



# health club management

FEBRUARY 2010

INTERVIEW

## DAVID BRAME

The MD of Bladerunner  
on tailor-made solutions  
and delivering on promises



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special report

## children's fitness

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## the joy of dance

Going to the gym to get fit just to look good in a T-shirt has never been as compelling or enjoyable a reason as going to get fit to do something you're truly passionate about.

Smart operators have been working on this assumption for decades, offering great classes, sports-specific workouts and personal trainers who help members to achieve their goals, whether it's playing hockey, going skiing or climbing Kilimanjaro.

Harnessing the latest activity trends and ensuring they're represented in clubs is vital if we're to be in tune with members and to motivate them. It seems that dance will be the next one to embrace.

Interest in dance comes in cycles with every decade – remember the Pineapple Dance Studio, which launched in 1979, started a trend and is now a world class facility in London? Then the dance craze which followed the first *Fame* movie? Each wave of interest in dance brings a slightly different style – the latest started with *Strictly Come Dancing* – not everyone's cup of tea by any means – but the first TV dance programme to hit the mainstream. Now it's being followed by Sky TV's *Got To*

*Dance* and the BBC's *So You Think You Can Dance*, which have both brought a wide range of dance styles to the attention of the public and shown how dynamic, exciting, life enhancing and motivating dance can be for people of all ages and backgrounds.

One outstanding trend has been the emergence of street dance, which brings together groups of kids who choreograph complex displays that are gymnastic, dynamic, entertaining and in many cases performed to the highest standards.

Picking up on this trend, the government has added a dance element to its

There are many great synergies between health clubs and dance and the relationships could be developed to the point where dance becomes an element of the health club offering

Change4Life programme – called Let's dance with Change4Life – with free dance classes happening nationwide starting from 1 February. A special Change4Life dance, choreographed by Britain's Got Talent winners, street dance group Diversity, is also being promoted on the Change4Life website.

As well as being great for cardiovascular fitness, strength and flexibility, dance has a social element, allowing like-minded people to enjoy dance forms they feel comfortable with. It's fun, full of joy and gives the chance for self expression – something often missing in the standard health club offering. Dance is also cheap to organise, because it requires little specialist equipment and can use existing studio facilities. When it comes to sourcing instructors, the majority of dance disciplines are well established and there should be no shortage of qualified dance teachers and leaders for clubs to work with.

If you're thinking of offering opportunities to dance within health clubs, there are many options available – why not do a poll of members and find out just which style of dance appeals to your clients, or offer taster classes to establish the most popular disciplines? You can then set up classes and also devise workouts which help members to reach a higher standard in the dancing they do.

There are many great synergies between health clubs and dance. The relationships could be developed to the point where dance schools and groups take up memberships and use the facilities, with dance becoming another element of the health club offering to the benefit of everyone involved.

Liz Terry, editor

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## buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to **p79**





# 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](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)

## we need to think differently if we're to be taken seriously

As I write this letter, I'm in the middle of the ISPAL conference at Ponds Forge, where much of what we're discussing concerns how we as an industry can work together to get people more physically active.

Yesterday I asked at the front desk if I could access the gym while staying over in Sheffield for a couple of nights to attend the conference. Having checked the website prior to my visit, I was anticipating the response I received: no, I could not, as I had to undertake a full induction (costing £15) and there were no slots available anyway. In other words, go away!

However, I wasn't willing to let this one go and managed to persuade the sales manager to ask his general

manager. The GM relented on the condition that I, and others, completed a PAR-Q. As a result, the 200 or so delegates could now access the excellent facilities and keep their fitness regime ticking over if they so wished – excellent! And of course Ponds Forge also made some additional, unexpected revenue. Well done to the team for reacting positively.

However, the irony of this situation is clear and illustrates why we need to 'think differently' if we're really going to be taken seriously on our quest to get the nation moving.

**andy king**  
community development director,  
serco leisure



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**Measurement of retention initiatives will be a key differentiator in 2010**

**retention is key, but doesn't need to be complicated**

Well done to Melvyn Hillsdon and Health Club Management for the recent three-part retention series (HCM July, Sept and Nov 09). It should really have helped demystify some of the calculations around member retention and help clubs with their measurements.

