



health club management

FEBRUARY 2011



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INTERVIEW

RENE MOOS

The CEO of HealthCity
International on
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SPA TRENDS


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future of health club spas

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will 'nudging' work?

The government's 'nudge' approach to improving public health – encouraging people to make healthier choices by making these the more accessible option – may struggle to make an impression, because the lure of unhealthy choices remains so much stronger. This is the conclusion of new research carried out by the Behaviour and Health Research Unit at Cambridge University.

Bad nudges work better than good nudges, explained professor Theresa Marteau, director of the research unit, on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme last month. We can try and change the environment to promote good choices, but unless we eradicate the bad nudges, people won't make the necessary changes to their lifestyle.

So what does this mean for the health and fitness industry, and should the findings really come as a surprise? We have, for a number of years, been plateauing at a population penetration rate of around 12 per cent in the UK. Even among these people – the membership-holding few – a large proportion will only attend the gym a couple of times a month. We're surely well aware already of the appeal of unhealthy choices, whether that's an active choice to go to the pub rather than the gym or a more passive decision not to leave the sofa.

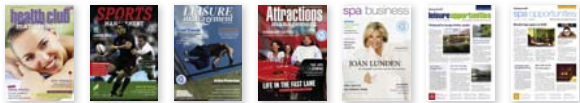
Even if we do coax someone in the right direction, will they be a permanent convert? Research published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* suggests not: in a recent US study, those offered financial incentives to lose weight began to pile the pounds back on once the monetary carrot had gone.

Our sector's approach to customer service is another factor here: how many times will a new member put up with being told that induction appointments aren't available, a class cancelled or they're 10th on the waiting list before they slip back into their old habits? We need to ask ourselves if we're actually the source of many of the 'bad' nudges putting people off going to the gym.

And ultimately, if we're failing to nudge even existing members towards achieving their goals – or worse still, actively putting up barriers to dissuade them – how can we hope to nudge the disinterested, sometimes even downright apathetic, masses into the gym in the first place? It's hard enough encouraging someone to choose dried fruit over chocolate to satisfy a sweet tooth. Going into a gym takes time and, frankly, hurts. Our industry can be guilty at times of preaching to the converted, or even falsely projecting our own enthusiastic attitudes towards exercise onto others, but here's a reality check: most people don't relish the 'burn' of the gym. It's going to take one hell of a nudge to get them through our doors.

So what can we do? Many bad nudges will be beyond our control – although we absolutely must address those occurring within our clubs – but let's at least do everything we can to change perceptions so choosing fitness seems less painfully, inaccessibly, unappealingly virtuous, such a lecturingly 'good' nudge. Yes, some people will be persuaded by the long-term health benefits, and education around these will certainly play a role, but the more we can do to make fitness less of an exclusive club, the better. Let's go out into the community and make exercise fun, social and almost a by-product that slips in under the radar of another, more enjoyable, activity. That would surely be a good start.

Kate Cracknell, editor
katecracknell@leisuremedia.com



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SUBS Tel: +44 (0)1462 471915 Fax: +44 (0)1462 433909 © Cybertrek Ltd 2011

welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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Head to Budapest's spas for a party,
and indulge in a new cocoa-based
drink that fights wrinkles

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



We must improve our retention levels to prove ourselves capable partners

we mustn't give healthcare a reason not to partner with us

I agree with Dr Melvyn Hillsdon that our industry must provide more objective measures of retention and the levels of service received by our customers in order to prove our credibility to the healthcare sector (*HCM Nov/Dec 10, p6*).

However, I also believe the healthcare sector needs to demonstrate a more dynamic and proactive approach to working with professional fitness operators. The NHS is a wonderful institution, but it could hardly be described as fleet-footed or dynamic. It needs to play its part too, seeking partnerships with other public and private sector organisations that can contribute to the prevention of, and recovery from, ill-health.

At times, it would appear that people within the NHS are more interested in protecting the status quo than adapting to new challenges and embracing change.

Trying to establish partnerships with the local PCT and its GP surgeries is time-consuming and efforts can often be more productive if directed elsewhere.

The health and fitness sector has invested an immense amount of capital in facilities and people, and we have the ideal organisations to partner with the health sector. I agree, though, that we need to improve on our level of customer service. We must engage with our customers more meaningfully and improve on customer retention for the sake of our own organisations' growth, as well proving ourselves as capable partners. Clearly our high churn rates send out the wrong message and provide potential health sector partners with a good reason, or perhaps an excuse, not to do business with us.

andy bourne
md, spxct leisure

clubs must embrace virtual marketing methods

Your letters page in *HCM Nov/Dec 10* suggested a missing ingredient in how clubs relate to members: engagement.

Clubs have efficient internal systems but have yet to grasp the opportunity behind 'outreach'. Many are sitting on a goldmine. They have so many pieces in place – a recognised brand, enthusiastic staff, big multi-channel databases (email addresses, mobile numbers, physical addresses) – yet continue to rely on old-school marketing tactics and a leaky business model that fails to maximise the full lifetime value of their members.

Most people's problem today isn't how to exercise. It's how to stay motivated enough to make exercise (and clubs) a regular part of their lifestyle. They require a more complete solution (programmes, resources and inspiration) that supports them in getting results. Clubs must involve members in ongoing two-way conversations – teleseminars, webinars, online programmes, social media – or lose out to more tech-savvy bootcamp operators and weight loss groups.

Clubs that act stand to eliminate member cost objections, fill dead staff hours, raise member loyalty levels, encourage clients to be inter-dependent on each other as much as on the club, and expand their member database.

noel lyons
fitness & internet marketing consultant



Clubs ignoring the web will lose out to more tech-savvy operations

STOP!

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IHRSA preparing for 30th anniversary convention

TOM WALKER

IHRSA will hold its 30th Anniversary International Convention & Trade Show in the US next month.

Taking place in San Francisco, California, between 16 and 19 March, the event will gather the major players of the global industry under one roof, with a number of keynote speeches, seminars and a large trade floor showcasing the latest equipment. Speakers at this year's event include author Daniel Pink, management consultant Patrick Lencioni, Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com, and Phil Keoghan, host of *The Amazing Race* (see p74).



Members at more than 200 clubs are taking part

voting underway to find clubs with the x factor

TOM WALKER

Voting is well underway by thousands of health club members to find the best clubs across the UK, as voted by consumers.

More than 200 clubs are competing in the first year of a unique competition where the members become the judges, rating the services and facilities provided to them.

The voting system enables clubs of all sizes to vie for the title of Best Health Club in the UK. Clubs will be shortlisted in 14 regions and the winners will be announced at LIW in September.

For details, go to www.healthclubawards.co.uk or call +44 (0)1892 610245.

joint consultative forum launches

TOM WALKER

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has established a Joint Consultative Forum with a number of royal medical colleges and faculties as part of efforts to increase the number of exercise referrals from GPs.

The forum is the first of its kind and has been designed to offer exercise professionals the opportunity to 'share a table' with doctors from a number of the royal colleges, including the Royal College of General Practitioners.

According to the FIA, there is still limited use of exercise as part of preventative medicine – an issue that the association has identified as one of its key priorities to rectify.

The group is chaired by Dr John Searle OBE, the FIA's chief medical officer, who says: "Exercise has not been used regularly in primary care



The forum aims to promote exercise's role within preventative medicine

and we're now joining forces with the medical profession to do something about that.

"Now that the association has been established, with the support of the fitness sector and the Department of Health, it has been agreed that its first task will be to draw up new standards in exercise referral."

topnotch expands into budget sector

TOM WALKER

Topnotch Health Clubs has secured a deal with budget club operator Fitness4less which will allow Topnotch to operate clubs under the Fitness4less brand.

Steve Bradley, operations director for Topnotch Health Clubs, says: "We studied the affordable health club market closely and felt that Fitness4less offered the best opportunity for us to expand into this exciting new sector.

"Partnering with Fitness4less, we believe that we can utilise our existing skills, knowledge and expertise in order to provide members with everything you would expect from a traditional gym but at a budget price."



Topnotch currently operates nine clubs in the UK

Topnotch will be opening its first two Fitness4less Clubs in Nottingham and Cardiff (both due to open early 2011), and has announced "ambitious" rollout plans for 2011. Topnotch currently operates nine clubs.

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new exeter club for david lloyd

TOM WALKER

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has opened its new £11m Sandy Park health and fitness club in Exeter, Devon.

The facility incorporates a 1,198sq m (12,900sq ft) gymnasium equipped with a number of CV and resistance machines from Life Fitness, plus 26 M3 Indoor Cycles and six M5 Ellipticals from Keiser.

Three indoor and five outdoor tennis courts, indoor and outdoor swimming pools and a dedicated area for children's activities are also on offer at the venue. A full programme of exercise classes are available, including yoga, pilates, step, dance and aerobics.

DLL Exeter general manager Greg Fanning says: "The club is looking fantastic, and I cannot wait for all of our members to experience the excellent facilities here at David Lloyd."



The new flagship centre in Exeter features a 1,198sq m fitness area

The Exeter development is the first club opening for the David Lloyd Leisure Group following the merger between David Lloyd Leisure and Next Generation.

The group operates 76 clubs across the UK and an additional 10 in Europe, with more than 450,000 members.

wolverhampton kids' gym launches

TOM WALKER

A new youth gym has been officially unveiled at the new £15m Bilston Leisure Centre in Wolverhampton – one of 10 such facilities to be installed across the city.

The new SHOKK-equipped youth venue incorporates around 30 pieces of equipment, including treadmills, rowers and resistance machines, as well as dance mats, a reaction wall and a climbing wall – all designed specifically for use by young people.

Targeting youths between the ages of 11 and 15, the new facility is part of a £500,000 investment by Wolverhampton City PCT. Other SHOKK gyms have been installed at schools and leisure centres, including Blakenhall Healthy



The SHOKK venue features more than 30 pieces of equipment for teens

Living Centre, Aldersley High School and Central Baths.

Dr Adrian Phillips, Wolverhampton's director of public health, says: "This gives Bilston kids a great opportunity to be active."

new £6m leisure centre planned for godalming

TOM WALKER

Waverley Borough Council (WBC) has unveiled plans for the development of a new leisure centre in Godalming, Surrey.

ISG has been appointed to deliver the £6m facility, designed by Pozzoni Architects, which

will feature a 25m swimming pool as well as a large learner pool.

A gym, dance studio and café are also proposed as part of the development, which will replace the town's existing facility. Work is set to begin in April 2011.

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3d leisure secures hotel contracts

TOM WALKER

Management company 3d Leisure has secured a deal with Crown Hotels to operate the company's leisure services at two hotels in York and Boroughbridge, Yorkshire.

Both hotels include a health club, swimming pool, sauna, steam room, a day spa and solarium.

A spokesperson said 3d Leisure was appointed as part of efforts to tackle a drop in membership levels at both clubs.

The two new additions take the number of sites operated by 3d Leisure to 49.



The centre's equipment was provided by Pulse

scottish trust investing in kids' fitness

TOM WALKER

Scottish Borders Sport and Leisure Trust has invested £56,000 in the creation of a new interactive zone at the Teviotdale Leisure Centre.

The investment is part of a strategy to increase the number of children using the trust's facilities.

The equipment in the new activity zone, which supplied by Pulse, includes dance mats and separate wall and floor units.

£8m leisure centre for ayrshire

PETE HAYMAN

A new £8m leisure facility is being planned for a harbour-side site in Girvan, South Ayrshire, as part of a scheme to enhance local tourism and leisure opportunities.

The proposed venue – backed by South Ayrshire Council – will include a swimming pool, fitness suite and an outdoor learning and activity centre with climbing wall. A multi-purpose space for community events, a restaurant and a viewing area also form part of the proposals, which are designed to act as a catalyst for further regeneration in the area.

Council leader Bill McIntosh says: "This is an historic decision by the council and one that will be remembered for years to come."

"We want the new facility to provide a focus for the people of the town and surrounding



The proposed new centre will enhance local leisure opportunities

villages and give them the opportunity to come together in a quality facility."

Funding for the facility will come from the council, with £4m to be incorporated into its capital plan for 2012–13 onwards. External support will also be used. Work is due to start by the end of 2012.

dc leisure to launch lazytown sports clubs

TOM WALKER

Leisure management company DC Leisure is to launch its LazyTown Sports Club concept at the Arena Leisure Centre, Camberley, from January 2011. The launch is part of DC Leisure's strategy to increase its fitness offering for children at its sites.

The LazyTown Sports Club sessions are based on the popular children's TV series and combine the movement, music and action of the show in a physical activity class. Children who attend the weekly classes also get an exclusive health message from *LazyTown* hero Sportacus to take home, encouraging healthy lifestyle choices.

Magnus Scheving, creator of *LazyTown*, says: "It's great news to hear that more children



Weekly classes encourage healthy lifestyle choices

will have the opportunity to participate in the LazyTown Sports Club. These sessions will help to meet our aim 'To Move the World'."

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edited by tom walker. email: tomwalker@leisuremedia.com

a third say gyms are too expensive

TOM WALKER

A third of Britons are shunning health clubs because of the financial cost, a survey for World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) has found.

According to the YouGov survey, 30 per cent of people said the cost of health clubs and leisure centres prevents them from being more physically active.

Younger people are most likely to steer clear of gyms due to their expense; 42 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds mentioned financial cost as a reason for not being more physically active. This compares to 19 per cent in the oldest age group: the over-55s.

Dr Rachel Thompson of WCRF says: "It's important to get the message across that being physically active does not have to mean signing up at expensive gyms or leisure centres."



42 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds quote cost as a barrier to exercise

Responding to the report, David Stalker, executive director of the Fitness Industry Association, says: "Investing in health and fitness is a lifetime investment and one of the most valuable you'll ever make. It is essential that we, as an industry, support people to incorporate exercise into their lifestyle."

abbeycroft to launch budget gyms

TOM WALKER

Suffolk-based Abbeycroft Leisure has become the latest UK-based leisure trust to venture into the budget gym sector.

The non-profit group opened The Gym Ipswich last month, in the former St Matthews Baths in the heart of the city, after a major refurbishment of the building.

The new club offers a 100-station gym equipped by Matrix and offers memberships starting at £12.99 a month with no joining fee.

Abbeycroft chief executive Warren Smyth says: "The more affordable fitness is, the more people will start taking exercise. That can only be a good thing for the UK, where 62 per cent of people are already obese or overweight."



The trust's first budget site opened in the centre of Ipswich last month

In November 2010, Kirklees Active Leisure, a trust that operates community leisure services in West Yorkshire, announced that it was to launch two budget gyms in the Huddersfield and Dewsbury areas.

eccd submits 'green' leisure centre plans

TOM WALKER

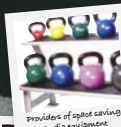
East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) has submitted plans for a new 'green' leisure centre, to be built in Ely.

The Roberts Limbrick-designed scheme would provide a new district-wide facility and

is poised to include a six-lane, 25m swimming pool and a six-court sports hall.

A small children's leisure water area, an additional fitness area, family changing facilities and a car park are also included as part of the planning application.

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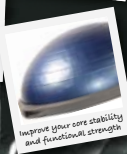
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INDEPENDENT NEWS

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helio opens third club in bolton

TOM WALKER

Independently-owned health club chain Helio Fitness opened its third club in Bolton last month.

The new location joins Helio's existing sites in Blackpool and St Annes. Facilities at the Bolton club include 170 pieces of CV and resistance equipment supplied by Pulse, a group exercise zone, an indoor cycling zone and a training area offering Power Plates and TRX suspension training.

Helio Fitness is owned by entrepreneur Neil Henshaw.

Henshaw says: "We knew that Pulse had been providing fitness equipment solutions for almost 30 years, but had not previously considered changing from the company that we had previously



The Helio Fitness brand is owned by Neil Henshaw (second from right)

sourced equipment from. However, having reviewed each of the bidding suppliers' offers, our management team chose to make Helio Fitness the first operation in the country to test Pulse's new cardiovascular solution."

gym member buys club out of receivership

TOM WALKER

Paul Dumbell and Brian Green of KPMG, joint administrators of Simpson Leisure Limited, have agreed to sell the Old Hall Health Club & Spa near Knutsford, Cheshire, to a club member – Will Banks, owner of Cheshire Helicopters – for an undisclosed sum.

The deal was brokered by specialist agents Christie + Co, who acted on behalf of the administrators. Included in the deal is a split-level health and fitness club, spa treatment area, indoor heated swimming pool, group exercise studio, two tennis courts and a lounge bar.

Banks has said he will keep the club operating and, indeed, has plans to improve the offering. He explains: "The club



The new owner will rebrand the club as Cheshire Health Club & Spa

is currently undergoing rebranding to become Cheshire Health Club & Spa. We'll have CV equipment with iPod interfaces and built-in TV screens, and Tritex Xdrearms for indoor mountain bike workouts."

payasugym launches in greater london

TOM WALKER

A new service that allows users to visit a number of gyms around the Greater London area has been launched.

PayasUgym, the brainchild of entrepreneurs Neil Harmsworth and Jamie Ward, is an online

gym network that taps in to smartphone technology to allow customers to locate a gym, book a session and pay per visit, all without membership fees. A large number of the clubs that have signed up are independently-owned operations and single-site businesses.



Self-financing leisure facilities

INVESTMENT CASE STUDY – CARSHALTON COLLEGE



THE BRIEF:

Carshalton College, Surrey were looking to provide a leisure and fitness facility for their students and the local community. However with limited funds available, they needed a private sector leisure partner to help them turn their dreams into reality.

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The new facility, which opened September 2010, was completed in just 52 weeks and comprises of an 18m swimming pool, steam room, sports hall, 80 station gym, three dance studios and a student activity zone.

Environmental efficiency was at the heart of the design and build, achieving an Energy Performance Asset Rating of Grade A and BREEAM 'Very Good' ratings, through use of the latest green technology, from Biodiesel B100 fuelled boilers to self-powered, wireless fitness equipment.

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gladstone and cascade3d in partnership agreement

TOM WALKER

Software group Gladstone Health & Leisure, developer of the Plus2 leisure management software suite, has announced a partnership arrangement with reporting systems company Cascade3d.

The agreement will see Cascade3d solutions now forming part of Gladstone's Business Intelligence and reporting suite, with both companies' development teams working together to ensure the products combine to meet the needs of their customers going forward.



The scheme targets talented athletes in the south

gll launches young athletes' funding scheme

TOM WALKER

Leisure trust GLL has opened the process for talented young athletes across London and south-east England to apply for a series of financial and training grants being offered by the GLL Sport Foundation.

A total of £400,000 has been made available, which the foundation plans to invest in the country's sporting hopefuls over the next year. Each successful applicant will benefit from funding of up to £1,500 to be spent on training, travel and equipment during the next 12 months.

star trac extends mad dogg deal

TOM WALKER

Equipment supplier Star Trac and Mad Dogg Athletics, creator of the Spinning line of equipment, have extended their partnership by signing an additional 10-year co-marketing agreement.

As a result of the deal, the two companies will collectively market and distribute Spinner bikes and the Spinning programming and education worldwide. Star Trac will remain the exclusive commercial equipment provider for Spinning bikes.

The renewal of the agreement follows an initial 10-year relationship between the two companies and the recent acquisition of Star Trac by fitness industry veteran Michael Bruno. The new deal is seen as a key component of Bruno's re-organisation plan, which focuses on continuity and aggressive streamlining.



The deal will see the two companies jointly marketing Spinning

Mike Leveque, president of Star Trac, says: "Both companies lead in innovation, with products such as the eSpinner. We are proud to be able to continue offering our customers this interactive, rewarding experience that allows them to enjoy the benefits of Spinning on their own terms."

dll adds adidas zone cycling classes

TOM WALKER

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

The freestyle-classes adopt a set structure of three blocks based around a track cycling theme, and use adidas miCoach – the interactive, personalised interval training device that uses colour-coded heart rate zones. DLL instructors gradually increase members' heart rates through The Ride In (warm-up) to prepare for the main workout block – The Velodrome – where they take their heart rates up to the highest (red) zone.

