memberships and increased overall usage of the centre.

Working in partnership with Thanet Leisure Force and Thanet District Council, Alliance Leisure funded and managed the six-month redevelopment project to encourage participation in physical activities for all ages. The £1.4m project aimed to transform the centre as a whole – not only the activity zones but also the broader visitor experience, from reception to changing rooms.

A state-of-the-art gym, two new exercise studios, multi-purpose areas catering for an array of sports, an Ollie's-branded children's indoor play area and a modern café now

Revamp: The new multi-purpose hall at Hartsdown Leisure Centre



Boosting the bottom line: The revamp has led to a 50 per cent increase in fitness income

sit alongside the 25m swimming pool and teaching pool, offering an all-encompassing leisure experience for the families of Thanet. Footfall to the centre has increased considerably: there are now more than 2,000 members using the new facilities and fitness income has grown by over 50 per cent.

Previously, the 'Fit Force' gym was located in a separate building from the swimming pool and changing facilities, making it difficult and progressively more unwelcoming for local residents. The redevelopment project moved the gym into the main building.

The new air-conditioned gym now offers a diverse range of CV and resistance training equipment, along with a large free weights area. When designing the layout of the gym, Alliance Leisure and Thanet Leisure Force carefully considered the positioning of the 62 stations, each with a personal TV screen, to create varied workout experiences for each member. Furthermore, the entire facility has full disabled access, confirming its DDA compliance.

Since its revamp, Hartsdown Leisure Centre offers a true 'club' feel, with an offering comparable to the local private sector competitors, but at a more affordable price. Stephen Parker, business development manager for Alliance Leisure, comments: "Working with Thanet Leisure Force and Thanet District Council is another fantastic example of what can be achieved in a sports centre that's not maximising the space available. Our partnership has been extremely successful." ▶



CHANGING PLACES AT DAVID LLOYD LEISURE

CLIENT: DLL

SUPPLIER: Ridgeway Furniture

The recent £1.5m refurbishment of the David Lloyd Leisure health club in Leeds included a £400,000 overhaul of the changing rooms, which was one of three major projects that Ridgeway Furniture undertook for David Lloyd in 2010, in conjunction with JM Scully.

The club wanted to increase the size of its lockers from 300mm to 400mm wide, to better accommodate the needs of the tennis-playing members. Ridgeway supplied the club with lockers, benches, vanity units, toilet cubicles and an IPS (integrated panelling system).

The three refurbished changing rooms are all designed with both luxury and practicality in mind. The main male and female locker rooms have separate zones for families, where large cubicles with baby change areas and bespoke playpens are housed. Meanwhile a separate family changing room, designed for both parents to use with their children, offers six private changing cubicles.

The lockers are manufactured with cream carcasses and walnut veneer doors, creating a contemporary feel to the changing room. David Lloyd Leisure has for several years now used a two-piece security latch lock, operated using a four-digit code, and this has also been used at the Leeds site. This lock is manufactured from 4mm powder-coated steel and is extremely strong and secure. In addition, it removes the key management hassle experienced by clubs with coin return locks.

The bench seats are constructed from solid wood with a padded faux leather cushion, which gives a feel of both elegance and luxury. Meanwhile the dry vanity units are designed with Arctic White Corian tops to give a clean, modern feel, while recessed light – installed behind a glass



Luxury with practicality: Walnut veneer doors and stone surfaces give a sense of quality

downstand – creates a warm atmosphere. The wet vanity units have stone tops with a blue glass upstand and tiled downstand and wall-to-wall mirrors.

The toilet cubicles and IPS are manufactured from solid grade laminate – a strong, self-supporting material that can be used in furniture or decorative applications with a colour or woodgrain face. It is extremely hard-wearing, so is excellent in high traffic areas, as well as high moisture and humidity environments.

The installation took place over an 11-week programme in a live club environment. This added complexity to the project, as many different trades were on-site simultaneously to keep the changing rooms closed for as short a time as possible. In fact, Ridgeway has adapted its working processes to suit the needs of the industry over recent years. “We realised five years ago that the market had reached saturation point in terms of new club builds, so we started to refine our business to cater primarily for refurbishments,” says Mark Cutler, MD of Ridgeway Furniture. “This meant a change in our working practices to accommodate 24-hour fitting on-site, as well as seven-day working at our production facility. This enables us to turn around projects both in the factory and on-site at speed.”



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rebounder with storage

Jordan Fitness has launched a medicine ball rebounder with built-in storage for eight balls.

Medicine balls are thrown at the rebounder and caught on the rebound for functional fitness training.

The price of the Jordan Medicine Ball Rebounder is £299 + VAT (not including delivery). The medicine balls are sold separately and prices for these start at £11.24 + VAT.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

jordan fitness



own your own escape trx ceiling solution

The recently-launched TRX ceiling solution is now available to gyms across the country.

The system – which has only been on sale in Europe for a short time – allows space-strapped clubs to hang TRXs from the ceiling, and then remove them when the space is needed.

A new TRX military pack is also available, perfect for boot camps when combined with the new ceiling solution.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

escape fitness

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freiform launched in uk after success in oz

Following success in Australia, Physical Company has launched its freeFORM board in the UK.

Essentially a disc on casters with a rotating top, the board can be used for all sorts of functional training exercise, including for group exercise, pilates and PT. The wheels on the disc can be locked to vary the exercise. Its USPs are its shape – being circular, it is always facing the right way – and its size: it's large enough to support two hands or feet (or elbows/knees), but small enough to be usable with one.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

physical company

stott pilates now available direct

STOTT PILATES equipment is now available to buy direct in the UK. Its Canadian manufacturer Merrithew Health & Fitness has stopped operating through a UK distributor and says the direct model will offer customers better pricing, shorter order turnaround times and new equipment bundles not previously offered in the UK.