According to our research at GG Fit, not all clubs are doing so well in the credit crunch; budget gyms and specialist clubs are gaining and retaining, while some of the chains are losing members. Systems are currently being put in place at one major chain to manage member contact and improve retention, and we look forward to more of the same in 2010.

For smaller clubs, it's important to remember that a system does not have to be hi-tech or expensive. A few reports or spreadsheets will measure one or all of the retention metrics, either against industry standards or against your previous performance. Then a well-written retention policy will help to improve retention.

A key differentiator for clubs in 2010 will be measurement of retention, and how clubs adapt customer service and communications to constantly improve.

**guy griffiths**  
director, gg fit

Do you exercise?	YES	NO
Do you have high blood pressure?	YES	NO
Do you have low blood pressure?	YES	NO
Do you have any other metabolic disorder?	YES	NO
Do you have raised cholesterol (serum level above 6.2mmol/L)?	YES	NO
Do you have a heart condition?	YES	NO
Do you take any medication?	YES	NO

Delegates were allowed to use the gym provided they completed a PAR-Q

## the letter of the law

**Taking early legal advice can often prevent a problem becoming a dispute. The team at Croner Consulting answers readers' questions**

**Q** I have read in the national press that I should avoid clearing snow from the street outside our business premises as I may be liable if I fail to do it properly and someone is injured as a result. Is this right?

**A** If the land is your own, you have a general duty to keep it safe for visitors, staff etc, and therefore you should clear snow and ice and lay grit if you can. As for land you don't own, the press reports are a bit misleading. By clearing snow and ice on, for example, the pavement in front of your premises, you are not assuming responsibility for the pavement. The only liability that could really follow would be if you were negligent in some way, thereby making things much worse than they were before.

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Leisure Complex.

## in brief...

**northolt leisure centre opens**

Ealing Council opened the new multi-million pound leisure complex in Northolt, London – created to replace the former Swimarama facility – on 30 January.

Construction work on the new 5,500sq m (59,202 sq ft) Northolt Leisure Centre, designed by S&P Architects, started in October 2008, a year after the closure of the Swimarama. Facilities include a 600sq m (6,458sq ft) fitness suite containing 125 stations of Pulse Fitness equipment and a free weights area, as well as an eight-lane, 25m swimming pool and learner pool, and a dance studio.

**stevenage leisure secures management deals**

Management company Stevenage Leisure (SLL) has secured a deal with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) to operate the Hitchin Swimming Centre and the Royston Leisure Centre in Hertfordshire.

SLL is set to take over the management of the two leisure centres in April 2010.

The company already works in partnership with NHDC: it has managed the North Herts Leisure Centre, Letchworth Outdoor Pool and Fearnhill Sports Centre, all owned by the council, since 2005.

**leeds met refits gyms**

Leeds Metropolitan University has completed a refurbishment of its two fitness suites.

Both the university's Headingley site and Civic Quarter campus have seen their gyms remodelled for the first time in 10 years. The work was carried out over the Christmas period and involved re-laying floors and knocking down walls, as well as replacing all the equipment with £400,000-worth of Precor kit.

The university's Headingley campus gym now offers a 52-station fitness suite, while the Civic Quarter campus facility in the city centre has a 60-station gym.



The centre has a 68-station gym

**work starts on abbey revamp**

Selby District Council (SDC) has announced that redevelopment work has started on a £1.1m renovation of the North Yorkshire town's Abbey Leisure Centre, which is set to take up to six months to complete.

Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust (WLCT), which was appointed to operate the facility in September 2009, will oversee the scheme on behalf of the council – including the construction of a new aerobics suite and a health suite featuring a sauna and steamroom.

Abbey Leisure Centre's fitness suite is set to be expanded to 180sq m (1,938sq ft) as part of the work, which will incorporate a 70sq m (753sq ft) dance studio and a 50sq m (538sq ft) group cycling studio. The gym will house 68 pieces of Technogym equipment.

The project also includes the creation of a new multi-purpose room, which will be used for functions, meetings and crèche activities, as well as a café.

**revamp for blackpool gym**

Blackpool Council has invested £200,000 in the refurbishment of the health and fitness facilities at the Blackpool Sports Centre.