In preparation for the Grand Final, instructors use sensory elements of music and



Sir Chris Hoy helped launch the new cycling classes

verbal cues to raise adrenaline levels and help participants feel the exhilaration of winning their 'race'. To enhance the experience, the classes also include special video footage to fully immerse them in the experience.

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in brief...

your health breda

Dutch budget operator Your Health opened its latest club last month, in the town of Breda.

Located in a residential area, the 1,000sq m club is equipped by Precor and Suunto. It offers a CV and resistance training fitness suite, personal training, group cycling classes – with further group exercise sessions due to launch shortly – changing/shower rooms and a bar.

Open seven days a week, monthly membership starts at €15.95, including all classes and showers. The target membership is 2,500.

Owned by Regina Wilting and Moeish Chedi, the chain has clubs in Almere, Amersfoort, Delft, Ede and Zwolle. It plans to grow to 15–20 sites over the next three years.

cyprus university site

Precor has equipped a new facility at Cyprus International University (CIU), which opened late last year.

The €12m new-build site is aimed at CIU students, teenagers, staff and the general public. The 780sq m, 53-station gym includes CV and weights areas, two studios, an Olympic pool and a climbing wall. There are also squash, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, and sports fields.

'yoga for single moms'

Actress Michelle Williams is reported to be launching a yoga centre for single mothers. The *Brokeback Mountain* star, who has a daughter by the late actor Heath Ledger, is one of the names behind The Yoga for Single Moms Project, which is launching a pilot programme in Boston, Massachusetts. The idea is that, if you can find the time, the project does the rest, providing childcare while mum is in the yoga class – all for free.

vivafit singapore

Women-only franchise Vivafit is expanding into Singapore following the signing of a master franchise agreement last month. The first site will open in April. Projections are for 100 clubs in Singapore by 2020, as well as expansion into Malaysia.

health and rehab centre for uae

SportsFit Health Club, the UAE's first specialist fitness facility with an on-site sports rehab clinic, opened its doors in December in the Arabian Centre, Mirfidi.

Offering full medical support – covering everything from sports injury rehabilitation and physiotherapy to

osteopathic care and occupational therapy – SportsFit also has mixed and ladies-only gyms equipped by Precor, complemented by the Nike+ system.

The PT division receives full medical support from the clinic. Each trainer is qualified to the highest standards and each individual exercise programme will be overseen by a medical professional.

The club not only offers state of the art facilities, but also very competitive pricing: opening rates are approximately half those of some of the UAE's more established health clubs.

SportsFit is owned by AC Sportsfit, a joint venture between SportsFit FZ LLC and Lals Group LLC. The company intends to open further clubs across the UAE, creating affordable facilities for both fitness and medical requirements.



SportsFit has mixed and ladies-only gyms as well as a sports rehab clinic

dir opens clubs 18 and 19

Barcelona-based DIR opened its 18th and 19th clubs last month.

The 3,000sq m Sant Cugat site, acquired by DIR at the end of last year, previously operated as independent Club Seven. Offering a gym, group cycling studio, paddle court, swimming pool and spa area with saunas, steam room and solarium, forthcoming new facilities will include a beauty salon and a restaurant.

DIR Tuset is an ultra-modern, top-end, 4,000sq m club in the centre of Barcelona, with a medical centre, spa and restaurant among its extensive facilities.

Both new clubs have been equipped by Life Fitness and Technogym. Tuset's medical centre is equipped by MedX.



DIR's new clubs are equipped by Life Fitness and Technogym

specialist cycling venue for lille

French operator Domyos Club opened its latest site in Lille in November, its second in the city.

The club, which was created in just five weeks, is located in what's said to be the world's largest cycling mall – see www.btwin-village.com for further information. The whole site is dedicated to cycling, with 3,000sq m of specialist retail stores, outdoor and indoor cycling tracks – including one to Olympic specifications – and the fitness club, Btwin Fit.

The club measures 1,500sq m, with one large group cycling studio (64 bikes), a fitness studio and 500sq m of cardio and weight training equipment.

The offering is similar to the concept at the operator's other sites, whereby monthly membership is complemented by a 'pay by the hour' option (€5 an hour) which contributes significantly to overall revenues.

Domyos is owned by the Oxylane Group, which also owns the Décathlon brand of retail outlets and sports kit.



Located in the Grand Millennium Al Wahda hotel, the club measures 2,700sq m

abu dhabi's 'largest club' opens

The new Grand Millennium Al Wahda hotel opened what's said to be Abu Dhabi's largest health club in November.

Spread over 2,700sq m, the gym and spa is open to members, hotel guests and day visitors, with a range of flexible memberships available for singles, couples and families, including a group exercise-only membership.

The 450sq m gym is equipped by Technogym, with 60 pieces of equipment including an Easy Line circuit. There's also a variety of classes, from yoga and pilates to dance and fitball, as well as training programmes, fitness assessments and dietary advice provided by the club's experienced personal trainers.

The rooftop swimming pool and kids' pool provide panoramic views of the city, while a juice bar serves detox, slimming and other healthy cocktails.

Completing the wellness experience is the Zayna day spa for men and ladies, with 10 spacious treatment rooms, a couples' treatment room, male and female relaxation rooms and an extensive wet area that includes spa pool, steam room, sauna, rainforest and powerjet showers. The spa menu is extensive with facials, body wraps, massages and hydrotherapy treatments as well as a range of signature treatments.

Grand Millennium Al Wahda is the fifth Grand Millennium worldwide.

eighth franchise site for crunch

Crunch Fitness will open its latest franchise location in Norwalk, Connecticut, US this month.

The club will occupy a 1,858sq m space, with 80-plus pieces of cardio and resistance kit as well as access to personal training, an online fitness and nutrition programme, and tanning. There's also a studio offering Crunch's unique group fitness programme, including sessions such as Zumba, BodyWeb w/TRX, Tred and Shed and Yoga Body Sculpt. Locker rooms and shower facilities will also be available,

all at a low membership fee (from US\$9.95–US\$19.95 a month).

"With the diverse population of families, young professionals and students, Norwalk is the perfect place to open this Crunch franchise," says owner Kristen Oddi. Owners Eugene Russo, and David and Kristen Oddi are local to the area and plan to open more Crunch franchise locations in the future.

Crunch, owned by New Evolution Ventures (NeV), now has eight franchise clubs, with over 70 others in the pipeline around the globe (see *HCM* Jan 11, p32).

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new partnership manager for alliance leisure

TOM WALKER

Alliance Leisure has appointed Paul Hawkes as its new partnership manager.

In his new role Hawkes, who has 18 years of industry experience, will focus on the implementation of sales, retention systems and training schemes, while dealing with public and private suppliers as well as spa sector clients. He will also offer consultancy support to a diverse range of clients.

Hawkes was previously regional sales and marketing manager at DC Leisure.



Sexton will promote water safety education

sexton appointed as sta swimming champion

TOM WALKER

Katy Sexton, the first British female swimmer to win a World Championship gold medal, has been appointed an ambassador of the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA).

She will be tasked with promoting water safety education and with raising awareness of the importance of learning to swim.

Sexton will also represent the STA at key events and will provide technical expertise to its 6,500 members through continuous professional development courses.

us fitness pioneer jack lalanne dies

TOM WALKER

Fitness pioneer and entrepreneur Jack LaLanne has died at the age of 96 at his home in Morro Bay, California, US.

LaLanne started his career working at a gym in Oakland in 1936 and went on to host *The Jack LaLanne Show*, the longest-running fitness show on American television.

During his career, he owned and operated a number of health clubs under his name, wrote books, invented gym equipment and for decades was widely recognised as the 'face of fitness' in the US.

burrows sets up branding company

TOM WALKER

Nick Burrows has left his role as managing director of health and fitness group Nuffield Health to set up his own leisure branding company.

Burrows has joined forces with brand designer Simon Coker to set up the new venture, called Brand Spirit.

Speaking to *Health Club Management*, Burrows said that the new company will "treat internal and external brand-building as a connected process".

He added: "Few organisations truly grasp the power of their brand. That's where Brand Spirit comes in. We ignite, mobilise and transform performance by putting the brand right at the core."

Burrows previously worked with Coker during his time at Whitbread, where the pair created the branding for the Table Table eateries.



Burrows left Nuffield late last year to set up the new branding company

Coker added: "Brand Spirit is a blend of business experience and branding expertise. We've been on both sides of the fence, coming up with the ideas and delivering them to market too. We feel that our means of internally and externally developing brands as a seamless process is unique and potent."

wilson becomes ceo of barnsley premier

TOM WALKER

Tim Wilson has been promoted to become the new chief executive of leisure provider Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL), which manages the Bassetlaw Council-owned leisure centres in Worksop, Retford and Bircotes.

Wilson has headed the human resources team at BPL since it was established as a charitable trust in 1999.

He was previously personnel manager at Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, where he played a central role in drawing up the trust and managed the TUPE transfer process.

Wilson says: "I am delighted to take up the lead position as CEO of BPL. The trust has been a fantastic success story, increasing



Wilson takes up the post after having headed the HR team at BPL

participation in sporting activities within the Barnsley borough for just over a decade.

"We took on the contract to manage Bassetlaw's facilities and are working hard to achieve similar increases in usage there."

fitness first australia's managing director departs

TOM WALKER

Peter Stirling-Benson, managing director of Fitness First Australia, has left the company.

A spokesperson confirmed the departure and added that the company is "expecting to be making a new appointment shortly".

Stirling-Benson joined Fitness First Australia in July 2008.

He is a graduate of University College London. Previous posts include a five-year stint as chief executive of sports and entertainment ticketing company Ticketek.

PEOPLE PROFILE



ian davey

A qualified PT, Davey's background is in the world of corporate recovery, where he has spent 22 years. He recently acquired his first health club, now operated as The Gym

INDEPENDENT
OPERATOR
FOCUS

How long have you worked in the fitness industry?

This time I've been in the industry for just under a year. In my youth, prior to embarking on my corporate recovery career, I spent a year working in the gym at my local YMCA.

You're a qualified PT, but never worked as one before now - why?

Keeping fit has been my hobby and a source of relaxation for many years. When I took the Personal Trainer course, it was purely to enable me to get the most out of my own training. At the time, my career in corporate recovery was going well.

How did the acquisition of The Gym come about?

I had let a number of people know I was interested in acquiring a fitness facility. One of my contacts phoned me out of the blue and explained that a gym in Chippenham had just gone into administration and would I be interested? I went to see it and thought it had real potential; I was then given three days to make my mind up.

So it was a leap of faith, as I had very little time to study the information provided to me, most of which was in any case very old.

Which comes first at the moment - gym or corporate recovery?

Obviously I wouldn't wish to upset my turnaround clients, so the pragmatic approach would be to say they both have had equal priority.

However, the reality was that more of my time was spent dealing with the gym in 2010 than my turnaround business.

But I now have an excellent staff team at the gym, and procedures have been implemented - together with a new computer system - which will mean I can deal with more things remotely. This should enable me to concentrate on building my turnaround business back up, in addition to looking out for new exciting opportunities in 2011.

What is your typical day-to-day?

Thankfully my job doesn't tend to involve too much routine. I normally spend three days a week at the gym - even though I'm the owner and have an excellent team around me, I do try to get involved in most aspects of the business. I have been known to clean and to fix things!

Sadly, for at least one day a week, I'm office-bound, dealing with the finances and general administration of the company.

I try to spend at least one evening working on the gym floor, meeting my members and doing the occasional induction. But I leave the personal training to my excellent staff, who are much more qualified and capable than me at delivering this!

When I'm at home, one routine I really enjoy is to start the day with a run. I'm very lucky in that I live close to the sea in Poole - I can't think of a better start to the day than running by the water.

What motivates you?

I'm always on the look-out for opportunities and another acquisition would be a real possibility. I'm still looking at other gyms and fitness-related companies on the market and I really feel the industry in general has a great future.

What do you think is the biggest weakness of the fitness industry?

As a 'new kid on the block', I'm not sure I'm suitably qualified to answer this one. However, prior to acquiring my club, I looked at a number of other gyms that were up for sale. One thing that was obvious among the operators I saw was the lack of proactive marketing. For most of them, marketing consisted of simply leaving the door open and the lights on in the hope that people would walk in.

A number of gym owners I saw told me their membership number was x but they were certain it could be y, and I thought: "Well why don't you get out there and make it y? Then you could ask for a lot more money for your business!"

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fitness in the spotlight



David Stalker, the FIA's executive director, looks ahead to what 2011 holds for the FIA and the industry it represents

There isn't much you can be certain of in life, but one thing's for sure: our industry comes under the spotlight in the month of January.

But this year was encouraging: not only was negative coverage relatively contained, but the industry was also invited to play a central role in the coalition government's first major effort to influence behaviour: The Great Swapathon. More than 1,000 FIA members took part in the project, which saw the FIA working in partnership with a reinvigorated Change4Life campaign, given wings by its new partnership with Asda and News of the World.

The FIA is learning all the time when it comes to the ingredients needed for a successful social marketing campaign, and we're still awaiting the results of the Great Swapathon. However, indications are that the combination used in this project – our coverage of facilities and variety of services, the government Change4Life brand, and commercial partners with significant marketing reach – is the right recipe for success. It's just a case of adjusting the measures of each ingredient to the consumer's taste.

responsibility deal

The Great Swapathon was only the start of what's set to be a major year for the FIA. The Responsibility Deal is another key initiative – a Department of Health (DH) scheme set up to forge partnerships between business, government and the third sector to create a healthier nation. Organisations will be asked to commit to the deal's core principles (physical activity, alcohol consumption, nutrition, workplace health and behaviour change), sign up to collective pledges to act, and pledge their own specific actions in support.

FIA chair Fred Turok has been asked to co-chair the Physical Activity Network of the Responsibility Deal alongside Simon Burns MP, Minister of State for Health. Our goal is to ensure that physical activity



Change4Life has been reinvigorated thanks to new commercial partnerships

is elevated up the political agenda and given the priority it deserves by the DH. It's a major undertaking that simply would not be possible without the support of FIA members, and particularly the funding from those in the Vanguard Group.

But it's not without risk. With the responsibility of leadership comes accountability, and our actions are likely to be scrutinised much more closely as a result of our new, elevated status. We should expect some arrows to be sent our way by an inquisitive media.

at the heart of things

The FIA will also drive forward key projects for 2011, recruiting new partners and enhancing existing relationships.

Shift into Sports, for example, has been in development for almost a year since receiving support from Sport England, the Mayor of London and commercial sponsorship from Addison Lee. It provides a platform from which our sector can work with Sport England to play our part in creating a sporting legacy from the 2012 Olympic Games. This is a project

that we've deliberately flown 'under the radar', with operational procedures being developed through a pilot phase limited to London, but the system that underpins Shift into Sports has also been used for the Great Swapathon.

We will also be keeping a very keen eye on reforms to local healthcare commissioning, as the formation of GP consortia gathers momentum and local authorities prepare to take responsibility for public health services. We've already been asked by five Essex PCTs to build a consortium of interested parties to deliver Let's Get Moving, a physical activity care pathway that puts fitness instructors into GP surgeries at the heart of primary care. This is a model that, if developed properly, holds great potential to bridge, at the coalface, the same gap that the FIA's chief medical officer, Dr John Searle, is trying to bridge at the national and strategic level.

With the development of major strategic relationships, use of vehicles such as the Responsibility Deal, and capturing local opportunities for our members, 2011 looks set to be a busy year.

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MARCH

1 | Quest Conference

Venue Holywell Park conference centre, Loughborough, UK
Summary

Quest, the UK quality scheme for sport and leisure, has launched this one-day symposium to explain the significant changes that it has planned for its benchmarking programme over the coming year.

Web www.questnbs.org

10-13 | ECA World Fitness Conference/ OBOW Show

Venue New York City, US
Summary

ECA World Fitness is an international organisation representing the wellness and fitness community. Its theatrical 'One Body One World' New York show features a strong dance, yoga and pilates programme, plus lots of seminars, demonstrations and presentations.

Web www.ecaworldfitness.com

25-27 | International Fitness Showcase

Venue Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK
Summary

Showcases the latest exercise classes, along with workshops and lectures, for fitness instructors and enthusiasts.

Web www.chrysalispromotions.com

30 March-2 April | Russian Fitness Festival

Venue Olympic Stadium, Moscow
Summary

This year's Russian Fitness Festival will include a business conference, fitness convention, aqua convention, trade show, kids' marathon and Russian open fitness aerobic championship.

Web www.fitness-convention.ru

16-19 MARCH | IHRSA 2011 Annual International Convention & Trade Show

Venue San Francisco, California, US
Summary

The IHRSA Convention & Trade Show annually draws thousands of industry professionals for four days of education and networking opportunities. Keynote speakers this year are Phil Keoghan, host of *The Amazing Race*, and best-selling business authors Daniel Pink, Patrick Lencioni and Tony Hsieh (see p74).

Web www.ihrsa.org/convention

APRIL

12-13 | BASES Student Conference

Venue University of Chester, UK
Summary

This event is the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences' forum for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

This year's theme is 'Integrations and Innovations: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Sport and Exercise Science'.

Web www.bases.org.uk

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

Venue Anaheim, California, US
Summary

ACSM's Health and Fitness Summit and Exposition bridges the gap between the science of sports medicine and its practice by fitness professionals. Through educational sessions and workouts, attendees are presented with cutting-edge information on hot topics in the industry.

Web www.acsm.org/summit

14-17 | FIBO 2011

Venue Essen, Germany
Summary

More than 560 companies – including all the sector's key players – from more than 35 countries showcase products, concepts and solutions for the fitness, wellness and health industries at this fitness convention. The show attracts around 53,000 visitors from 60 countries.

Web www.fibo.de

15-17 | The Yoga Show

Venue Manchester Central, UK
Summary

All things yoga under one roof. There's another show in London in October.

Web www.theyogashow.co.uk



This year's convention marks the 30th anniversary of IHRSA

COMPETITIVE EDGE

8-10 APRIL 11

swimathon 2011

TV presenter and keen swimmer Gail Porter and Olympic gold medallist Duncan Goodhew kicked off this year's Swimathon – one of the world's biggest fundraising swims. Following a 38 per cent rise in the number of participants in 2010, a record number of 582 leisure centres, health clubs and lidos around the UK have signed up to host sessions this April. Over the three days, participants can set their own distance to swim, or choose from set distances (1.5km–5km), to raise money for Marie Curie Cancer and the Swimathon Foundation.

Details: www.swimathon.org



Gail Porter and Duncan Goodhew launched this year's event

14-23 MAY 11

marrakech & atlas mountain cycle

This nine-day cycle challenge takes participants from the colourful, bustling souks of Marrakech through the foothills of the High Atlas mountains into the remote Anti Atlas mountains. Strange rock formations and ochre-coloured villages form the backdrop to the many climbs and descents en route towards the Atlantic coast. Coming out of the mountains, the path heads towards the walled town of Tiznit, which is renowned for its striking pink buildings. The registration fee for this open charity event is £299 and the minimum sponsorship is set at £2,375.

Details: www.discoveradventure.com



Cycle through the Atlas mountains

16-17 JULY 11

oxfam trailwalker

This year sees the 30th anniversary of the Trailwalker UK challenge.

The 100km route follows the South Downs Way, finishing in Brighton.

Walking in teams of four, the goal is to complete the course in less than 30 hours to raise money for Oxfam and the Gurkha Welfare Trust. This year sees a new category award, for Best Sports Club. Entry is £200 per team, plus £1,500 sponsorship.

The sister challenge to this is Trailtrekker, a slightly harder route across the Yorkshire Dales that takes place on 4-5 June. Details: www.oxfam.org.uk/trailwalker

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gym programmes

Are individual gym programmes a thing of the past? Are they a good use of staff time, and do members even want them? Do they need to evolve, or are they fine as they are?