CEO Lindsay Merrithew says: "As we continue to grow our business overseas, we see this as a wonderful opportunity to get to know our customers on a more intimate level. With their valuable feedback, we will continue to enhance our product line and customer service experiences."



fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

stott pilates



new boxing group exercise studio concept

A new company, Tube Boxing Limited (The Ultimate Boxing Experience), has entered the fitness arena with the launch of its first product: a new concept group exercise studio.

Equipped with a variety of boxing stations, lively branded walls and an energising light and sound show to accompany each class, they are available in a variety of modular sizes.

The studio, installed on the gym floor or customised to any space by Tube, comes with a full schedule of pre-

programmed, no-staff classes which are activated through a speaker system at the touch of a button. New classes are sent to clubs every three months.

Club members can choose whether to book in to a 45-minute class or use a 20-minute 'Explosion' session as part of their cardio gym training.

Tube is taking bookings for demos at its new showroom in Huntingdon.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
tube boxing

physical company creates own brand range

Physical Company has a new line of studio storage racks with colour-coded equipment. It's the first range that the company has made itself; in the past it has only sold other companies' products.

The racks are finished in oval tubing with durable silver metallic paintwork, and the range includes dumbbell racks, a kettlebell rack, bodybar rack, pump set rack, swiss ball tree and plate storage racks.

The complementary range of equipment – dumbbells, plates, strength bars and so on – has consistent colour coding throughout the weight/strength ranges, so the user can easily select the weight that is right for them. In the dumbbells,



for example, there are 13 weights ranging from 0.5kg to 10kg, each in a different colour. The line has been designed to be both aesthetically pleasing and highly durable.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
physical company



new corealign for pilates

Balanced Body's new CoreAlign combines mind-body exercise, cardiovascular exercise and strength training in one workout experience. Exercises emphasise upright posture while improving balance and functional movement. Its frame encloses two tracks and two carts, which move independently with smooth resistance (or assistance) created by six elastic resistance tubes on each cart.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
balanced body



kettlebell classes follow celebrity fitness trends

Ponds Forge International Sports Centre in Sheffield has launched 30-minute kettlebell classes using Jordan kettlebells.

They say the sessions were introduced to keep up with celebrity fitness trends. Says Helen Broadbent, general manager at Sheffield International Venues (SIV): "The sessions are a fantastic way of toning your whole body and are also ideal for those who have limited time."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
jordan fitness

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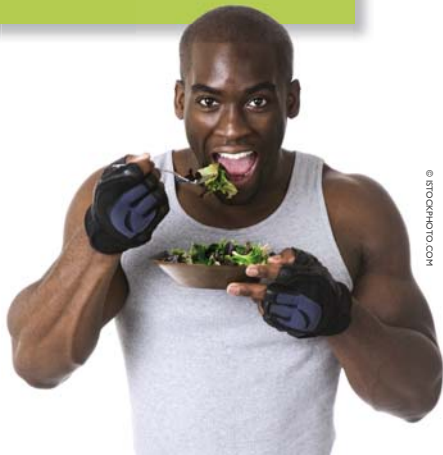
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Popeye was right all along – eat spinach and you really will get big biceps.

Research from Swedish medical university the Karolinska Institute shows that the mitochondria – the cellular power producers of muscles – are boosted by nitrate, a substance that is abundant in spinach and other vegetables such as beetroot and lettuce.

In the study, healthy people took the nitrate equivalent to 200–300g of spinach for three days, while another group took a placebo. Following this, both sets of participants were asked to perform a cycling task. Samples from thigh muscles were taken and compared and it was found that after the nitrate ingestion a significant improvement was seen in the mitochondria.

The mitochondria in the nitrate group consumed less oxygen and more ATP – an energy rich substance. Details: www.ki.se



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TOILET SEAT THROWING AT REDNECK GAMES

The Redneck Horse contest – where people try to throw toilet seats as far as they can – is just one of the events at this year's Redneck Games.

The Hubcap Hurl and Bobbin' for Pig's Feet Fest are other popular choices at the games, which take place on 9 July in Georgia, Atlanta, US.

The games reportedly started as a joke event to run alongside the Olympics in Atlanta in 1996. Around 500 competitors were expected, but 5,000 showed up. Over the last 10 years approximately 95,000 people have taken part in the games, with all profits going to local charities. Details: www.summerredneckgames.com



STREET SNOOKER ARRIVES IN THE UK

Street Snooker, an outdoor game which is a hybrid of Brazilian freestyle football and snooker, has launched in the UK.

The game involves players kicking a ball at a green board which looks like a snooker table, where different coloured holes resemble the layout of snooker balls. Players can then score points the snooker way when they kick the ball through the holes in the right sequence.

The first Street Snooker opened at the Moneyhole playing fields in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, last month. It was the brainchild of Marco Boi, director of Playinnovation, whose aim is to offer a range of exciting gaming solutions at low prices. Details: www.playinnovation.co.uk



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banking on losing weight

Korea has come up with an interesting method to encourage its citizens to slim down and save up.

Ever since 2008, the country's Hana Bank – part of the Hana Financial Group – has offered a savings product known as S-Line: a word which describes an hourglass figure in Korea.

Customers of S-Line are reportedly offered a higher interest rate the more calories they burn. Special rates are

also offered to those who hold a fitness membership or who lose more than 5 per cent of their weight in a year.

In another scheme – this time for smartphone users – Korea's Kookmin Bank has an interesting savings application. If their customers feel the need to spend, they click on an icon which transfers the cost of what they would have bought from their current to their savings account.



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