The eight-month revamp has more than doubled the size of the health club area – from 136sq m (1,500sq ft) to 300sq m (3,200sq ft) – and included an upgrade of the gym equipment.

Supplier Life Fitness was appointed to refit the gym, and the company created zones catering for rehabilitation groups such as respiratory, cardiac, children and people with limited mobility.

According to a spokesperson, in the last three months, 22 per cent of memberships have come from GP referrals. Since the refurbishment membership sales are also up 149 per cent (compared to October 2008).

The club now offers more than 60 CV and resistance stations and an exercise studio for group exercise. Other facilities at the centre include an outdoor sports arena with a 400m running track.



The gym caters for GP referrals

**contractor named for life centre**

Plymouth City Council has approved international construction firm Balfour Beatty as the main contractor for the city's £46.5m Life Centre project.

The green light was awarded following a detailed evaluation of five bids.

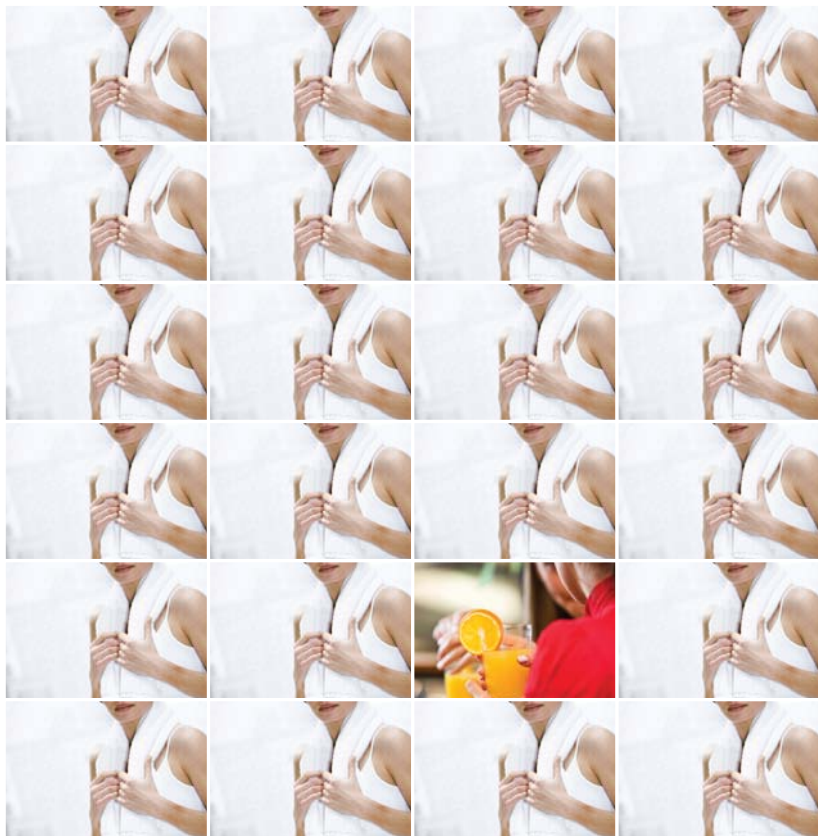
Council leader Vivien Pengelly says: "Awarding this contract marks the last crucial milestone in laying the groundwork for the Life Centre, and we are really excited to be at this stage in the project."

"Plymouth has waited a long time for a top-class facility and, with the start of work just around the corner, that dream is finally starting to become a reality."

As previously reported in Leisure Opportunities, facilities at the new leisure complex will include a family leisure pool with flumes, beach entry and a bubble pool, a climbing zone with a 15m (49.2ft) wall and aerial assault course, an eight-lane bowls centre and a 12-court multi-use sports hall.

Also included in the plans are a 150-station fitness suite, a 10-lane, 50m swimming pool with moveable floors and submersible boom, a diving pool, a dryside training facility for elite divers, multi-purpose areas for dance and martial arts, a youth gym, sauna/steamroom and changing facilities.





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## in brief...

**fitness sector still resilient**

While the property values of hotels, restaurants and pubs all suffered heavy falls during 2009, the emergence of new budget health club chains has given the fitness industry a much-needed lift.