Call me old-fashioned, but I strongly believe a personalised programme is part of what having a gym membership is all about. When I was looking into joining a gym recently, whether or not they offered programmes was one of the deciding factors, especially as they all charged around the same price. I didn't want to be given an induction and left to my own devices. With a couple of health issues, I wanted an expert opinion on what I should be doing.

But it wasn't all about hand-holding; having a fitness assessment and setting goals with an instructor would help me get to know the staff and build

a sense of anticipation about what I was going to do. I also felt that having the reference point of a programme would keep me motivated and make a difference to my fitness. Knowing that an instructor has invested some time and thought into my goals makes me feel like I'm not in this on my own.

From the gym's point of view, these consultations are a great way to get to know a client, making it easy to engage with them. They help break down barriers for those who think gyms are intimidating, and tick the boxes in terms of customer service and retention.

It's true that not offering programmes might mean more people

book personal training sessions, but I personally think members should expect some element of guidance in return for their membership fee – unless it's as cheap as the budget gym model, where members understand that extras will be shaved off.

But in this economic climate, is phasing out individual programmes an effective way of cutting costs? Are there other ways of offering programmes that can still help members achieve their goals, but that are less labour-intensive for operators? Is it inevitable that the gym programme has to evolve to survive? We ask the experts for their thoughts.

ARE PROGRAMMES A THING OF THE PAST? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

lucy alcock

dw sports • national pt services manager



Programming is still an essential requirement of the fitness experience. However, it has evolved and will continue to do so.

We now offer a three-fold solution for the next generation of programming. All members have the option of a complimentary session with a personal trainer for a full lifestyle and postural

analysis, before a programme is written specific to their needs and goals. This is especially helpful to members with medical conditions or injuries, and those who are new to exercise.

Meanwhile, free 30-minute group training sessions are provided to our members on the gym floor on an ongoing basis, with content adapted to suit all ages and abilities. Themed programmes are the newest addition – such as ski fit, powerhouse and kettlebell workouts – and are also free of charge.

The future? Interactive programming is the next avenue for us. The need for fitness programming has never been stronger, but it now needs to be delivered in all shapes and sizes.

Listening to our members and non-members alike is critical to its evolution, and using our expertise to respond to their requirements remains the key to its ongoing development.”

mark talley

la fitness • fitness director



I don't think programming is a thing of the past. If anything, LA Fitness is moving closer towards it, offering a greater range of programmes – particularly on the gym floor.

All new members are offered appointments and reviews, including a personalised programme based on their primary goal. However, in the past we've found that, once people are inducted, they tend to disappear into the ether and there are limited opportunities for staff to interact with and motivate them. As we want to continue influencing members to achieve their fitness goals, we have programmed the gym floor with the introduction of crew classes, workshops and clinics. Run in groups, these deliver quality interaction, exercise and education in 15-minute chunks.

Each club runs eight of these sessions a day – five within defined peak times – when all the staff interact with members. These sessions give members the chance to talk through issues and have helped make them feel really looked after. Member surveys show that customer satisfaction, enjoyment and their perception of value for money have improved dramatically since these programmes were introduced.”



With limited staff time, should we focus on individual programmes for members or move towards small group sessions?

john treharne

the gym group • managing director



“I wouldn't say programming is a thing of the past, but it doesn't fit with The Gym Group's business model.

We offer gyms at a third of the price of most of the competition, and our innovative concept is all about providing only what our members want and giving them the flexibility of choice, not charging them for goods and services

they generally don't want. Members have to fill in a medical questionnaire and are given a group induction, so they know how to use the equipment safely. Many of our members have been gym members before and don't want a programme.

What we offer them is membership at such a low cost that it gives them the choice to pay for a personalised programme if they want it. All of our sites offer personal training from £25 an hour, so with the savings they are making on the gym membership, they can afford a PT session if they do want an individual programme. All of our PTs are REPs: Level 3-qualified or sports science graduates.

When choosing gym memberships, people will choose according to their requirements; different people will want different things from their membership.”

derek crawford

fitness first • national fitness manager



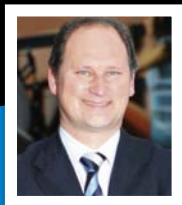
“Programming is not a thing of the past, as members are still requesting a programme and guidance. There is a high incidence of members who enter the club with no pre-prescribed workout, and their time is unproductive and results come slower.

It's our responsibility to offer the member a choice of activities each

time they visit the gym. Fitness First therefore provides free access to Top 20 Workouts, which are outlined in leaflets that members can help themselves to. The workouts fall into four tracks – Shape, Sport, Health and Strength – depending on a member's goals. They were introduced in November, but don't replace individual programmes which are prescribed under our BODYFIRST offering (see HCM Oct 10, p28).

Top 20 Workouts provide our members with variety and the motivation to increase visit frequency, as they have access to different options and aren't limited to one workout or a generic workout of the day. Over time, the member completes a number of different workouts and collects them to create their own personal library of workouts, which again will lead to an increase in visit frequency, a productive workout and results.”

RENE MOOS



The CEO of HealthCity International speaks to Kate Cracknell about growth plans and balancing a portfolio of brands



The middle of a global economic crisis, with bank debt hard to come by and caution the generally accepted watchword, might not seem an obvious time to dramatically expand a company through acquisition. Yet that's precisely what Netherlands-based HealthCity International has done.

In July of last year, the company – led by CEO Rene Moos – acquired the 32-site budget club operation BasicFit. That was followed in November by an announcement that Fitness First would be selling its 57 Benelux-based clubs to the HealthCity group.

However, even prior to these deals the story of the company has been one of growth. Leaving school at 16, Moos started out as a full-time professional tennis player. "But I was never very successful – OK for Holland but not good enough for the international stage," he says. "So I started teaching tennis and, over five or six years, grew my business into a big tennis school with lots of coaches.

"One of the owners of the club where I was based decided to open a new club and offered me the chance to buy a 25 per cent stake, and that's really where it all started, 26 or 27 years ago. One tennis club turned into two, then three, and my percentage share grew until I had 100 per cent ownership. I then grew the company until we had eight sites.

"At that time a friend of mine, Eric Wilborts, had three facilities in the south of the Netherlands, while my now business partner Dennis Aarts

was renting space in my tennis clubs to deliver fitness services. We decided to bring it all together to create a chain of 11 clubs with a lot of tennis, plus some fitness. That was about 14 years ago, and from that moment on we started to grow the company into a fitness chain.

"The market is very fragmented in the Netherlands, so we've generally grown through small buyouts – one, two, maybe three clubs at a time – as well as our own new builds, which account for about a third of all our sites. We've gone from 11 sites to over 200 clubs and we still have the appetite to grow."

That growth has been helped by the sale, in 2005–2006, of 50 per cent of the company to Dutch private equity company Waterland. "It's an aggressive private equity company," explains Moos.

"They leave us to drive the company forward, but they're keen for us to be constantly growing."

on a budget

HealthCity now has three levels of offering: the all-inclusive HealthCity clubs, budget offering BasicFit and, at the luxury end of the scale, HealthCity Premium, where facilities include tennis/squash courts, swimming pools and so on. But Moos is unusually candid when I ask about HealthCity's USP: "It's very difficult to say what's different about us, because all health clubs look pretty much alike – if you create something new, somebody else will copy it in a month. So our business has been more about copying than bringing something completely new and unique to the



Mid-market HealthCity is positioned between BasicFit and HealthCity Premium



HealthCity International now operates more than 200 clubs across three markets: the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium



market: I'd say our luxury clubs look a lot like David Lloyd clubs, while our basic clubs look very much like McFit.

"Ultimately it's through your people that you create a USP, and by choosing the right locations. We also keep our equipment very up-to-date – all clubs are installed with Technogym kit that's a maximum of four years old."

HealthCity originally entered the budget end of the market around six years ago. "The low-cost sector is a force in these economic times, but it's not the big money maker that everyone thinks," says Moos. "It only accounts for a very small portion of our profit. Nevertheless, it is a market and you have to be in it."

However, it's only since the recent acquisition of BasicFit that the company has a separate brand for its low-cost offering. "We originally made the wrong decision and used just one brand – selling memberships of €78 and €16 under the same HealthCity label.

"In the beginning it helped us – we got more brand recognition. However, we have cities where we have 10+ clubs, some premium, some budget, and in the end it's very difficult to communicate all that with only one brand. It confused a lot of customers," says Moos

HealthCity's budget offering is therefore being rebranded as BasicFit.

Moos continues: "We also made a mistake in making our budget offering



Ultimately it's through your people that you create a USP, and through the right locations

too complicated – we had some basic clubs with group fitness and some without. We're now rebranding everything and, at the same time, will make a decision about the budget clubs with group fitness – perhaps upgrading them to the HealthCity brand or downgrading them to BasicFit."

Similarly, the clubs recently acquired from Fitness First will be categorised according to their offering. "We expect two-thirds of them to become HealthCity clubs, with the remainder either being upgraded to HealthCity Premium or downgraded to BasicFit," explains Moos. ▶

- Indeed, it was this acquisition – the sudden influx of a large number of clubs – that prompted the introduction of the new Premium category. The branding of existing sites may also now be reshuffled as the portfolio continues to expand. Management will also be split to create separate teams responsible for each of the sub-brands.

brand swapping

Although the low prices mean it's easier to close a sale for a BasicFit membership than for a Premium club, Moos stresses that the member profile is similar across all HealthCity sites. So is there a risk – particularly as the chain continues to grow, with multiple sites in a number of cities – that the budget clubs will cannibalise members from the all-inclusive and premium clubs? And is this a risk to the business given that the higher-end clubs are, as Moos confirms, still the most profitable for the company?

"We don't really experience much cannibalisation. Premium members get a lot more than they would at BasicFit, which really is just an equipment-based offering. Premium clubs include group exercise, swimming pools, climbing walls, tennis, squash, daycare and so



HealthCity is keen to develop more of a community feel to its clubs

on. If we open a BasicFit club near a HealthCity site, there will be a bit of movement between the two but it will go both ways – if people haven't been to a gym before, they're more likely to try a budget club first and then maybe trade up if they enjoy it.

"We also keep an eye on the market. We've changed a budget club into an all-inclusive HealthCity club before now, and vice versa. They're a similar size, so we can switch things around if the market asks for it.

"This ability to swap club models around has played a role in our success.

If something isn't working at one of our facilities, we have the option to change the model and turn it around into a profitable site.

"And there are learnings you can apply both ways. Our luxury clubs always had a lot of staff, compared to just one in the budget clubs, but we noticed that members still received a lot of attention in the basic clubs. We learnt that it's not about the number of people, but more the kind of people you put in."

expansion plans

HealthCity currently operates in three markets: the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Expansion plans going forward will continue to focus on these markets, with the overall aim of doubling the number of clubs over the next two years; Waterland's seven-year investment period ends in 2012. However, as HealthCity is the only remaining company in that particular Waterland fund, Moos believes the investors could withdraw as early as this year, and he is keen to reach this goal before then.

Meanwhile a fourth market – France – is also being considered, due both to geographical proximity and the availability of French marketing collateral already used in the company's Belgian clubs.

Growth is likely to occur primarily through acquisition, funded by the company, its shareholders and via bank loan. "We can only grow through new builds at a rate of one club a month," says Moos. "We've done exactly that in recent years and I'm sure we can continue over the next couple of years – we have enough clubs in our pipeline. But to grow faster than that, we have to look at takeovers.

"The mid-market is experiencing a lot of problems at the moment; we get a lot of offers to buy mid-market clubs."

Our clubs are all a similar size, so we can switch models around if the market asks for it



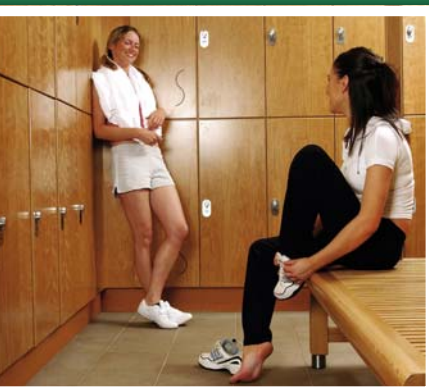
HealthCity's luxury clubs provide the main income for the company

Ridgeway Furniture



"Most gym users visit the changing rooms at least twice per visit"

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Keeping up to date: Equipment at HealthCity's clubs is upgraded at least every four years

► So is there a maximum size beyond which Moos would not want the company to grow? "Only in terms of the number of markets – not in terms of number of clubs," he states.

"I think what's difficult for Fitness First, for example, is that it operates in so many countries. Each has a different culture and a different way of doing things and it takes time to get used to each other. I'd say a fourth country is possible for us, definitely, but in my mind a fifth would be the maximum. You can then have maybe 100 clubs in each country – that would be easier to manage than having 500 clubs spread all over the world."

changing places

So are there any other changes afoot at HealthCity International?

"We've been focusing on growth for the last six years, and it's only now that we're starting to look at other things – in particular the development of secondary income streams.

"At the moment, personal training is only 0.29 per cent of our total turnover; if you look at other chains, it's 10 or 15 per cent. That's a huge opportunity for us to move into.

"We've also started to rent out floorspace to hairdressers, beauty therapists and so on, which brings in



rental income but which also increases footfall to the club.

"Then we have our ex-members – maybe 500,000 of them. We're looking at how we can get them back in – for example, offering memberships for people who want to work out at home or outdoors, but who want to come in now and then for some guidance.

"We're also working on a deal with a famous Dutch designer to make our clubs look sexier, more luxurious. Operators look at ways to improve their product, but the clubs themselves don't change – someone who left five years ago could walk into our clubs now and they'd see more or less the same thing. That's not good.

"We're also building more of a sense of community within our clubs. The social aspect is going to be crucial to our success, and it's something we haven't really focused on 'til now.

"We've also become more flexible with our memberships, as contracts

is an area the whole industry has traditionally done wrong.

"Four years ago, we changed our approach to be more flexible. You can become a member for the length of time of your choosing – it's normally 12 months, but you can opt for six months at 10 per cent more, or 24 months at 10 per cent less. But after the first six months, you can leave at any time.

"Our budget memberships are also transferable – anyone in your family can borrow it, for example. I don't think anyone else has done that yet.

"I think the industry generally – here and across Europe – should be able to double its population penetration rates if we improve our product in the right ways. But we have to think more about what the client wants instead of what we want. In the end, that mindset will also bring benefits for us."



kate cracknell, editor
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

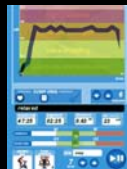
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new
opening

HEALTH
CLUB SPA



Lifehouse – one of the largest new spas in Europe – opens in Essex after a £30m investment. Shoshana Kazab reports

LIVING WELL AT

Located in Thorpe-le-Soken, 10 minutes' drive from the beach town of Frinton-on-Sea in Essex, Lifehouse opened its doors in December 2010 following a £30m investment and construction that lasted more than 18 months.

Lifehouse is an independent venture owned by Tangram Leisure. A contemporary health spa with guest rooms, it aims to offer a unique, life-enriching experience that's tailor-made for every guest. "Our goal is to provide our guests with an intelligent spa and wellbeing offering," confirms Berni Hawkins, MD of Lifehouse.

A former army officer, Hawkins is a well-known personality in the leisure industry and was previously a director at The Champneys Group and Whitbread. The Lifehouse team also includes its chair, Steve Brown, and development director Paul Cronk.

extensive menu

Built on the grounds of Thorpe Hall manor, Lifehouse is set within 130 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens and 12 acres of historic listed gardens. These were tended to by Lady Byng in the

1920s, the one-time mistress of Thorpe Hall and wife of Lord Byng, and the gardens have been enjoyed by Winston Churchill, Queen Mary and Rudyard Kipling. Thanks to the investment in the Lifehouse project, the gardens and waterways have been restored to their former glory as a 'wild garden'.

Lifehouse is a 'day and stay' spa and currently offers 89 guestrooms, all of which have courtyard or garden views. The spa building comprises 35 treatment rooms, with other features including a state of the art gym equipped by Matrix Fitness, a yoga and pilates studio, a thermal spa area, 18.5m swimming pool, relaxation areas, 15 manicure and pedicure stations, three make-up bays, a hairdressing salon and a spa boutique.

Guests are recommended to complete a pre-arrival questionnaire, so that Lifehouse's wellness consultants can better understand their needs and ensure optimal results. Some guests are then offered a complimentary consultation to check that certain activities or treatments are suitable for them, and they have the option to extend their consultation for a more detailed analysis into their diet and lifestyle.

The Lifehouse menu of services ranges from spa, fitness and cooking classes to mind, body and spirit therapies.

"At Lifehouse, we go beyond pampering," says health and wellness manager Sue Davis. "Our aim is to be whatever our guests want us to be. Some guests prefer to get on with their own thing, while others need more hand-holding, support and guidance. "By assessing guests' health goals and objectives, we're able to devise a highly personalised and tailored programme for them. We provide follow-ups throughout their stay and also put a farewell consultation together so they can continue their good work once they've left us."

Treatments such as Botox, liposuction and colonic irrigation are all notably absent at Lifehouse. "We're keen to offer non-invasive options for our guests wherever possible," continues Davis. "For example, we offer natural fertility enhancement programmes for couples who wish to conceive, identifying any areas of health that may be influencing conception and suggesting corrective measures. We're also introducing the Gastric Hypno Band, which will



A 'day and stay' spa, Lifehouse has 89 guestrooms, a spa, gym, beauty and hairdressing salons and relaxation areas, all set in 130 acres

LIFEHOUSE

complement Pete Cohen's work on his weight management programmes."

Cohen, the weight loss 'guru', has joined Lifehouse, offering expertise in the areas of behaviour and performance to add another string to the Lifehouse bow. Lifehouse will become a centre of excellence for his boot camps and weight loss programmes. "I want guests to take responsibility for their own wellbeing," says Cohen. "This is achieved by ensuring that they feel good about the programmes we devise for them. If they enjoy carrying out our programmes during their stay, there's a greater chance they'll make long-term lifestyle changes."

Other features and activities at Lifehouse include pre- and post-dinner talks, a fully stocked library, watercolour painting in the garden, walking and jogging trails, and cycling down to the beach. Dining is recognised as a crucial part of improving one's overall wellbeing and a healthy spa dining menu is on offer courtesy of executive chef Paul Boorman.

Overnight packages at Lifehouse start at £185 per person including accommodation, full board, access to all spa facilities and one 35-minute treatment. Lifehouse is primarily aimed

at ABCI females aged 25 to 55, although it offers targeted packages aimed at a wide range of demographics ranging from men to couples.

fitness offering

Lifehouse's gym is available to both members and guests. The gym currently has around 100 local members and is aiming for a maximum of 350, from Frinton and also from as far afield as Colchester and Ipswich.

Membership packages start at £600 a year for off-peak access to the spa facilities, gym and pool.

Matrix Fitness came on board as a partner to Lifehouse to help deliver new and innovative solutions. The gym features many of Matrix's latest innovations including the Krankcycle, which is used both independently and as part of express classes, called Krank it Up, which cater for two to four users. The new Virtual Active interactive entertainment system is available on Matrix's 7xe CV range. Users work out to cinema-quality videos of iconic destinations while the equipment automatically adjusts to the elevation changes shown on screen.



Users feel gradual terrain changes and hear ambient sounds through their headphones, distracting them from the exertion of the workout and keeping them more engaged in the exercise.

"We work closely with our strategic partners and are committed to helping Lifehouse add value to its members and guests wherever possible," says Jeremy Jenkins, commercial head of sales at Matrix Fitness. "We introduced the idea of providing members with an ▶



Our philosophy is to find out what our members and guests want from fitness and help them achieve these goals

▶ ActiPed activity monitor through our relationship with FitLinxx.”

Each member of Lifehouse is given an ActiPed device, which can be attached to their shoe to record their movements throughout the day. It accurately tracks steps, calories burned, distance and activity time, and wirelessly sends the data to the user’s personal web page as well as to a hub at the gym. “ActiPeds promote vitality,” says Russell Turner, fitness manager at Lifehouse.

“They can be used effectively to show members how many calories they burn and is a useful motivational tool.”

Turner and his team provide a personalised approach to fitness at Lifehouse. “Our philosophy is to find out what our members and guests want from fitness and help them achieve these goals. We’re focused on the individual and our programmes are 100 per cent tailored. We want them to experience the improvements that



can be achieved in their daily activities as a result of carrying out their unique training programmes.”

The fitness suite features the sort of equipment one would expect to see in a five-star facility. However, in good weather, resistance training is also carried out in Lifehouse’s extensive grounds.

spa focus

The spa is the focal point at Lifehouse and the signature treatment is the Oriental Bathing Experience. Inspired by the centuries-old tradition of oriental bathhouses, this treatment is based on the therapeutic effects of water. The two-hour experience consists of a series of traditional massage techniques for the feet and ankles, bathing pools, water rooms and full-body exfoliation, and culminates with an essential oil and therapeutic back and shoulder massage.

The spa at Lifehouse uses Babor products, which combine organic plant-based ingredients using a medspa approach.

Award-winning architects and interior designers The Manser Practice – known for their innovative and stylish projects – are responsible for the build and interiors throughout the site. Lifehouse’s Cronk had visited a Michael Manser building as a boy and immediately thought of the company



Matrix Fitness partnered with Lifehouse to introduce innovative gym solutions



Architects The Manser Practice were chosen for their ability to integrate contemporary buildings within a natural setting



for this project, thanks to their ability to integrate contemporary buildings within a natural setting.

Planning consent was applied for in 2001, giving The Manser Practice sufficient time to submit plans that took into consideration the listed gardens and conservation area. The challenge was to obtain permission to build a contemporary spa on the land and the result is a series of low visual impact buildings connected together using 'links' – external courtyard spaces.

The only surviving original building is an old cottage, which has now been connected to two accommodation blocks and the spa.

"The project was effectively a new build," says Guy Barlow, director at The Manser Practice. "This resulted in us designing a series of modern, simple and restrained buildings which integrate seamlessly into the natural settings and grounds. Importantly, we also feel that we have successfully created buildings that are designed around the user and their experience."

Jane Johnson, director of interior design at The Manser Practice, was given carte blanche when it came to suggesting ideas. "One of the ideas I'm most proud of is the atrium within the spa," she says. "It's a pivotal, curled, shell-shaped space in the middle of quite a large building, through which

guests need to pass in order to visit the treatment rooms, pool and bathhouse, all of which are dark and moody spaces.

"We needed to make the area interesting and give it character, but also create an air of mystery and excitement. The result is an all-white space featuring sheer curtains and subtle lighting which highlights various shapes in the room."

Johnson also suggested a unique double-sided fireplace that creates atmosphere and warmth in the bar, but also features in the outdoor terrace, creating a magical area that can be enjoyed all year round.

future plans

Hawkins' aim now is for Lifehouse to become the UK's leading residential spa, and a centre of excellence for fitness and weight loss – Cohen has already moved from London to Frinton so he can be based permanently at Lifehouse.

But ultimately it's all about changing people's lives. "We want our guests to take what they have learnt and experienced with us back home with them," concludes Hawkins. "At the heart of what we do is our core proposition: to improve our guests' habits and enhance their general wellbeing for the long term."



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HEALTH
CLUB SPA



spa scene

Our panel of experts offer their thoughts on the current trends shaping health club spas

GERARD MCCARTHY

SALES DIRECTOR, DALESAUNA



The trends in heat experiences have changed over the past 12–18 months, but more so in the spa market than in health and fitness. Spa operators are now seeking return on investment more than ever before, and are looking for products that they can make a tangible return on – dry float and Rasul mud rooms, for example, for which they can make specific charges, and which require very little therapist ‘hands-on’ involvement.

For health clubs, I believe heat experiences are still seen very much as a must-have. However, they currently offer relatively little opportunity for making a direct charge for use, other than in a tiered membership structure – at David Lloyd Leisure, for example, where the standard membership package allows access to the gym, pool, poolside sauna and steam room, but where an upgraded, opt-in Celsius membership includes access to a separate heat experience area with rooms such as salt vapour, aromatherapy, ice cave, hydro-pool and so on.

In my opinion, this tiered approach will become a more popular method of pricing club usage, as it will allow operators to compete at all levels. Also, if members can pay for what they want rather than paying an all-in price, each individual will be able to tailor their membership to their own specific requirements, hopefully leading to increased membership levels and better retention.

SUSIE ELLIS

PRESIDENT, SPAFINDER



I think the big story over the next few years is going to be about the ageing Baby Boomer. Health clubs and spas will need to rethink everything to address Boomers’ specific needs: facilities, equipment, programming and staffing. As futurist Edie Weiner – keynote speaker at the 2010 Global Spa Summit – so wisely says, the days of ‘over-65’ as a catch-all, ‘old person’ category are over. We need to think about the unique issues for people aged 65–70, 70–75, 75–80 and so on. Ageing Boomers will have more aches and pains, back, neck and knee problems. We’ll see more knee, hip and shoulder replacements. Problems with mobility, depression and nutrition will also rise.

Boomers will be less focused on looking good and more concerned about their health. Physical therapy will play a bigger role, with rehabilitation and restoration as key goals. In general, a more individual, nuanced approach will need to be taken. Wellness coaching will enter the scene in a big way, while home exercise – using portable items like dumbbells and stretch bands, ideally suited for this audience – and home spa services will also become more popular.

Also on the horizon are insurance company reimbursements (which may, initially, cause more headaches than revenue), the rising impact of technology – online spa bookings, for example – and interesting new wellness diagnostics and online health monitoring options, which will add a bit of zest.

JUSTIN MUSGROVE

SPA DIRECTOR, THE BANNATYNE GROUP



2011 will be about creating a balance between delivering value for money and meeting the standards demanded by clients who, in spite of the current economic climate, are not prepared to dilute their lifestyle choices. At Bannatyne Spas, we've chosen to work with aspirational product brands while delivering treatments at value for money prices.

Clients are also attracted by product innovation, which we're delivering through new offerings such as lava shells massages, supplied by Shared Beauty Secrets, and mineral make-up through ID Bare Minerals.

We aim to attract both health club members and non-members to our spas, and our relationships with gift voucher companies – such as Buy a Gift, lastminute.com and Spa Seekers – have maximised the exposure of our product range to the broader public.

The web is also a key tool – it's important to note the growth in sales of spa treatments and vouchers through bannatyne.co.uk, which has become the most popular purchasing route compared to the other voucher outlets utilised by Bannatyne within the last 12 months.

Operators must get the ambience of treatment rooms right, with appropriate décor, lighting, aromas, music



PICTURE: WWW.STOCKPHOTO.COM

NICK COUTTS

INDUSTRY CONSULTANT



The trend in this economy is for members to cut back on their spa visits – and spend – if they're not proactively encouraged to continue to use it. Health club spas will continue to be under pressure during the medium term as members make tough decisions around which of their 'extra' services they will cut back on in order to maintain their health club membership. As always, spas that focus on delivering excellent service that's keenly priced will do better.

As well as constantly delivering a quality service, spas must proactively mine the club member database for new clients. Too many spas are tucked away in their clubs and the fact is that a significant portion of club members are simply not aware of their existence.

Spa managers who work closely with their two key colleagues – the sales manager and the fitness manager – will also do better. Ensuring that each new club joiner is toured via the spa, introduced to a therapist and offered a complimentary taster treatment will guarantee an increase in spa clients. Developing product bundling offers – treatments of relevance to gym-goers, such as deep-tissue or relaxing massages, physio sessions and so on – is also an excellent source of generating new spa clients.

DAVE COURTEEN

MD, IMAGINE SPA MANAGEMENT



There's an increasing demand for spa guests to be able to choose their treatment on the day rather than when making the original booking. Guests also want flexibility in the way they buy their spa packages and experiences.

I think there's a clear move to segment the purpose behind the spa visit. There's a real demand for 'glamour' treatments – to help prepare for a big night out or event, for example. A mineral make-up range is becoming increasingly popular within this segment and a high quality waxing offering is important too.

A second segment comprises the 'pamper' treatments, where guests just want to be spoilt for a while and have some well earned 'me' time. The demand here is for excellent therapists and a high quality product house range that the guest is unlikely to find on the high street. There's a real need for operators to get the ambience of the treatment room just right and use appropriate lighting, aromas and music to accompany the treatment.

A third segment is 'cosmeceutical', with treatments that provide an alternative to cosmetic surgery. Here the treatments are less focused on pampering and more on delivering effective results in the anti-ageing battle.

This feature first appeared in the 2011 Health Club Management Handbook – www.healthclubhandbook.com

inside spa £220k extension

The UK's first public sector 'premier' spa – Inside Spa, at Pendle Wavelengths – has completed a £220,000 extension in response to public demand.

Pendle Leisure Trust worked with Alliance Leisure on the project, creating a relaxation room for large groups and clients waiting between spa use and treatments, a further four treatment rooms and a manicure and pedicure bar.

Inside Spa – part of a £3m redevelopment of Pendle Wavelengths, East Lancashire, that first opened in June 2007 – offers a value for money experience with a range of offering usually only found in more exclusive, private sector complexes.

Phil Storey, CEO of Pendle Leisure Trust, says: "Month on month we experience increased footfall. Between 2008/09 and 2009/10, we tracked a 30 per cent increase in public spend within



Inside Spa: Expanding to meet ever-growing customer demand

our facilities. This financial year alone we have already witnessed a further 18 per cent growth.

"The need to expand our facilities demonstrates our nation's changing demand on leisure services. The spa is well supported by the local community, but people are also travelling from far afield."

power plate in spa programmes

The award-winning Wildmoor Spa and Health Club in Stratford upon Avon has invested in a Power Plate pro6 to create more synergy between its spa treatments and fitness facilities.

"To strengthen the link between the fitness and spa facilities, we are planning to include a Power Plate session in some of our spa day packages, as the benefits extend to aiding relaxation and reducing cellulite. We are sure this will help to increase the wellbeing of our guests," says Anthony Bird, Wildmoor Spa and Health Club director.

The spa offers a variety of full-day spa experiences, with a wide range of treatments and facilities that include a fitness suite, crystal steam room, herbal sauna, caldarium, hydrotherapy spa, 20m swimming pool, relaxation rooms, three tennis courts and a crèche.

new health spa for mercer hall leisure centre

Hyndburn Leisure Trust's Mercer Hall Leisure Centre in Great Harwood, East Lancashire, opened the doors to a brand new health spa last month.

Funded by Hyndburn Borough Council, the new-look Mercer Hall offers an affordable all-in-one relaxation experience for members and casual users alike. Facilities include a large glass-fronted steam room, Swedish sauna, new male and female changing areas, a 78sq m relaxation and chill-out area, futuristic walk-through monsoon shower and direct access to the centre's 20m heated swimming pool.

The new spa complements the existing swimming pool, gym and studio facilities at the centre.



New spa area caters for members and casual users

bannatyne: new spa at broadstairs club



Duncan Bannatyne enjoys a manicure at the new Broadstairs spa

The Bannatyne Group has opened a £350,000 wellbeing spa in Broadstairs, Kent. The spa is the 31st in the Bannatyne Spa chain and has been created as an extension to the existing Bannatyne's Health Club at Westwood Farm.

Open to members and non-members of the health club, the single-storey spa has four therapy rooms and a dual treatment room for couples and friends. It offers a range of spa and beauty treatments for men and women, using products developed by leading beauty brand Elemis.

Among the specialist treatments on offer are the lava shells back, neck and

shoulder massage and the clinically-proven detox, Ionithermie, which encourages contouring and firming.

There's also a relaxation room, which features six luxury tiled heated loungers and soothing piped music, plus a spray tan room and manicure/pedicure area.

Duncan Bannatyne, founder of the Bannatyne Group, says: "In line with all my existing health clubs and spas, the Broadstairs spa will provide a high quality service and experience for every visitor, offering the latest treatments and using leading luxury product ranges."

The launch is part of a strategy to add spas to existing health clubs.



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Defying the slowdown

The health and fitness market in the UK is coming out of a four-year spell of decline (2006–2009). During this time, the market fell in real terms by 13 per cent. The decline was not ignited by the economic recession but by the housing bubble and the squeeze higher house prices imposed on family budgets.

According to the *Sport Market Forecasts (2010–2014)* report – produced by the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University – in 2009 the size of the UK health and fitness market was £1.96bn, representing a decline of 3 per cent compared to 2008 in real terms (2006 prices). At the same time, prices increased by a modest 2 per cent.

Membership of health and fitness clubs declined marginally in 2009, mainly because of a full year of declining economic activity and increased unemployment – membership of private

Offering more targeted services, such as catering for older people, will help drive future growth



Green shoots are emerging for the UK health and fitness industry, driven by the budget sector and community-based programmes. Themis Kokolokakis reports

health clubs is now 4.2 million. Meanwhile Sport England's Active Places reveals that the positive trend of club numbers slumped only in 2009 to recover in 2010. Specifically, the number of health and fitness suites increased marginally from 6,649 in 2009 to 6,693 in 2010.

However, the opportunities for sport conveyed by the forthcoming London Olympic Games and Glasgow Commonwealth Games, coupled with more wide-reaching policies at health and fitness centres – catering for the older population, 24-hour service and so on – are predicted to reverse the recent decline. Further advances into targeted services may also be developed to take advantage of the full spectrum of health and fitness services that are already emerging in clubs in the UK, such as personal health monitoring, programmes for obesity, dietary advice and psychological support.

impact of government policy

According to government estimates, the recently announced economic policy will cut public sector employment by 500,000 jobs over four years; together with the private sector, almost one million people will become unemployed.

However, although this will slow down the economic growth predicted for 2010 and 2011, it will not reverse it; another recession, although threatened, remains unlikely. In 2011, the economy (GDP) is forecast to grow in real terms by 1.9 per cent, following an expected

0.7 per cent growth in 2010. This real growth is already allowing the fitness market to expand: according to The Leisure Database Company, a total of 122 new private and public fitness centres opened during the year 2009–10.

low-cost health clubs

One very visible aspect of the industry's response to the recession and economic squeeze was the emergence of the budget health clubs. The development of a number of budget concepts – generally providing dry health clubs with a 24-hour trading profile – is taking the sector into a new era of operation. Memberships at these new clubs range from £10–£20 a month, fitting in well with consumers' wish to cut down on their spending.

And these chains are growing fast: Pure Gym has announced plans for 25 clubs by the end of 2011, with up to 45 over the next three years, while The Gym Group aims to open 15 to 20 new sites in 2011. Meanwhile, US-based 24-hour chain Anytime Fitness – while focusing on convenience rather than price as its USP – has announced plans for 50 sites in the UK and Ireland by 2012. In spite of high rental and property costs, London and the south-east of England have a significant presence in a number of the budget operators' plans.

creating communities

Reports have suggested that, in the grip of worsening economic climates in which gym fees are often seen as a

Consumer spending on health & fitness

YEAR	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Value: £ m.	1923	1984	2018	1992	1933	1906	1958	2059	2181	2316	2472
(Curr. prices) % ch	4.6	3.1	1.7	-1.3	-3.0	-1.4	2.8	5.2	5.9	6.2	6.2
Prices: Index	98	98	100	102	106	108	109	111	114	116	118
(2006=100) % ch	1.8	-0.1	2.2	2.5	3.1	1.9	1.4	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9
Volume: £ m.	1963	2027	2018	1945	1829	1770	1794	1848	1918	1999	2093
(2006 prices) % ch	2.7	3.3	-0.4	-3.7	-5.9	-3.2	1.4	3.0	3.8	4.2	4.7

Sources: SIRC model, The Active People Survey, Family Spending, Active Places (2010)



A total of 122 new private and public fitness centres opened during the year 2009–10

luxury, consumers are expected to trade down to cheaper alternatives such as local authority-run facilities or the up-and-coming budget gyms.

However, regardless of their size or level of budget, existing and new health clubs can counter this threat by adopting a more inter-personal relationship with their members in order to maintain or grow their membership base. This cannot be emphasised enough. All sport participation in the UK – and indeed in most countries – expands through a system of networks. This may be through links with a sport club, or through friends and wider relations in a local community.

Much progress has been made already, especially through partnerships with schools. In Scotland, for example, 32 Active School partnerships have been forged with local authorities, which facilitate the transition between school

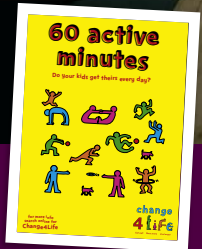
Michael Jordan at the Olympic stadium: the Games mark a huge opportunity for our sector



sport and community sport. A white paper published by Nielsen stresses this point and expects significant changes in the fitness sector in the near future.

Another example is the government's Change4Life programme and the FIA's MoreActive4Life scheme, in which more than 1,200 health clubs and leisure centres took part – a joined-up bid to increase levels of physical activity in communities throughout Britain. Participating facilities reported an average of 200 referrals through MoreActive4Life. Reports suggest that the most popular element of the scheme was a six-week gym programme, which attracted 80 per cent of participants and as a result of which 44.7 per cent of participants converted to full gym membership. The programme has been reported as being the single most successful consumer engagement programme the industry has ever undertaken in terms of stimulating consumer interest, tracking performance and winning the Department of Health's confidence.

All of these communities and networks can be enhanced using the internet. Thanks to mobile telecommunications, people are already developing a 'permanent connection' between themselves and the world accessed via the internet, and this has changed the conduct of everyday business and personal life. Health and fitness operations are strongly behind in these terms, and clubs and centres should strive for a more active connection, via the internet, with active and inactive members in the near future.



MoreActive4Life was the most successful marketing programme ever undertaken by the industry

future trends

Despite the current economy, in 2010 and 2011 the health and fitness market will grow by 1.4 per cent and 3 per cent in real terms, reaching £2.1bn in value. This is reinforced by the Active People Survey, which shows growth in sports participation during the year 2009–10.

In 2010 and 2011, prices will rise by 1.4 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively, while during the period 2010–2014, market value will increase by 17 per cent in real terms, reaching £2.5bn. Meanwhile, the sector-specific inflation rate will remain at around 2 per cent up to 2014. In real terms, excluding inflation, the fitness market will grow strongly in the two years following the Olympics – annual growth rates of 4.2 per cent and 4.7 per cent. Although factors such as cheap subscriptions and a demand for healthy living will drive growth, the London Olympic Games and the Glasgow Commonwealth Games are expected to further boost and stabilise the market.

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SHAPING UP FOR THE FUTURE

As technology continues to improve at a pace, what new innovations are manufacturers developing for the gym user to experience? Julie Fisher takes a look at R&D in the field of CV equipment

Just a cursory glance around the trade show floor at industry events at the moment provides evidence of the prominence of interactive technology in equipment manufacturers' R&D (research and development) departments. But what are the other key drivers in the design process of today's – and tomorrow's – new CV equipment? Does size matter, for example? Or is functional training at the heart of new developments? We take a look at some of the recent, and upcoming, equipment launches.

SPACE-SAVING VERSATILITY

Equipment is increasingly being designed to be smaller, lighter and more portable, not only taking up less valuable space in the gym, but also allowing it to be moved from the gym floor – for independent training or small group sessions – into group exercise studios.

Designed by Johnny G, the inventor of Spinning, the Krankcycle has been one of the big new launches for Matrix Fitness Systems in recent years, focusing on the use of the upper body to build cardio fitness.