According to the *Business Outlook* report, published by leisure property specialist Christie + Co, the value of property in the sector has been propped by the development of a number of budget concepts, providing dry health clubs with a 24-hour trading profile.

John Patrick, head of leisure at Christie + CO, says: "Compared to some leisure sectors, personal health and wellness is seen as an enduring value, particularly during an economic downturn. It will be interesting to see whether the market continues to polarise, as club users seek both value and high standards of facility, equipment and service in the future."

**savings drive to close pools**

Swimming pools at Shelton and Tunstall in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, are facing closure as the local authority looks to reduce costs over the next three years. Stoke-on-Trent City Council is also proposing that classes currently run at the city's Gymnastic Centre are moved to Dimensions Leisure Centre in a bid to concentrate on "quality rather than quantity".

**birmingham hotel adds health club**

Hyatt Regency Birmingham has invested £60,000 in the redevelopment of its fitness provision. Part of the Amala Spa and Club, the fitness suite has undergone complete internal redecoration and now houses a range of CV and exercise stations supplied by Matrix Fitness. Matrix installed four treadmills, a recumbent bike, two elliptical trainers, a stepper, three upright cycles and a Functional Trainer which uses a pulley system to create 200 different workouts.

## reps looks to clarify role

The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) is looking to restructure as part of efforts to make its operations "more realistic" and "easier to understand".

According to registrar Jean-Ann Marnoch, the organisation's framework is in need of updating to make it more understandable to people working within the fitness industry.

"The previous framework was a good starting point for both REPs and SkillsActive, but desperately needs updating to reflect current working practices, as well as offering much-needed simplicity to those both within and outside the industry," she says.

"We hope the new structure will be much more realistic, as well as being much easier to understand."

According to a statement, the new structure is a revised set of National Occupational Standards developed by industry experts to reflect the needs of the health and fitness sector.

The awarding bodies are currently writing qualifications to meet these new standards, and the training providers will then write the courses to meet the qualifications. "All of this means new courses reflecting the new structure will not be available until after April 2010," the statement adds.

The current 44 categories of accreditations will be cut to 24. Changes

include an additional category at Level 2 – Physical Activity for Children – while the Level 3 advanced fitness instructor has been dropped.

According to REPs, the new categories are "entirely based on consultation, industry research and job roles in the industry" and linked to the Government's new Qualifications and Credit Framework level descriptors.

Set up in 2002, REPs is owned by SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing.



**Marnoch is hoping to make REPs "easier to understand"**

## fitness4less to expand



**All smiles: Fees start at £14.99/month**

Budget health club operator Fitness4Less has appointed leisure property specialists Christie + Co to oversee a major acquisition and development programme across the UK.

Bristol-based Fitness4Less launched its first site in September 2007 and is currently preparing to open two more sites. A Fitness4Less club will open in Birmingham on 18 January and another in Cambridge Heath, London, is set to launch by the end of March 2010.

Fitness4Less has tasked Christie + Co to find suitable locations on medium-term leases to meet its growth targets.

According to a spokesperson, the company is hoping to open clubs in major cities across the UK, including Birmingham, Brighton and Cardiff.

Fitness4Less offers monthly memberships from £14.99.



New club has been kitted out with CV and strength equipment from Precor

## gym for former mcdonald's site

An énergie Fitness-branded health club has opened in a property that formerly housed a McDonald's fast food restaurant.

The club in Forest Hill, south London, is owned and operated on a franchise basis by David Waugh and Andrew Gossett. The pair have invested £260,000 in the venture. The transformation of the site was handled by the Leisure Development Partnership – a joint initiative between Precor and fitness supplier Inspirit.

Facilities at the club include a range of CV stations and 11 pieces of resistance kit supplied by Precor, as well as a large free weights area, therapy rooms and a group exercise studio.

Gossett says: "The fact the building used to be a McDonald's has been something of a talking point.

"Even though the golden arches have been drilled out of the floor and all other traces of its previous incarnation have been removed, we're not allowed to sell any ground beef or chicken on the premises as part of our lease agreement – so in its own way the spirit of McDonald's is still with us!"