Jon Johnson, MD of Matrix, says: "The Krankcycle provides a new

way of training both on the gym floor and in a group exercise environment. It's so light that it can easily be moved into studios for fusion classes, and clubs can also use it to hold spontaneous small gym floor group sessions.

"We design our equipment to occupy the smallest footprint possible, as well as making it innovative and adaptable. Ultimately, though, it must be functional and easy to use in order to earn its place on the gym floor."

Tim Colston, MD of Keiser, agrees: "In recent years, we've seen a shift among the major health club chains to include multi-purpose equipment for use both on the gym floor and in group exercise classes. Space is at a premium, and equipment must offer flexibility, as well as the ability to generate additional income via opt-in, paid-for sessions.

"Meanwhile, consumers are looking for pieces of equipment that provide quicker, high intensity exercise options, as they have less time to spend on leisure and often look to group exercise for motivation. By training small groups on the gym floor, equipment – such as the small, portable Keiser M3 Indoor Cycle and Keiser M5 Elliptical – is increasingly being used more often by more people and in a variety of ways, creating a buzz around the gym, which may ultimately encourage more members to get involved."

Meanwhile, with space and performance top of mind, Concept2 has just launched the sixth generation of its rowing machine – the Dynamic Indoor Rower – which is 45cm shorter than the previous model and can be moved easily.

And by efficiently packaging the motor and drive system, the Life Fitness Elevation Series treadmills provide a

Innovation:
Developing new
CV categories,
like Concept2's
SkiErg, is
essential to the industry





smaller footprint while also offering a larger running surface, again conducive to smaller spaces and group training.

NEW CATEGORIES

But it's not all about smaller machines and reducing footprint to maximise space. The development of new kit and even new equipment categories – the elliptical cross-trainer, for example, first launched by Precor in 1995, through to more recent launches such as the Precor AMT and Technogym Cardiowave – are integral to the survival of the industry.

New categories continue to launch. For example, Concept2's SkiErg brings the exercise benefits of the great outdoors, inside. Designed for Nordic skiers, nevertheless it opens up the benefits of the activity to everyone in the same way that the rowing machine did when it was launched some 25 years ago: you no longer need snow to participate and benefit from one of the most challenging and physically rewarding sporting activities.

Meanwhile the xRide Octane xR6 is currently the only seated elliptical cross-

trainer on the market. It can provide a challenging workout for fully-fit users, but is also ideal for people with injuries and those undertaking rehab thanks to a low starting resistance, the fact that it can be used with any one limb, and the inclusion of a muscle resistance programme and independent upper and lower body workouts to focus on trouble spots.

WHAT'S NEW IN R&D?

While new categories continue to emerge, treadmills, bikes and cross-trainers are still the staple of any gym, so how can manufacturers improve what's already on the market?

With 8 per cent of the company's employees involved in research and development, Precor looked outside of the fitness industry – and in particular to furniture manufacturers – to increase comfort levels when designing its recently launched 815 bikes. Miles Rimell, head of marketing, explains: "Precor has long believed in taking a broader-minded approach rather than simply looking to our fields of existing expertise. Our research showed that gym users wanted

Above: Keiser is developing state of the art electronics to tell users how much power they are using. Below: The Octane xR6

greater comfort, so we looked at how chairs are designed in terms of comfort and technology and brought that expertise into the fitness arena."

Meanwhile, with a development team of 175 people, Technogym continues to invest in creating innovative and engaging solutions to push at the boundaries of product development and help members achieve their wellness goals. ▶



“ Equipment needs to offer flexibility, as well as the option to generate additional income ”



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ROWING

“By understanding members’ aspirations, clubs can ensure they provide the correct environment”

- “Fitness participation and client retention numbers show that the industry’s traditional offering is not meeting the needs of members,” says Alex Bennett, network manager for Technogym UK. “In the last decade, the profiles of fitness members have dramatically diversified. Clubs need to ensure that they offer an environment and range of services that meet both the conscious and sub-conscious needs of a variety of target groups.

“Traditional fitness training is too often based on physical training goals of participants, often ignoring the underlying motives of clients. By understanding a member’s deeper aspirations, a club can ensure it interacts and provides the correct environment for members to work out in.”

The recently launched Technogym Club 2.0 concept is based on research from the IULM University of Milan, which identified six core aspirations: move, shape, sport, power, balance and fun. It uses an individual’s ‘aspiration’ as the training goal and automatically creates a programme around this.

Keiser, on the other hand, believes power (power = strength x speed) to be the key to performance, and continues to develop its state of the art electronics to measure this force. Keiser’s aim is to make it simpler for the user to understand how hard they are working while exercising, and for tracking to be made easier for coaches. New CV equipment will be launched this year to complement the M3 indoor bike and M5 elliptical.

HI-TECH: FITNESS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Independent research by Leisure-net Solutions highlights that 51 per cent of members would spend more time on CV equipment if the machine provided entertainment and motivated them. According to the research, iPods are currently the most popular form of entertainment, but interactive capabilities within equipment have already hit the gym floor and the ‘of the moment’ trend is clearly that of integrated consoles, interactive technology, connectivity and user experience.

Technogym considers its new Visioweb to be the ultimate digital platform, with touch-screen displays that monitor user results and entertain during the workout. There’s not only access to TV, radio and iPod connection, but also to games and the internet. Clubs can also use Visioweb to communicate with members and guide them through a correct workout.

Pulse Fitness, meanwhile, employs a team of 10 specialist R&D professionals and recently launched the Fusion range of CV equipment. Continuing to focus on wireless, energy-efficient technology, the new range embraces an advanced, integrated multimedia entertainment package that can display up to 50 Freeview channels and that has iPod compatibility. The new line also features an in-built education function that includes multiple motivational workouts.

Thanks to a research and development team specialising in CV products, Matrix’s 7 Series CV range features an integrated touch-screen TV console that’s iPod and Nike+ compatible. However, the newly launched Virtual Active programme takes interactive workouts one step further, enabling users to work out to cinema-quality footage of iconic destinations ranging from the Las Vegas Strip to Yosemite National Park. The experience is so realistic that the user

The Star Trac eSpinner, launched in 2008, provides a personalised, virtual workout





feels gradual terrain changes under-foot and hears ambient sounds over the music through their headphones.

And ZigZag's internet-linked Expresso bikes have launched new software that allows riders to share their exercise milestones on Facebook and Twitter. The software – the first of its kind – allows clubs to interact with their members in a completely new way, linking the cardio floor with social media sites. Using 19-inch LCD personal viewing screens, the bikes allow riders to pedal through a range of virtual worlds, ride into scenic landscapes, take part in off-road competitions and even enter a fantasy kingdom and chase dragons, all while working out – and now the new software means they can also challenge their online friends to beat their scores.

Fergus Ahern, MD of Zig Zag, says: "This is a really exciting new feature for the fitness industry. It will guarantee publicity for health clubs as they are automatically promoted every time one of their members posts or tweets a ride on the Expresso bikes – nothing else does this. With Expresso riders throughout the world completing almost two million rides a month, it's an ideal way for club operators to market their facilities through social media."

PERSONALISING THE WORKOUT

Many pieces of equipment enable the user to track and adapt their workout, and virtual trainers are becoming popular. The Star Trac eSpinner, launched at IHRSA in 2008, offers an

Flexible: Matrix's Krankcycle meets the trend for developing smaller, lightweight, moveable equipment

interactive, personalised workout: guided, virtual Spinning classes led by a master instructor through an embedded touch-screen display, which members can take part in at a time to suit them.

Meanwhile, launched last year, the Star Trac Coach introduces a unique personal training element to the treadmill. Led by real-life personal trainer Kimberly Shah, who guides users through their workout via an integrated screen on the equipment, there are more than one million workout possibilities tailored to the specific needs of each user. "Initial feedback has been incredibly positive, with users impressed by the variety of workouts on offer," says Matt Pengelly, MD of Star Trac Europe.

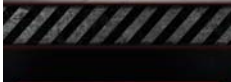
THE WAY OF THE FUTURE

Ongoing refinements to existing designs, as well as the occasional creation of brand new product categories, will continue to drive the CV equipment offering forward and enhance the member experience.

However, as consumers become increasingly tech-savvy, and clubs turn to technology both to streamline their own operations and to forge stronger links with their members, we can expect interactivity to lie at the heart of R&D going forward.

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
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 **leisurelines**
The Art of Being a Performer

Following the Comprehensive Spending Review in October, local authorities now know the full extent of the cuts needed. Kath Hudson speaks to the experts to find out how they are planning to safeguard leisure



WHAT'S THE FUTURE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY LEISURE?

Everyone looks set to feel the pinch as the coalition government aims to bring the structural deficit down to zero by the 2015/16 financial year, but what does this mean for the future of local authority leisure? With all the cuts, do the non-statutory leisure departments still have a future? How can they adapt?

October's Comprehensive Spending Review set out the reductions in local authority funding of around 7.1 per cent each year for the next four years. Funding from quangos is set to diminish, which will have a further negative impact. Sport

England has received a 33 per cent cut, UK Sport 28 per cent, English Heritage 32 per cent, Visit Britain 34 per cent and The Arts Council 29 per cent over the next four years.

The 2006 Audit Commission report showed that 21 per cent of leisure services were provided by trusts and 17 per cent by private contractors; it seems likely that more local authorities will pursue the trust option. The pressure is also on for leisure services departments to communicate the benefits of leisure to those involved in health and social care sectors.

We ask our panel about the future of local leisure provision.

Craig McAteer

Managing director,
Rochdale Boroughwide
Cultural Trust



There will be severe efficiency savings and I think we're facing unprecedented closure of leisure facilities, as well as price increases. So it's time to think outside the box.

It's not all doom and gloom. There's now the opportunity to pool resources and share services, which will lead to other avenues for providing and commissioning services. Local authorities will need to look at working more closely with the third sector and voluntary community sector to explore

partnerships in coaching and possibly in running museums and libraries.

Going forward, there is a future in co-location. Putting services in one place drives efficiencies and customer experience and maximises space. In Rochdale, we offer health screening in libraries and pilates in the museum.

Local authorities will need to bring innovation into programmes and involve the trust sector and social enterprise. The cuts will mean that we will have to be smarter about how we offer programmes. Commissioners will need to find out exactly what local people want.

There will also need to be partnerships within authorities, including the pooling of resources and budgets. Rochdale Boroughwide Cultural Trust has just won

the Municipal Journal 2010 Public Private Partnership Achievement of the Year, because we do have partnerships at the highest strategic level, driven by partners on the Local Strategic Partnership Board.

In terms of trying to protect leisure and cultural services, it will become necessary to offer a cross-cutting service that's not just about leisure, but that also engages with other issues such as working with vulnerable people, children and diverse communities.

For example, we provide free entertainment and a place to meet on Friday nights for young people in Rochdale, and the impact – the reduction in the amount of nuisance caused, and hence police time needed – was calculated to be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Facing cuts: Will public pressure prevent 'an epidemic of closures', or will there be a rationalisation of facilities?



2013/0001/0508

Ian Cooper

Director, Ian Cooper Associates



In recent years we've been able to prove the value of leisure interventions to commissioners of services – especially in the health and adult social care sectors – so I think culture and sport managers are well placed to hold their own in these difficult times.

After the golden years of big budgets and high status in the 1970s and early 1980s, local authority leisure has had to keep evolving, as both budgets and status have changed. The introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering

at the end of the 1990s heralded the creation of contractors and trusts, with many senior leisure authority managers migrating from in-house teams.

The 1990s saw a couple of boosts to the sector, with the National Lottery and the government's support for Local Cultural Strategies, while the 2000s have been a period of continuous cost-cutting, endless performance indicators and increasing externalisation, especially to trusts. Good results in Audit Commission inspections and specific inclusion as a CPA Core Service boosted service status, but council restructures have led to a serious loss of status for leisure in many councils.

However, the third sector has always recognised the value of our services

and we are well placed to support the government's Big Society initiatives going forward. Leisure departments will need to be led by a well-trained professional, working with an enthusiastic, motivated councillor, to support our services politically. Shared services and strengthened third sector partnerships will be the way forward.

More councils will move culture and sport services to not-for-profit organisations, including Community Interest Companies. There's a continuing requirement to undertake analyses of local needs and reviews of service delivery. I think public opinion will prevent an epidemic of facility closures, but I do foresee a rationalisation of facilities and any new builds are likely to be multi-use. ▶



GRANT UNDERWOOD

Proving outcomes: Local authorities will have to prove they offer value for money, says ISPAL chair Peter Mann

Peter Mann

Chair, ISPAL



The next few years will change the face of local authority leisure. The extent of this change will depend on the level of government grant to councils and the priority given to leisure services.

As a discretionary service, leisure is more exposed than other local authority services. While the public sector will remain at the heart of leisure, I believe we'll witness a focus away from direct provision towards a promoting, facilitating and commissioning role.

Leisure departments will need to actively promote the benefits that leisure and culture bring to a community:

social inclusion, general wellbeing, crime reduction and health. Although undervalued in a difficult financial climate, these can bind communities together during hard times.

There will also need to be a greater emphasis on building links with local employers, to facilitate the financial and human resources potentially available via company corporate social responsibility programmes. Reviewing the objectives of these programmes may open up new opportunities for companies and councils to work together.

Another role could be the purchasing of specific outcomes, activities or time from other public sector providers, such as schools or new community, third sector or private sector providers.

Facility rationalisation appears unavoidable and only the best located,

best managed and output-driven facilities may survive the cuts. Facilities might be scaled down to a central hub site only. Where local authorities continue providing direct leisure services, they will need to demonstrate that they offer value for money, through optimising income, driving down costs and continuing to develop enhanced facilities and products which reflect the quality expectations of their customers.

ISPAL and ISRM are working with the Privy Council and key stakeholders towards the potential creation of the Chartered Institute of Sport. This new institute won't solve all the challenges, but it will play a key role in helping us become more adept at managing, pioneering, facilitating, promoting and commissioning the services our communities so urgently need.

Peter Howells

Operations director,
Leisure Connection



At Leisure Connection, we're working closely with our local authority partners to look at how we can support them through the tough years ahead.

The next three to five years will be crucial, but we expect to come out the other side. For those authorities that have already outsourced leisure, I think it will be a time to review how operators are working. For those that haven't, it could be an attractive prospect.

The biggest change in the last 20 years of local authority leisure has been the outsourcing of leisure as a non-statutory service. As a result, private operators have entered the market and have invested millions in the provision of public access leisure and other cultural facilities. To the end user, the quality of the service has significantly improved. Local authority leisure centres are no longer the poor relation in the industry.

Leisure Connection is now broadening the scope of the projects it manages. We've taken on various outreach programmes for sport and the community and manage numerous theatres, arts centres and arts outreach programmes.

For Leisure Connection, despite the spending review, it's still business as usual: focusing on our swim and gym revenue lines, managing our cost base, especially utilities, and looking at where to make investments.

In terms of the future, we experience a great deal of interest in our health and community hub in Downham Leisure Centre, managed on behalf of the London Borough of Lewisham. This project houses a state of the art leisure centre and swimming pool but also a community access point, numerous surgeries and practices and a popular library. This type of integrated facility could become the future for new provision and services.



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Stuart Dyson explores the opportunities presented by social media, and looks at how it can be integrated into club management

SOCIAL MEDIA

What's in it for you?

By now, most people will have heard of Facebook, the social networking site that enables people to keep in touch, share photos, express 'likes', chat and accumulate 'friends', all from the comfort of their laptop or mobile phone. Originally conceived by Mark Zuckerberg in his student digs, Facebook has (at the time of writing) more than 500 million users and is now valued at an astonishing US\$50bn.

You may have logged on for a cursory look while at home one evening, or perhaps you're hooked and find you're constantly grabbing any available moment to post comments and pictures?

Maybe Facebook isn't your thing, but perhaps you've clicked on a link to view the latest viral video clip on YouTube, had a look for your colleagues on LinkedIn or even started to follow your favourite celeb's tweets on Twitter.

Research from Nielsen claims that 22 per cent of all time online is spent on social networks and blog sites; in fact, Facebook recently overtook Google as the most visited site on the internet. Social media is impacting all our lives and, while personally we can choose when and to what extent we get on board with it, as operators we cannot afford to delay in responding to this cultural phenomenon.

building communities

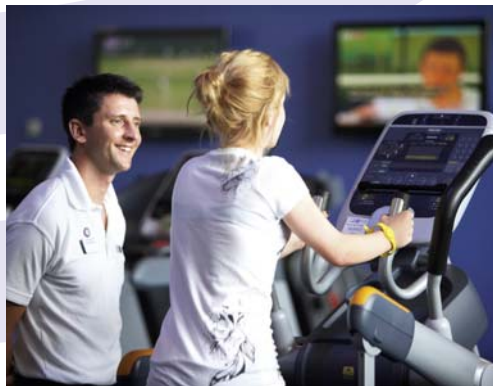
Ray Algar, managing director of Oxygen Consulting and an early advocate of social media for leisure operators, has recently completed the first European-wide analysis of social media among club operators. A free copy of the resulting *2011 European Web and Social Media Report* can be downloaded at europeanwebreport.ning.com

Algar explains: "For a long time, I have believed that clubs need to foster a deeper and more enduring connection with members. I think the emerging social web will enable clubs that are passionate about, and dedicated to, what they do to connect with their community in unprecedented ways."

We have long talked about the club in terms of the corner shop, the pub, the Post Office. Well, now we have the technical tools, combined with a powerful social trend, which can make this idea a reality.

Through social networks, clubs can build a true community with their members, delivering all their services not just on-site but also away from the physical facility. They can supply the right information at the right time, geared specifically to each individual. And the member can post their views on the club to the wider community too. Engaging and interacting with the member in this more personal way creates a stronger bond. And, with the huge growth in smart phones and other mobile devices, the club will soon be in the palm of a member's hand wherever they go. People will always be online, always connected.

But here's the thing: this new source of power and possibility can



Social media can alert staff regarding which members have entered the club



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also be incredibly dangerous if not managed correctly. If you're providing poor service or unpopular pricing, a simple post on a social network means everyone will know immediately. If people are angry, you can be sure they'll be highly motivated to sound off about you. Like it or not, if people are talking about you on these sites, you already have a social network presence – the difference is that you can't control it.

A cursory search will reveal that there are already 'hate sites' for some health clubs. If you ignore the comments, your brand reputation will be eroded.

But it's not all bad news. If you address the issues on these social sites promptly and successfully, you can not only win over one unhappy member, but also impress many other potential new members at the same time with your proactive and dedicated approach.

integrated communications

This is why you need a strategy: to ensure your brand is protected and to capitalise on the many opportunities for improving sales, marketing and retention. The strength (and the weakness) of social media is that everyone, from the largest corporation to the teenager in his or her bedroom, can produce content – you can create a Facebook page in 15 minutes. What's more, in theory, it costs nothing.

US-based marketing company GramercyOne, supplier of SpaBooker and FitnessBooker, recommends implementing social media alongside your existing activities. "Don't be scared," says James Bremner, VP of marketing. "It's not complicated and it's hugely successful as a business tool."

Integration is key, he explains: "You need a software package that allows

Members can access social media sites from anywhere – people are always online, always connected

you to integrate your social media – you don't have time to tweet and post all day."

A club management system that can integrate with the main social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, allows clubs to communicate to their members in an instant – for example, to announce that a bookable item is available. Members could then book a squash court and automatically post to friends that they need a partner to play with.

SDA's LeisurePoint software, for example, connects to both Facebook and Twitter and allows members to set up automatic posts when they check-in to the club, make a booking or arrive for a booking. These posts can be seen by family, friends and club staff and can be ▶



Members could set up an automatic post that's triggered whenever they check-in, alerting both club staff and friends

- used for promotion and awareness, to promote better service by informing key staff when the member has arrived at the club, and to aid retention – friends and followers can post encouraging messages each time they check-in.

"Don't be afraid to experiment with what works for you," adds Bremner.

"Use different promotions and try things out – it's instant and, if it doesn't work, you can change it. Social media will drive your business to the next level."

Currently, many health clubs would appear to have unofficial Facebook pages, started by a keen member of staff without too much thought about how it fits into the club's marketing strategy, and these clubs are missing a trick. While some web pages show signs of being an active online community, they are disconnected from other club communications. Others seem to be nothing more than extensions of existing traditional sales and marketing activities, with a few special offers or guest passes available.

But social networking sites can be a real boon. Small, independent fitness operators and amateur sports clubs in particular are able to use Facebook to create a vibrant community online. Rushbrooke Tennis Club, for example, has regular updates on its activities, events and comments from a wide variety of users. Thanks to their relatively small membership bases, clubs

Don't be afraid to experiment. It's instant and, if it doesn't work, you can change it

like this have an advantage – Facebook is a natural extension of a network of friends. The challenge for commercial operators is to try to replicate this among a less cohesive group of members.

building trust

Neil Henshaw had two ailing clubs in Lancashire. He turned them into low-cost gyms, called Helio Fitness, promoted them via social media and now the membership is growing rapidly. He plans to have five budget clubs operating by the end of the year.

"As a low-cost operator, I thought social media would be a great opportunity to get the message out without the need to spend too much time and money on marketing," he says. "I started off seeing it as a tool to help my sales activities, with offers and guest passes on our Facebook page.

"However, one of the challenges I faced was getting to grips with what social media is. I realised how much we could do with it, and that the benefits went way beyond sales and marketing.

"The next stage is to integrate our Facebook page with our club management system and website, and then start extending use of our social media into retention and safeguarding our reputation online – in fact, we're already seeing more and more people 'liking' our page."

But however large these communities may be, clubs should bear in mind that success is dependent on the founding principles of social media: trust, sharing and reciprocity.

Take a look at the Facebook pages for football clubs like Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United. They are extremely detailed, very interactive and have close integration with their websites, ecommerce and sign-up.

getting started

It's best to tread carefully when starting out with your social media presence. In the early days of social media, some companies tried to bombard communities with overly commercial posts and patently self-serving content.

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SOCIAL MEDIA OPTIONS

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- **Twitter** – microblogging and social networking based on ‘tweets’
- **LinkedIn** – business and professional social networking
- **Foursquare** – Location-based mobile social network
- **Ning** – Users create their own social websites and networks
- **Yammer** – Internal social networking for work colleagues

The built-in self-regulation of social media then came into play, as untrustworthy contributions were vigorously challenged or simply ignored.

In fact, many purchasing decisions now have little input from the producers, as gym-goers rely more and more on online reviews and recommendations rather than a club's own website. Your whole social media reputation is closely bound to the trust you generate through engaging with the community.

Rather than being passive consumers, the people in the community are often the most valuable part of the network. Their conversation is happening with or without you and no club, no matter how large, is able to control it. The bottom line is that, with social media, your members can sell your business for you better than you can sell it yourself, through ratings and recommendations. Success will ultimately be determined by the community, not the club.

let the party happen

Remember, once you decide to launch onto social networks, it's important to keep at it, as results won't happen overnight. From tracking posts to adding content and status updates, you will need to dedicate time and resources to keep everything current and interesting.

Many operators I speak to say that they don't want their staff on computers; they want them on the gym

By integrating club management software with social media, clubs could 'tweet' the availability of slots on tennis or squash courts

floor. But do you want your staff to have meaningful communications with eight people in a day or 500?

the future

Social media sites like Facebook will continue to grow in importance, and in some cases overtake traditional websites, according to Kyle Zagrodzky, president of leisure software supplier iGo Figure. "We have found that our clients' Facebook pages receive more traffic than their company websites," he explains. "This happens through membership activity, referrals and inviting members to become fans."

It's important to note that social media is potentially a game-changing new paradigm for club operators; if you bring your old way of thinking and doing things, it won't work. With Facebook and the like, you need to realise that the best chance of success comes from creating the conditions for a community to grow – and then moving into the background. You provide the room, but the party has to happen on its own.

Stuart Dyson is the founder and managing director of SDA Solutions, specialist in developing web-based member management solutions for health clubs around the world: www.sdasolutions.com/blog

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Child healthcare or just childcare?

How can clubs and leisure centres get better at delivering kids' fitness? Abigail Harris asks a panel of experts for their thoughts

Kids' fitness should be big business. Despite the coalition government's U-turn on school sport, there's still a lack of clarity around just what will be on offer for our future generations. This uncertainty, coupled with the fact that new NHS statistics show almost one-third of children are overweight or obese when they leave primary school, should provide health clubs and leisure centres with an ideal springboard to provide programmed activity for youngsters. But children's activity isn't a statutory offering, even for local authority sites. So are operators getting it right on their own, or is more commitment needed to really make a difference?

Products simulating real sports, like the Freedom Climber, encourage children to become more engaged



Andrew Bagnall, director, Revolutionary Products



Catering for kids is often simply used as a way to attract parents to become members. However, to actually make a difference to children's health, there has to be more than a token kids' area.

Children develop quickly and so need to be continuously challenged. The secret to creating enthusiasm is the constant development of programmes and the provision of motivated staff with kid-friendly skills.

The tendency now is to provide different game formats with flashing lights systems, but these need progressive programming to maintain their edge. And there's still a need for core exercises such as cycling,

dancing and climbing, where kids can replicate outdoor activities indoors. This gives them a chance to sample the real thing and get a taste of the adventures available out there, away from the gaming culture.

Freedom Climber, the rotating climbing wall system, can be used to create low-level 'climb zones', with bold mountain graphics to stimulate the kids' senses. These can also integrate exercise with other learning opportunities – the 'Higher Ground' programme, for example, where kids have a map of world structures and mountains, complete with heights that equate to the number of revolutions climbed on the Freedom Climber. Not only does this create real-life exercise targets and challenges, it also helps to stimulate their minds.



Left: In ZigZag's Makoto game, children must touch flashing lights.
Below: Cyber Coach believes group sessions can foster self-confidence



Fergus Ahern, managing director, ZigZag (PTE group)

I believe the industry needs to work on its marketing to parents. Children's activity programming shouldn't just be about childcare. Often parents see health clubs and leisure centres as somewhere they can drop the kids while they have a workout, without understanding the health benefits that their children could be gaining too.

At ZigZag we understand that, in this current climate, all activities must be commercially viable, and our USP is helping clubs and centres make their kids' programmes financially successful. Our understanding of when and where these sessions

should take place, and who they should be aimed at, reduces the risk of simple programming mistakes that can dramatically cut commercial capability. We also advise on how best to structure affordable children's and family membership packages.

Children are willing participants but will vote with their feet if they're not happy. So activities must be inclusive, enjoyable and aspirational – children want to look up to their teachers, so centres must provide motivated, well-trained staff who actually want to work with children.



Glen Jones, managing director, Cyber Coach

Many activities only reward children when they are good at them, and fail to reward kids who are either new to an activity or less confident. Operators should provide activities that give immediate tangible rewards and a feeling of achievement, no matter what kids' ability, so that all children can enjoy success.

Give children control over their physical activity – put them in the driving seat. Centres using the Cyber Coach Virtual Dance Instructor report that kids thrive when they don't feel they are being dictated to, and when they can manage their own routines.

Group exercise is a great way for children to make friends, build confidence and learn valuable social skills, but often has an element of competitiveness not suited to everyone. Activities such as our dance mat games and virtual fitness instructor can be enjoyed as part of a small group, with the focus on fun, and can also overcome anxieties and self-consciousness often felt by older girls.

Activities outside the norm can also help operators set themselves apart and entice children who are less 'into' traditional sports.

Clubs and centres can build a feeling of familiarity by taking activities into the local area, creating direct links with schools, youth services and community groups and attending community events.



Richard Proctor, general manager, The LC, Swansea

Children's fitness has to be about fun: they must want to do it and want to keep on doing it. Concentrating on the teenage market, our focus is on attracting young people who are disillusioned with school sport, not just those who are already active. To do this, a facility must be able to offer something different, innovative and considered 'sic' by teenagers.

At the LC, we chose to install a teenage gym using ZigZag equipment due to its interactive nature. The Expresso bikes' ability to race against your mates, register online and see yourself on worldwide leader boards – with a similar functionality for the dance mats – really captures the imagination.

However, to drive retention we also offer a programme of regular, fun group sessions, incorporating the reaction wall and Nintendo Wii. By trying to be innovative and offering the latest interactive equipment – which puts fun first – we hope we can improve our offering. But as always, the enthusiasm, expertise and interaction of the staff who deliver the programme is paramount.



Andy Sayle, marketing director, Pulse

At Pulse, children's fitness is at the forefront of the design and planning of any new leisure development. No longer can it be a token gesture of a few pieces of equipment in a redundant storeroom – we're designing bespoke children's fitness suites as an integral part of developments. For leisure to continue to grow, it needs to embrace a family theme where mums, dads and kids can all spend quality time together, enjoying a healthier lifestyle at the same time and at the same venue.

Consequently, Pulse has not only created leisure environments specifically for kids – with exciting layouts, décor and graphics – but also offers a comprehensive range of safe, bespoke kids' gym equipment and interactive fitness systems, designed to engage and challenge today's tech-savvy kids. From arcade-style dance mats to interactive wall and floor systems, a host of exciting new products are now being introduced to excite the kids.



Jonathan Williams, CEO, SHOKK

Innovation and differentiation are key to delivering the best youth fitness offering. Like adults, young people want a club or centre that delivers an exciting concept, quality service and effective results. A watered-down adult offering will not suffice: an integrated or standalone facility will present a complete physical activity solution and concept that appeal to young people's interests.

Young people demand more than a handful of group exercise sessions within a leisure facility. Operators need to create an exciting and stimulating environment where young people can engage in a variety of fun and valued activities outside of school. To motivate them to be active, the facility should be accessible, attractive and appropriate to their needs.

We deliver a concept that integrates fitness and fun. Our specialised equipment delivers different activities, from functionality to interactivity, alongside dynamic workshops and group exercise programmes. SHOKK's 'buddy system' also enables young members to train with friends – a key motivator for sustained physical activity and a vehicle for social interaction.

We also employ exercise scientist Dr Lee Graves as our head of research and development to develop our fitness offerings. This involves consulting with young people on the type of activities they enjoy, as well as ongoing research into the most effective forms of physical activity.



Sarah Hobbs, head of family and programming, David Lloyd Leisure

Keeping members fit and healthy is David Lloyd Leisure's main focus, and this includes our young members too. With DL Kids we have developed activities that engage children of all ages and abilities.

It's important to offer different options, as not every child is interested in the same thing. We have a mix of sport-specific coaching through our All Stars programme – in swimming, tennis and badminton – as well as general play and fitness sessions through our unique DL Kids activities. DL Kids and the All Stars programmes have been designed to get and keep children interested in sports, fitness and an active lifestyle, much of it themed through play.

Our programmes fit in with how children learn as part of the National Curriculum, and it's important that parents can understand how beneficial these programmes are for the children.

Children's introduction to exercise must be fun and we recognise that the activities and provision need to be as special as what's on offer for adults.

We're striving to create great spaces in our clubs for our young members, and to ensure their activities fit well with our adult programming to help support the needs of all family members.



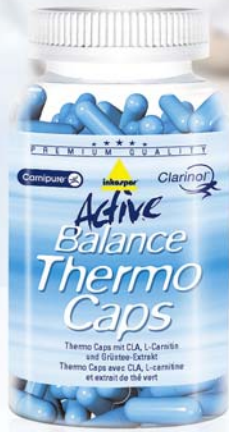
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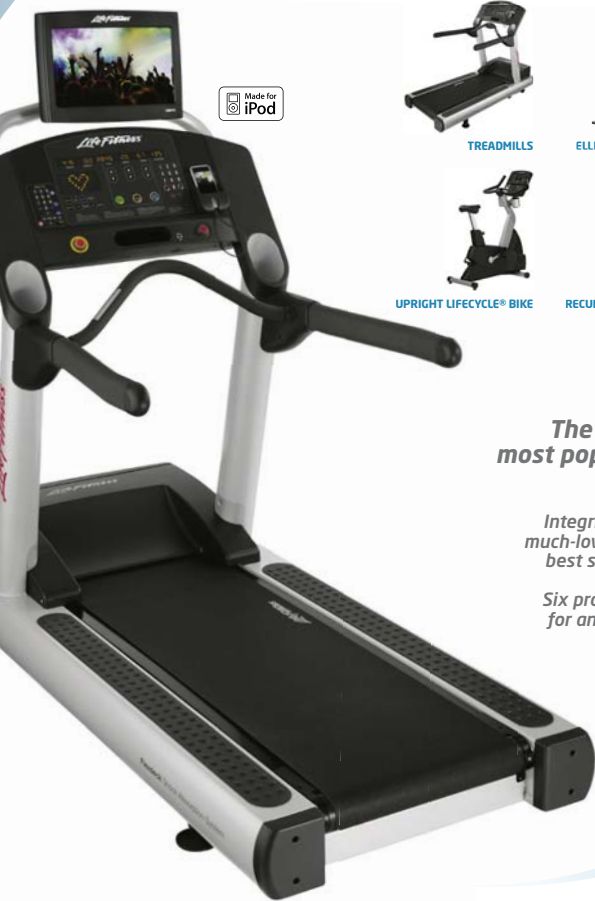
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WHAT WE LIVE FOR

PROJECT PROFILES

We ask a selection of industry suppliers to report on their most exciting projects over the last year



David Lloyd Leisure in partnership with Life Fitness opens a new club in Exeter

The new £11m David Lloyd Leisure health club in Exeter opened its doors on 13 December last year, and already has nearly 2,000 members.

This is the first club opening for the new David Lloyd Leisure Group – the result of the merger of two premium club chains, David Lloyd Leisure and Next Generation.

The high-end club offers a premium health, fitness and tennis destination for the people of Devon. Its facilities include indoor and outdoor heated swimming pools, a 1,198sq m (12,900sq ft) air conditioned fitness area with a gym designed by Life Fitness, and a dedicated area for children's activities.

It also has three indoor and five outdoor tennis courts, providing some of the best tennis facilities in the south-west of England. Indeed, it is the David Lloyd Leisure Group's aim that the Exeter club becomes the premier health and racquets club in Europe.

The fitness area has a 130-station gym and three studios, including a dedicated group cycling studio. Together, these three studios offer a full programme of exercise classes including yoga and pilates, step, dance and aerobics.

David Lloyd Exeter is the first site in the UK to have installed the brand new Life Fitness Integrity Series of CV

equipment. In addition, all cardio stations come complete with integrated screens, USB ports and iPod connectivity.

David Lloyd Leisure is one of Life Fitness' premium brand accounts, and the supplier undertakes extensive research among members across the estate before creating gym designs that are bespoke to each club. These designs will incorporate the latest cardiovascular and resistance equipment, including the Integrity™ and Elevation™ Series.

Antony Morrison, Life Fitness account manager, is delighted with the new facility at Exeter. "This club is a great example of our solid partnership with David Lloyd Leisure," he says. "The Life Fitness-designed gym and its features were extensively researched so they would complement the high standards and services offered across the board by David Lloyd Leisure.

"By utilising our research and our understanding of David Lloyd Leisure's business aims, we have created a facility that will, without a doubt, be a huge success. It will offer a health club experience unlike anything else provided in the area."

The gym layout has followed the Life Fitness Journey™ concept, in which exercise stations are thoughtfully positioned to create



Main image: Life Fitness designed the 130-station gym
Above: Greg Fanning, GM of DLL Exeter, with a member

varied workout experiences for members of all fitness levels. The Life Fitness Journey focuses on what motivates people to stay on their exercise path and achieve their goals. The different spaces prevent members from getting bored and offer a natural progression through the gym.

The result is a high-tech fitness suite that's designed in such a way that it encourages members to exercise for longer and thereby get better results from their workouts.

For more information, visit www.lifefitness.com



Two new site openings for Calderdale Council with wall-to-wall Technogym

November 2010 marked the opening of the second newly built Calderdale Council leisure facility – Sowerby Bridge Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre. It followed the opening of Brighouse Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre in October of last year. The facilities at both sites, located in West Yorkshire, include 25m swimming pools, teaching pools, state of the art fitness suites and group exercise studios.

When choosing equipment for the gym, Calderdale Council selected Technogym as a business partner to provide its latest and most expansive range to satisfy their "demanding and diverse" customer base, as well as to future-proof them for years to come. Both centres' fitness suites are fitted with Technogym equipment – with 65 stations of cardio and strength at Brighouse and 45 stations at Sowerby Bridge set in an open, fresh and modern training environment.

Technogym helped with equipment selection as well as with the design, layout and installation. In addition, pre-launch sales and marketing support were provided by Your Management Solutions Ltd (YMSL), a partner of Technogym, which offers clubs dedicated assistance, resources and planning for branding,

marketing and pre-sale of memberships prior to opening.

Fitness manager Matt Brooks says: "I believe Technogym is years ahead of its competitors in terms of equipment innovation, design and business support.

"With close competition, Technogym secured the deal with the offer of marketing and sales support. It's no longer enough to provide clients with the best equipment on the market at a competitive price. I want guarantees that my gyms will be full and that income targets will be met. This was something Technogym was confident of delivering through their partnership with YMSL.

"Our targets were not just met, they were blown out of the water well ahead of schedule. This has given me even greater confidence in Technogym and has built a partnership with YMSL which, all being well, will continue in the future."

Included is an extensive range of Technogym Excite + Cardio and Selection Strength to offer variety for members, including:

- Vario – the latest piece of equipment in the Excite cardio line, which allows users to step, walk or run with a natural and fluid movement. It has the longest

New openings: the new Brighouse Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre, and the Technogym equipped gym (above left and right)

stride length on the market (0–83cm), which can be set by the user.

- Visio – an entirely user-managed, integrated screen for gym equipment. It creates a direct, digital, interactive communication channel between the gym and its clients. Individual users are constantly updated on their performance while having an extensive entertainment platform at their fingertips.

- Kinesis – This patented innovation allows users to move tri-dimensionally while providing resistance to every possible movement of the body. It's a highly versatile and space-efficient piece of equipment.

Both sites also operate the Technogym Wellness System, the customer relationship management solution that's fully integrated into the equipment, which Calderdale Council have used successfully for over 8 years, to offer individual programmes to users to maximise the benefit of their workouts, as well as to help monitor and control member retention.

For more information, visit www.technogym.com



Careful planning: the layout of the 65 station Brighouse fitness suite with a wide range of Cardio and Strength



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TIME is the scarcest resource in people's lives. On average, a user spends twelve minutes per workout on a cardiovascular machine. (Based on data collected in HRF clubs of EU countries in 2007 related to approximately 500,000 training workouts)

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO MY CUSTOMERS?

With Visioweb, entertainment and wellness are just a touch away. Your customers will be able to watch TV, connect their ipod to play music and videos, surf the Web to explore their favourite websites, look at photos and play games. A guide me function is also available to support the use of the equipment and an easy interface helps to make the most of their workout. There is also a "Plug and Train" feature that allows members to create and store their workout using a Wellness Key.

CASE STUDY – ROCKLIFFE HALL

Rockliffe Hall is an exclusive Golf Resort with Hotel, Spa and a Private Health Club. The Club offers an exclusive membership and currently has 650 members. Rockliffe Hall made the decision to install Visio and Communicator when they built their new gym facility. *Liz Holmes, Spa Director comments: "Communicator provides us with a valuable tool we can use to keep clients up to date with what's going on across the entire resort, delivering information on social events, treatment activities and gym based challenges whilst also maximising revenue opportunities."*

The group exercise timetable was added into the club area three months ago and since then the timetable has been viewed 440 times and helped take the class occupancy levels from 40% to an impressive 77%. The survey facility on Communicator has also proven to be a really useful tool, currently running is a survey regarding the introduction of Kinesis Golf Classes. The direct feedback improves interaction with members and will help to understand if this could be a viable business opportunity to add to the timetable.



SOLINA JETTY/2010 © SHUTTER

The great Escape – TRX suspension training gathers momentum

TRX suspension training has been one of the key product launches for UK distributor Escape Fitness over recent years. Highlighted as one of the fitness industry's fastest-growing training methods in the annual fitness survey from IDEA, the association for fitness instructors, the popularity of TRX looks set to continue throughout 2011 with the launch of new moves, programmes and training.

The TRX suspension trainer – a simple but highly versatile piece of equipment consisting of two 6–7ft, heavy-duty nylon strips with handles and straps at the end – was originally created by Randy Hetrick, a former US Navy Seal commander, so that he and his comrades could perform leveraged bodyweight exercise while on deployment.

Lightweight, compact and highly portable – TRX weighs only 2lbs – it allows users to work out wherever they are, as the parent company's name Fitness Anywhere suggests.

More than 750 different exercises using the entire body can be carried out using the TRX, making it suitable for beginners right through to advanced combat training participants.

It's even used by football teams including Manchester City and Liverpool, as Liverpool's head of fitness and conditioning Darren Burgess explains: "The TRX gives players a full-body workout and provides dynamic exercises that are really specific to football. As there are no bars, plates or dumbbells,

the players can use their own bodyweight as resistance in any plane of movement."

One health club operator to appreciate the potential of TRX is Virgin Active. "Virgin Active is committed to providing its members with as many dynamic and interesting ways as possible to work out and get fit while having fun," says Nick Hudson, national fitness manager at Virgin Active. "TRX is yet another inspiring form of exercise to challenge our members and enable them to really get the most from their fitness regime."

One of the most recent Virgin Active sites to install a TRX functional training area, in December 2010, was Virgin Active Barbican – also one of the first sites in the UK to use X Mounts rather

than a frame. This ceiling-mounted option ensures that the club's 11 TRXs hang safely during a class or PT session, but also means they can be easily stored if the space is required for another activity.

"Our TRX facility is going really well, with new members picking up on it all the time. The TRX has really opened our members' eyes to how fun training can be," says Jez Robinson, a trainer at Virgin Active Barbican. Virgin Active has already introduced TRX group training classes at six of its clubs, and this is now set to be rolled out across the country.

For more information, call Escape Fitness on +44 (0)800 458 558. The Escape fitness blog is also full of motivational movies, training tips and footage.



Portable training: The TRX can be attached almost anywhere

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Is vibration technology really as powerful as it claims to be? Kath Hudson looks at some of the latest research

The idea of losing weight and gaining fitness by standing, or doing some simple exercises, on a vibrating platform sounds very appealing. So is it too good to be true? Eager to demonstrate that it really is as good as it sounds, the manufacturers are robust with their research efforts, with studies demonstrating the benefits of vibration training across the board, including use by those trying to lose weight, elite athletes, those with chronic illness and post-surgery patients.

WEIGHT LOSS

Power Plate International has looked at how effective diet and exercise is for reducing the percentage of visceral fat (fat stored around internal organs and the torso). The research, carried out between 2006 and 2008 on the Power Plate pro5 machine, looked at four different test groups over a 12-month period. Each group followed its prescribed intervention for six months and then was observed for a further six months without any intervention.

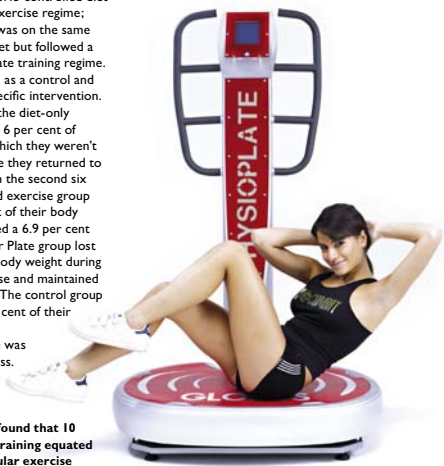
The first group was asked to follow a calorie-controlled diet; the second

group followed a calorie-controlled diet and a conventional exercise regime; and the third group was on the same calorie-controlled diet but followed a supervised Power Plate training regime. The final group acted as a control and didn't receive any specific intervention.

After six months, the diet-only group had lost about 6 per cent of their body weight, which they weren't able to maintain once they returned to their usual lifestyle in the second six months. The diet and exercise group lost about 7 per cent of their body weight and maintained a 6.9 per cent loss, while the Power Plate group lost 11 per cent of their body weight during the intervention phase and maintained a 10.5 per cent loss. The control group gained about 1.5 per cent of their original body weight.

The real difference was seen in visceral fat loss. The Power Plate

A study for Globus found that 10 minutes' vibration training equated to two hours of regular exercise





(left) Power Plate in action; (above) Dynamic Activity's bodycore functional training platforms; (right) VibroGym, which has proven results with knee replacement patients

group lost a total of 47.7sq cm over the first six months and maintained this after 12 months. The conventional fitness group reduced visceral fat by 17.6sq cm initially, but were unable to maintain this and returned to just 1.6sq cm below their starting point. The diet-only group lost 24.3sq cm after six months and a reduction of 7.5sq cm after a year.

"This research shows how Power Plate can be incorporated as part of a weight loss plan," says Jeff Davis, senior vice president of commercial sales UK. "It's especially suitable for clients who already have a high level of visceral fat, which has a strong correlation with the development of serious chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes."

POST-OP REHAB

VibroGym, manufactured in the Netherlands, has been subject to rigorous research, and a recent US study into its effectiveness in treating people after a knee replacement operation has shown that it can improve strength and function in post-op patients.

The study was based on two groups of eight people: one group used the VibroGym and traditional physical therapy, while the other just undertook physical therapy. The participants had to complete 10–12 sessions over a four-week period, starting three to six weeks after surgery.

Both groups showed equal strength gains, but the differentiating factor was

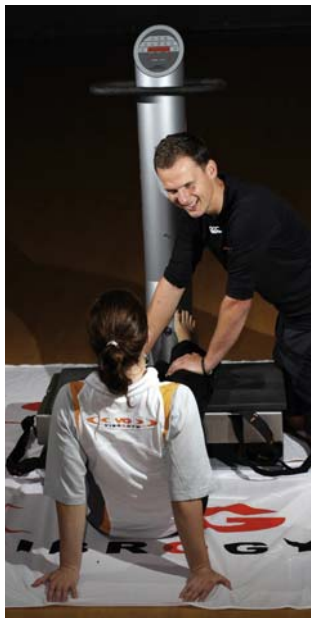
VibroGym was that it reduced the need for resistance training – a particular benefit when working with elderly patients. Also, there were no adverse side effects and, anecdotally, people enjoyed using it, so adherence levels were high.

"We have a great deal of research on the VibroGym website which gyms could use to target new members – people suffering from chronic fatigue, multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia, for example," says VibroGym MD Dan Fivey. "We suggest gyms link up with GPs and physios to encourage referrals to rehabilitation programmes."

CHRONIC ILLNESS

Creating a new category in vibration training, Dynamic Activity's bodycore functional training platforms involve an up-and-down movement that works with the body's natural vertical plane, accentuating gravity.

Dr Gareth Wright, a physiotherapist based in Ireland, is currently working with the MS Society to develop exercise programmes for patients suffering from multiple sclerosis. He completed a study in 2009/10 looking at how bodycore platforms can be used to this end.



Dr Wright incorporated the platforms into various exercise patterns, right down to the more incapacitated patients who simply lay, or were supported, on the platform. In just a few sessions, he reported that patients' mobility was improving, their tolerance to exercise had increased, sleep patterns improved and they had fewer muscle spasms. The study also showed that muscle tone improved, in contrast to the gradual deterioration common among multiple sclerosis sufferers. "Clubs could market to this population, as more than 200,000 people suffer from MS in the UK alone, and this number is rising," says David Seymour, director of Dynamic Activity. "Clubs could forge partnerships with local GPs and hospitals, offering specialist classes or renting out space to physiotherapists."

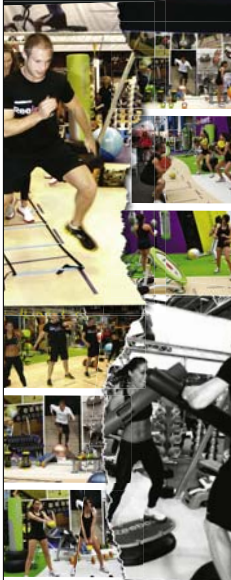
Findings suggest that vibration training can boost testosterone and growth hormone levels

DIVERSE BENEFITS

A study carried out for Globus Gold, led by Professor Bisciotti Gian Nicola, found that 10 minutes of vibration training is equivalent to two hours of equivalent standard training. Findings suggest that vibration training can boost ▶

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The True Vibe, launched in January, is currently undergoing medical research

► testosterone and growth hormone levels, leading to an improvement of up to 46 per cent in maximum strength and up to 26 per cent in jumping ability. It was also shown to improve balance, cardiovascular performance and bone density, which could be of particular interest to clients over the age of 50.

According to William Fryer, technical director of JD Harris – the UK distributor of Globus Gold – many clubs do not appreciate the full benefits of vibration training and consequently frequently under use them. “Globus Gold has tried to address this with an on-screen personal training programme, which allows the user to select an outcome. The machine then guides them through a pre-programmed series of workouts,” he explains.

NEW TO THE MARKET

True Vibrations has a brand new machine on the market: the True Vibe was unveiled in January.

“The experienced team behind it has produced a machine with all the qualities of the original steel machine – the Power Plate – rather than plastic construction, as the steel machine has been subject to the most valid medical studies,” says Kevin Barclay-Webb, True Vibrations managing director. “We also have an adjustable handle to ensure clients and trainers can work on perfect spinal alignment, alleviating or correcting any spinal defects the user may have.”

Research studies are just about to get underway, including a medical study

investigating the strength and circulation differences incurred from the use of different vibration plates.

BROAD AUDIENCE

Vibration technology does seem to have proven benefits, judging from both clinical trials and anecdotal evidence.

Since vibration training is load bearing, it offers the potential to appeal to an elderly audience, and studies certainly suggest that the platforms are not only safe but also beneficial for people with chronic illness and post-surgery.

However, it's not just these groups who can benefit: vibration platforms can significantly enhance everyone's fitness. A 2009 study by Montpellier University into bodycore, commissioned by the French Rugby Federation, found significant increases in muscle activation among elite athletes, as well as in their strength, power and endurance.

In fact, bodycore now offers a REPS-accredited course, educating personal trainers in transferring their training techniques onto the platforms to gain increased performance.

Used properly and to their full potential, vibration training machines offer gym staff the opportunity to get creative in prescribing fun routines, incorporating them alongside other training tools and running short, intense functional circuits which can be completed in a lunchtime.



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David Minton, director of The Leisure Database Company, reports on the recent EU/UK Health and Productivity Forum

protecting your assets

Towards the end of the 19th century, three now famous philanthropists were working to improve the quality of life of their employees: Joseph Rowntree in York, the Cadbury brothers in Bournville and Lord Lever at Port Sunlight were all building model garden villages and communities where employees enjoyed conditions, pay, hours and benefits far exceeding their competitors in similar industries.

Four years after Lord Lever's death, his enterprises were amalgamated as Unilever, which, by 1930, employed a quarter of a million people and, in terms of market value, was the largest company in Britain.

Today, Unilever employs 300,000 people in 150 countries and Dr John Cooper, head of corporate occupational health since 1998, has a mandate to establish a global occupational health strategy for the whole company. Unilever is still pioneering studies in increasing business benefits of a healthy workforce and, in its newly refurbished HQ in London, it hosted the sixth Annual EU/UK Health and Productivity Forum. The forum was organised by the Institute for Health and Productivity Management and took place last November.

reducing down-time

Back in 1878 it seemed both logical and morally sound, to a few philanthropists, that a healthy environment would deliver a healthy workforce, and over 100 years later it's possible to quantify the value-based health benefits. Today, encouraging employees to embrace a healthy and fitter lifestyle pays off with reduced absenteeism due to sickness. At the same time, employees have more

energy throughout the day and can concentrate for longer. Fitter and healthier people tend to have more self-confidence, which in turn can inspire confidence and produce a more positive attitude among colleagues and customers.

Business owners and managers around the world know that their most important assets are their employees, and figures from the World Health Organisation (WHO) provide an idea of the scale and importance of a healthy workforce. Every day, around 1.7 billion people between the ages of 40 and 65 get up and go to work. This group makes up one-quarter of the world's population and most are at the peak of their earning and spending power. For example, of all the income earned by workers in the US and the UK, two-thirds is brought home by those between the ages of 40 and 65. Commensurate with their income, these people pay the highest tax rates, and so shoulder the bulk of costs of financing the government's health, education and other public services.

quantifiable results

Over two days, attendees at the Health and Productivity Forum discovered many global examples of the value-added benefits of a healthy and fitter workforce, but one surprisingly close to home came from occupational health practitioner Dr Marianne Dyer. Formerly a Royal Air Force medic, Dr Dyer has been appointed medical director of Park

Health, the occupational medical service for the construction of the London 2012 Olympics.

The nature of construction brings with it a large burden of occupational illness: it's a high hazard industry. A strategic approach to prevention, on-site clinical intervention and health promotion have all been put in place on the London 2012 project, including – for the first time – pre-employment screening of those working to ensure they are fit and safe to do so.

It's estimated that having an occupational health team has so far saved the companies involved in the Olympic Park 52,000 working hours. The wider community has also benefited from a quantifiable reduction in the impact on local health services, compared to the levels any major construction project would normally generate.

Other speakers from a number of global brands gave compelling presentations of how their health and fitness programmes became integral and essential parts of the companies' strategic and tactical business practices. They focused on the modern day corporate's awareness of its role, responsibilities and benefits in terms of the health and fitness of its employees. Most speakers produced evidence to demonstrate the resulting additional engagement and performance at work, which often translated into additional shareholder value.

“Having an occupational health team at the Olympic Park has saved 52,000 working hours”



Worth paying for: Fit and healthy employees take less time off sick, concentrate better, have more energy and are more confident

Companies like Intel, the world's largest semiconductor manufacturer, which has been named as one of the top 10 most valuable brands in the world for 10 consecutive years, showed how it has developed and monitored a wellness programme since 2005. Following initial success, Intel expanded the programme over five years to cover all 80,000 employees across 300 sites in 50 countries. Employee feedback led to the creation of 'wellness ambassadors' and a programme of evaluation that measures both lifestyle modification and clinical outcomes. The estimated total labour cost savings for years one to three was US\$17.7m.

Meanwhile, between 2004 and September 2009, Dow – the 'official chemistry company' for the PGA Tour, which employs 46,000 people across 214 sites in 37 countries – recorded a 23 per cent reduction in the number of employees at high risk due to smoking, obesity and lack of physical activity thanks to its wellness programme.

Similarly the 208-year-old Du Pont company, famous for performance coatings like Teflon and developing astronaut moon-suits, has helped 12,000 employees since 1994 to understand their personal health risk through scorecards which help promote a culture of health and fitness.

Closer to home, Dr Richard Heron from BP International showed how positive workplace health could link interventions to cost reductions per employee, and how the same interventions could link through to improved shareholder value.

And Yvan Miklin, CEO of Aquila Health & Fitness, showed how global health and fitness models could be applied on a single site – in this case in Croatia, for Vipnet (Vip), the country's leading innovator in the field of mobile communications.

Vip employs a young, dynamic and demanding workforce of around 1,000 people, with an average age of 35. At a new site on the outskirts of Zagreb, it created the first work-life unit in Croatia. The 1,858sq m (20,000sq ft) on-site facility includes a fitness centre, a wellness and spa area, child care facilities, a restaurant and two cafés.

In just four years, Vip has achieved between 70 and 80 per cent participation rates in its many wellness, team building, health and recreational programmes. Vip has also been ranked the number one place to work in Croatia by HR consulting agencies.

stories for the future

Just a few days before the forum it was announced that Nuffield Health, the

UK's largest healthcare charity, had acquired the corporate fitness business Bladerunner. Bladerunner had been running contracts at almost 100 on-site fitness facilities in offices and schools for around 60 clients, while Nuffield Health had 93 on-site corporate fitness facilities.

The combined company becomes the UK's largest provider of on-site corporate facilities, which not only includes memberships to private gyms but also thousands of mobile therapists, physiotherapists and GPs who can provide a wide range of medical services. Nuffield Health's expansion into the wider areas of occupational health builds on a unique portfolio of 31 hospitals, day-case clinics and physiotherapy clinics and will now command a very large percentage of the sector.

It would be wonderful to hear from Nuffield at next year's Health & Productivity Forum, as the organisation has a heartwarming back-story to tell: Lord Nuffield, the ennobled motor tycoon William Morris of Morris Motors, suggested in 1959 that a small health charity might benefit from incorporating his name in its title and so it was re-registered as the Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust, now known as Nuffield Health.



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It could prevent diabetes, childhood obesity, heart disease and birth complications – Jo Talbot rounds up some of the latest scientific thinking concerning exercise during pregnancy

Exercise in pregnancy the facts

Fit mums-to-be are less likely to get diabetes during pregnancy

Sept 2010

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, US, have demonstrated that physical activity before pregnancy can lower the risk of gestational diabetes by up to half. They also found that exercise in early pregnancy cuts the risk by a quarter.

Researchers examined studies of 34,929 patients' activity levels prior to pregnancy, as well as rates of gestational diabetes. Women who did the most physical activity before they got pregnant were 55 per cent less likely to develop gestational diabetes than those doing the least amount of exercise. This benefit dropped to 24 per cent among those who only started their exercise in early pregnancy. The study was published in *Diabetes Care* in September 2010.

Research could offer new advice for mums of all fitness levels

Nov 2010

A study is currently underway at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, US, that could lead to revisions in the advice given to pregnant women about exercise.

The study is testing women of different levels of fitness, all taking exercise based on their ability levels, and monitoring the impact of this exercise on their babies.

Around 60 women in their third trimester are taking part in a treadmill test. The women are only being asked to work to the best of their ability, whether this is walking, jogging or running. Foetuses are examined by ultrasound before and after treadmill work.

Over time, the doctors plan to measure the impact of exercise on the foetuses; to develop new ways to monitor the foetus during exercise, for example wirelessly; and to collect long-term data on the pregnancy outcomes.

Could running for half an hour, three times a week, cut the risk of cot death?



Exercising prevents excessive birthweight

Apr 2010
/ Sept 2009

Two recent studies have shown that exercising while pregnant can prevent excessive birth weight in babies, resulting in fewer risks during birth and also less likelihood of later obesity in the child.

A study by the University of Auckland in New Zealand, published in April 2010, assigned 84 first-time mums to either an exercise or a control group. The exercisers were given a maximum of five sessions of 40 minutes' exercise per week – depending on their ability – to carry out until at least 36 weeks' gestation. They found that regular, moderate-intensity aerobic exercise led to a small reduction in the birth weight of the baby – babies born to mothers in the exercise group were an average of 143 grams lighter than infants born to mums in the control group, and also had a lower body mass index.

"Given that large birth size is associated with an increased risk of obesity, a modest reduction in birth weight may have long-term health benefits for offspring by lowering this risk in later life," says co-author of the study Paul Hofman, MD.

In the other study, published in *Obstetrics and Gynecology* in Sept 2009, Norwegian researchers reviewed data of nearly 37,000 women. They discovered that the odds of delivering a too-big baby dropped by as much as 28 per cent in women who exercised regularly in their second and third trimesters during their first pregnancy.

The researchers said that a heavier birth weight – known medically as foetal macrosomia – poses a risk to both the baby and the mother. If a baby weighs more than 8.8lb, the risk of delivery problems, C-sections, postpartum haemorrhage and low Apgar scores all increase, according to background information in the study. They also state that larger birth weights have been associated with an increased risk of obesity later in life.

Exercise after birth can help prevent post-natal depression

Apr 2010

Specialised exercise routines could help new mothers lower their risk of depression by up to 50 per cent.

Scientists at the University of Melbourne in Australia carried out a study of 161 new mums, none of whom had any previous depressive symptoms. They were split into two groups and asked to take part in an eight-week mother and baby programme. One group's course included parenting education and exercise classes, the other group only received the parenting education.

The first group fared significantly better. The number of women in this group identified, pre-intervention, as 'at risk' of postnatal depression was reduced by 50 per cent by the end of the intervention, and four weeks later.

The study was published in *Physical Therapy*, the scientific journal of the American Physical Therapy Association.



US doctors didn't know exercise guidelines for pregnant women

Feb 2010

A study published in the *Journal of Women's Health* showed that medical experts in America were seriously lacking in their knowledge about exercise recommendations for pregnant women.

Sixty per cent of medical doctors (MDs) and 86 per cent of doctors of osteopathy (DOs) weren't familiar with pregnancy exercise guidelines, it was found.

The study by James Pivarnik and colleagues surveyed 93 MDs, DOs and midwives. "Study after study has shown exercise to be beneficial for both mother and baby, but some doctors seem reluctant to trust that body of evidence," says Pivarnik.

The official recommendations for pregnant women in America were published in the *US Physical Activity (PA) Guidelines for Americans*, released in autumn 2008. This states: "Current evidence shows that PA performed by women undergoing a normal pregnancy is associated with very little risk, may decrease a woman's risk of complications during pregnancy (hypertension, gestational diabetes), and may enhance weight loss postpartum. Thus, women are encouraged to perform the minimum amount of PA suggested for all Americans – that is, 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week."

'Womb workouts' could give babies healthier hearts

Apr-2010

Babies whose mothers do aerobic exercise during pregnancy may have healthier hearts, according to researchers at Kansas University, US.

The study examined the effects of aerobic exercise on the developing foetal heart. Magnetocardiograms, which measure the foetal heart rate through sensors placed on the skin, were used on 61 healthy, pregnant women aged 21 to 35. Half of the women exercised and half did not.

Results showed substantial differences in foetal heart rate between the two groups. At 36 weeks, the heart rate when the foetus was active was 136 beats per minute in the exercise group and 148 in the control group. The researchers believe that 'womb workouts' have health benefits that continue into adulthood, lowering the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and hypertension decades later.

Breastfeeding mums should exercise to prevent bone loss

Nov-2009

Nutritionists at the University of North Carolina, US, found that exercise can reduce the bone loss in new mums caused by calcium lost to their babies through breastfeeding.

Reduction in bone density is a common side-effect of breastfeeding, as babies need calcium to grow and therefore deplete the mother of her own stores. But this loss increases the risk of osteoporosis in the mother.

However, researchers found that weight-bearing or aerobic exercise can help stimulate bone growth. They measured the bone density of 20 women between one and five months after they'd given birth. Those who did no exercise lost about 7.5 per cent bone density in their lower spine during the study. But women who did pilates and walking or jogging three days a week lost only 4.5 per cent. They also regained their figures faster, even without dieting.

Can exercising during pregnancy prevent cot death?

Apr-2009

Researchers at Kansas City University, US, believe that mothers who exercise during pregnancy could be improving the health of their unborn babies and even helping to prevent cot death.

The study looked at 26 pregnant women between the ages of 20 and 35. Half the group took 30 minutes' moderate exercise – such as vigorous walking, cycling on an exercise bike or running – three times a week, while the other half took no activity. The doctors found that babies in the womb had lower heart rates and improved breathing if their mothers were physically active, and their nervous systems were more mature. They concluded that exercise could be an "early intervention" to help prevent cot death, as it helped the development of the nervous system, which is where some researchers think the causes of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) lie.

Yoga: great for mum and baby

Dec-2009

Women who practise yoga during pregnancy may have a lower risk of pre-term labour, according to research carried out in Bangalore, India.

This study of 335 women, published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, compared expectant mums who did yoga for an hour a day with a similar group who walked 30 minutes twice a day (standard obstetric advice). The women were followed from 18 to 20 weeks of pregnancy. Compliance in both groups was ensured by frequent telephone calls and maintenance of an activity diary.

Pre-term labour was significantly lower in the yoga group. Complications such as isolated intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) – a condition in which a foetus is unable to achieve its genetically determined potential size – and pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH) with associated IUGR were also significantly lower in the yoga group. There were no significant adverse effects noted in the yoga group.

The yoga mums also had a lower risk of high blood pressure, while their babies, on average, had a healthier birth weight. The researchers speculate that yoga's benefits could come from increased blood flow to the placenta and lower levels of maternal stress hormones.

Yoga appears to contribute towards a baby's healthy development



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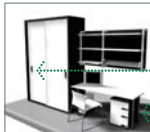
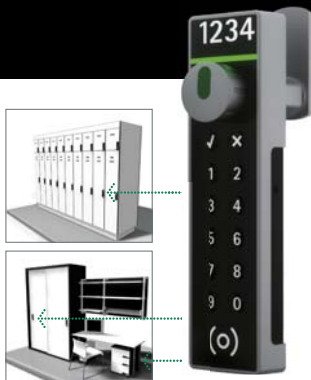


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event preview

IHRSA will celebrate “three decades of excellence” at its 30th Anniversary International Convention & Trade Show this month. Kristen Walsh offers a preview of the event

TURNING 30



Thousands of club owners, operators, instructors, staff, consultants, suppliers, investors and other industry professionals from around the world will convene in San Francisco, California, US this month for IHRSA's 30th Anniversary International Convention & Trade Show, which takes place on 16–19 March.

keynote speakers

Attendees will profit from the ideas and insights offered by one of the strongest line-ups of keynote speakers ever assembled by IHRSA.

This includes US Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, who on Saturday 19 March will present her 'Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation'. Dr Benjamin's presence at IHRSA30 will underscore the vital link between the medical and fitness communities, and her keynote will emphasise the importance of fighting the obesity epidemic by communicating and celebrating the full benefits of healthy living.

"On behalf of IHRSA and the entire fitness industry, I am extremely pleased to welcome such an admired and distinguished leader to our convention," says Joe Moore, IHRSA's president and CEO. "IHRSA members understand that health clubs must play a critical role in promoting healthy living, and we are eager to support Dr Benjamin's efforts to combat obesity and fulfil the promise of the HealthyPeople 2020 goals for improving the health of all Americans."

In addition to Dr Benjamin, the IHRSA Convention will feature four of the most sought-after speakers on the lecture circuit. Daniel Pink, author

of *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* and three other best-selling books on the changing world of work, will lead a session entitled 'Drive: What The Science of Motivation Can Teach You About High Performance'. This presentation will take place on Wednesday 16 March, and is sponsored by Matrix Fitness.

Patrick Lencioni, founder and president of The Table Group, a specialist management consulting firm focused on organisational health, will offer a session entitled 'The Four Disciplines of a Healthy Organisation', to be held on Thursday 17 March, sponsored by Precor.

Tony Hsieh, CEO of clothing website Zappos.com, who grew the company's

US Surgeon General Regina Benjamin will give a keynote speech about tackling obesity in the US



gross sales from US\$1.6m (£1m) to US\$1bn (£623m) over the past decade, will also speak at the event, in a session entitled 'Happiness: A Path To Profits, Passion and Purpose'. Taking place on Friday 18 March, this session is sponsored by Technogym.

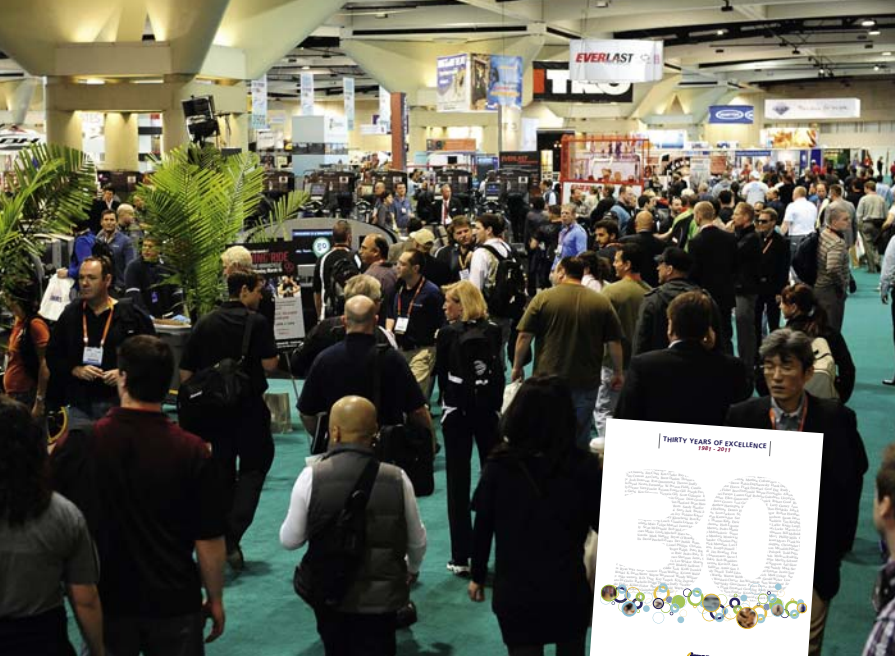
And Phil Keoghan, host of the television show *The Amazing Race* – who attributes his success and zest for living to a near-death experience at the age of 19 – will speak on the topic of 'No Opportunity Wasted: Creating the Life You Want' on Saturday 19 March, sponsored by SPRI Products.

networking opportunities

In addition, this year's convention includes more than 130 educational sessions – a 30 per cent increase on 2010 – and a raft of networking opportunities. Highlights will include:

- The Making Connections Reception, to be held just before the welcome reception on Wednesday 16 March. This event is ideal for first-time attendees and those travelling alone to the convention, and IHRSA staff will be on-hand to make introductions and promote networking.

- The Annual Women's Leadership Summit, which provides a unique opportunity to network with, and learn from, female leaders from across the globe. One of the fastest-growing components of the IHRSA Convention, the summit is sponsored by Cybex International and takes place on Wednesday 16 March. It will be hosted by Debra Siena, president of Proactive Partners, a division of TCA Holdings.
- The Planet IHRSA reception for



international delegates, to be held on Thursday 17 March, is always one of the most vibrant, fun and best-attended events at the convention.

- The 6th Annual BASH for MDA's Augie's Quest will be held on Friday 18 March at the San Francisco Marriott. Presented by Augie's Quest to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association's ALS Research Program, the event will be hosted by Natalie Morales of the TODAY show, and there will be a live performance by the band Sugar Ray. Learn more and register at www.augiesquest.org

- A Networking Luncheon is scheduled for Saturday 19 March. The opportunity to network with club operators from around the world is one of the most requested IHRSA Convention activities each year, and IHRSA has responded to this demand by bringing back this popular event. Attendees can connect and share what they have learned at the convention on a host of topics, including personal training management, staff retention and incentives, marketing strategies, public relations strategies, franchising, revenue growth, corporate fitness, membership sales, retention strategies and non-dues revenue. Pre-

Looking back: IHRSA has published a commemorative yearbook marking its 30 years, which will be distributed at this year's show

registration is required, at a cost of US\$30 (£19) per person.

- Two golf outings to the beautiful Presidio Golf Course will take place on Saturday 19 March – one in the morning, and one in the afternoon. The course is a National Historic Landmark and has been open to the public since 1996. Prior to that it was a private course, operated for the military for more than 100 years.

30-year snapshot

To commemorate its three decades, IHRSA has published a 30th Anniversary Yearbook, to be distributed on-site to every convention attendee and sold via The IHRSA Store (on-site and at www.ihrsa.org/store). The yearbook features more than 400 biographies from IHRSA club and associate members, a 30-year industry timeline and much more.

Visit www.ihrsa.org/convention for more information and to register for the convention and/or trade show. On-site registration is also available.

TRADE SHOW

See and sample the wares of more than 300 IHRSA associate member companies – 78 of them first-time exhibitors – at the always-bustling trade show.

For a current list of exhibitors by booth number, log on to www.ihrsa.org/trade-show or consult the IHRSA Exhibitor Directory, which will be available on-site at the show.

Trade show-only delegates may attend both days of the event, as well as taking part in exercise classes, early-morning workouts and Ask the Industry Leaders sessions. Trade show-only passes cost US\$50 (£31).

Thursday 17 March

- 6–8am – Exercise classes
- 11am–6pm – Trade show

Friday 18 March

- 6–8.30am – Early morning workouts and exercise classes
- 11am–6pm – Trade show

Promotional Products



Ion sports watches

Innovations 4 Leisure has launched a new ion sports watch. Originally a celebrity craze, the watches are said to have health benefits – stimulating blood circulation and metabolism, as well as being infused with negative ions which are said to help balance, flexibility and strength. The waterproof, shock-proof watch is available in a variety of colours and can be branded with gyms' logos. Prices start at £1.20.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
innovations 4 leisure



D2F's Incentives site can now upsell too

Operators using D2F's online Incentives scheme – which allows them to choose member incentive gifts online – can now also use the site to sell products.

Incentives is used by more than 50 operators in the UK and Europe, and the new Upsell platform allows them to offer merchandise for sale at the same time – with profits going to the gym. DLL and Freedom Leisure have been the first operators to subscribe.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
d2f

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Life Fitness launches e-merchandise store

Life Fitness has launched a new online merchandise store. Products include a clothing range, Hammer Strength merchandise and Life Fitness promotional kit. Built by UK-based Creative Emporium, the site enables Life Fitness to control merchandising requests centrally, from one system, for up to 40 countries.

Creative Emporium has worked with Life Fitness for 12 years on its promotional merchandise. The site can be viewed at www.lifefitness-shop.com



fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
life fitness

New shaker sports bottle by First Editions

Promotional products company First Editions has launched a new sports bottle – called Atomix – that's a drinking bottle and shaker all in one. The 700ml bottle has an internal mesh cup which, when the bottle is shaken, eliminates any lumps from a powder drink or supplement. There's also a fluid level indicator and an integrated spout, and it fits in car drink holders. Logos, brand names and advertising messages can be printed around the product, which is made from high quality polyethylene PE that complies with all FDA regulations regarding food contact, as well as the corresponding EU regulations.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
first editions

research round-up

New research shows that dieters can improve their chances of losing fat by getting a good night's sleep. We find out more

dream diet



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Sleep health is no new phenomenon – a good night of catching the z's has been shown to improve our fitness performance (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 08, p59), help us look more beautiful, and alleviate symptoms associated with lack of sleep such as bad mood and impaired cognitive function. And now a study by the University of Chicago* – published last October in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* – has found that adequate sleep cannot only help those on a diet to increase their fat loss, but can also help to suppress feelings of hunger.

the study

The small study was based on 10 slightly overweight, non-smoking people – three were women, seven were men. Their ages ranged from 35 to 49 and their BMI ranged from 25, which is considered to be just overweight, up to 32, which is considered to be obese.

Each participant was put on a diet, where calories were restricted to 90 per cent of what they each required to maintain their weight without exercise. This daily calorie allowance was maintained throughout the study.

Participants were then observed over two 14-day periods. During these periods, they spent the nights in a laboratory. For the first fortnight, 8.5 hours was allocated to sleep and in the second two weeks

Sleep to lose weight: A poor night's sleep reduced fat loss by 55 per cent

only 5.5 hours was set aside for sleep. During the day they carried on with their typical home/work life routine.

the results

During the first, longer sleep study, participants slept for an average of seven hours and 25 minutes a night. In the short-sleep programme, participants got around five hours 14 minutes' sleep a night – more than two hours fewer than they had in the first phase.

The dieters in the study lost the same amount of weight – 6.6lbs on average – during each two-week session, whether they got a full night's sleep or whether their sleep was limited. So there was no difference in the amount of weight lost.

However, those who got more sleep did lose more fat: they lost 3.1lbs of actual fat and 3.3lbs of fat-free body mass (such as protein). In comparison, those who had less sleep only lost 1.3lbs of fat but 5.3lbs of fat-free body mass.

Those who got less sleep also felt hungrier, it was found. When the

amount of sleep was reduced, the dieters produced more ghrelin – a hormone that stimulates hunger and food intake and that reduces energy expenditure.

Dr Plamen Penev, the study director and assistant professor of medicine at the University of Chicago, says: "If your goal is to lose fat, skipping sleep is like poking a stick in your bicycle wheels. Cutting back on sleep, a behaviour that is ubiquitous in modern society, appears to compromise efforts to lose fat through dieting. In our study, it reduced fat loss by 55 per cent."

He adds: "For the first time, we have evidence that the amount of sleep makes a big difference to the results of dietary interventions. People should not ignore the way they sleep when going on a diet. Obtaining adequate sleep may enhance the beneficial effects of a diet. Not getting enough sleep could defeat the desired effects."

It was acknowledged that the study was limited due to its small sample size.

* Penev, Palmen D et al. Insufficient Sleep Undermines Dietary Efforts to Reduce Adiposity. *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2010)

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The views expressed in print are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the publisher The Leisure Media Company Limited.

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lightweights

IT'S SPARTY TIME IN BUDAPEST

The owners of thermal spas in Budapest, Hungary, have an interesting way of boosting income from winter to spring – they hold pool-based rave parties.

Known as Sparties, the events are held on select Saturdays and are co-ordinated by Cinetrip – a company that specialises in audio-visual parties. The baths are transformed using 3D, 360° projections, laser shows, fire, water and air-based acrobatics and belly dancing performances. There are also live DJs; previous international guests include the Chemical Brothers.

The dress code is swimwear or beach clothes and various rules – such as no alcohol, glass bottles or pool jumping – are in place to ensure the party is safe as well as fun.

Hosts for 2011 include the Széchenyi Spa and Rudas Bath. On the door tickets cost HUF10,000 (£30). Details: www.cinetrip.hu



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FIVE PER CENT OF BOSSES HAVE GYM KIT IN OFFICE

Thirty-one per cent of employees think their boss has an extravagant office, according to a survey by interior design firm Maris Interiors.

Five per cent of those questioned said that their CEO had gym equipment – ranging from free weights to a treadmill – in their office. One head honcho at a design company even had an ensuite sauna, the survey found, while a bank chief was said to have a rooftop garden complete with a hot tub.

The most common excess at the office, mentioned by 17 per cent of employees, was artwork, including Picasso and Andy Warhol originals.



PUPPY POSES FOR 2011 YOGA CALENDAR

A calendar by photographer Dan Borris has shown that even our four-legged friends are fans of yoga poses: especially the downward facing dog!

Borris, who's from Texas, encouraged the dogs into position with help from his yoga-teaching wife Alejandra. He then used computer magic – of course – to perfect the pin-ups. He told the *Daily Mail*: "We just play with them. Then, with the help and the magic of Photoshop, they end up doing yoga."

He came across his first yoga dog Otis – a two-year-old English bull terrier – five years ago and this year has produced four calendars: Yoga Dogs, Yoga Cats, Yoga Kittens and Yoga Puppies (our office favourite). The dogs are from rescue homes and a proportion of proceeds go to various animal foundations. Details: www.yogadogz.com




chocolate that fights wrinkles

Good news for chocolate lovers everywhere – Acticoa, a cocoa-based drink, has been found to have anti-ageing properties, including boosting the overall appearance and health of the skin and maintaining its moisturisation.

Acticoa is made by Barry Callebaut, the world's largest chocolate manufacturer, which conducted a double-blind study on 30 adults with an average age of 50. Fifteen adults drank

200ml of Acticoa a day, while 15 others had a placebo. After six weeks, those in the Acticoa group were said to display considerably improved skin hydration – on average 21 per cent better. There was no significant change in the other group.

Hans Vriens, chief innovation officer at Barry Callebaut, says: "This study is part of the mounting evidence in support of the beneficial effects of cocoa flavanols on human health."



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