Privately owned énergie Group currently has close to 100 operational franchises in the UK, Latvia and Qatar, encompassing both full service and, more recently, budget clubs.

## council backs £12m wellbeing centre designs

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (NLBC) has approved William Saunders Partnership's designs for a new £12m health and wellbeing centre on a site next to the town's existing Jubilee Pool.

The Newark-based architects were appointed by the council to draw up plans for the new facility, which will include a 25m, eight-lane swimming pool, a learner pool, an 80-station fitness suite and a health suite. Dance studios, a climbing wall, wet and dry

changing facilities and multi-purpose areas also form part of the proposed centre, which is supported by NHS North Staffordshire and Sport England and scheduled to open in 2011.

NLBC cabinet member for culture and active communities, Mary Maxfield, says: "Our design team has tried to make sure that the building's appearance reflects the modern nature of its interior while also fitting in as sympathetically as possible with the edge of town character."

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## in brief...

**revamped gym opens at bolton facility**

An extended fitness suite has opened to the public at Horwich Leisure Centre in Bolton, Lancashire, following the completion of a £250,000 refurbishment.

Renovation work was undertaken by the Bolton Community Leisure Trust and Life Fitness, which has led to the creation of a 456sq m (5,005sq ft) gym offering three different spaces and 80 stations.

A new entry-level gym space has been created in the centre's former crèche, which has been designed to cater for disability groups, schools, junior clubs and elderly people, as well as offering cardiac rehabilitation.

**childhood obesity levels still 'too high'**

New research published as part of the government's National Child Measurement Programme has revealed that more than one in five children in the UK are starting school overweight or obese.

The Department of Health (DH) says the NHS Information Centre's study shows that the rapid increase in childhood obesity levels has started to level off, but accepted that the figures among young people were still "too high".

According to the report, 24 per cent of boys and 21.5 per cent of girls in reception class were deemed to be either overweight or obese during 2008-09, while nearly a third of Year 6 pupils - 32.6 per cent - are above their recommended weight.



**Alesha Dixon will be actively involved in the new dancing classes**

## la fitness recruits dixon

Health club operator LA Fitness has teamed up with Alesha Dixon, a former winner and one of the judges on the BBC's popular *Strictly Come Dancing* show. Dixon has been brought in to devise new dance and exercise courses for the chain.

The four-year deal will see Dixon hold a strategic role in which she will receive a share of the revenues generated through the new classes she will consult on. The appointment comes as part of LA Fitness' repositioning strategy, which includes the refurbishment of all of its 83 clubs and the launch of the new LA Fitness experience.

LA Fitness is the latest operator hoping to cash in on the increasing popularity of dancing and interest in the government's Dance4Life campaign: in December 2009, Fitness First announced that it had struck a deal with BBC Worldwide to offer new group exercise classes based on the *Strictly Come Dancing* show.

## nuyuu acquires two new gyms

nuyuu fitness, the gym chain launched in October by Ben Silcox and *Dragons' Den* entrepreneur James Caan, has expanded its portfolio to five sites after acquiring two new properties.

The £2m venture, which is backed by Caan's private equity firm Hamilton Bradshaw, has added LA Fitness outlets in Newbury (Berkshire) and Stevenage (Hertfordshire) to its existing sites in Slough (Berkshire), East Grinstead (East Sussex) and Livingston (Scotland).

Both the Newbury and Stevenage gyms will be redecorated and rebranded as part of the first phase of a three-stage development programme. Phase two will see the installation of Precor and VibroGym equipment, while phase three - scheduled for March 2010 - will involve member feedback in addition to more extensive site works.

Silcox, nuyuu managing director, says: "Newbury and Stevenage fit our model entirely in terms of population density and refurbishment potential."



**The company was launched by Silcox and Caan in September 2009**

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The Saheli Women's Group trust also organises out-of-club activities

## women-only club adds analyser

The Saheli Adventure Hub in Birmingham has installed an InBody composition analyser.

The women-only health club, owned by the Saheli Women's Group trust, will use the equipment to help staff monitor the health of its patients as part of the Saheli Exercise and Wellness GP referral programme.

According to club manager Shebina Gill, the GP referral programme and the body composition analyser are part of the group's strategy to provide members with a complete health service.

"Our goal is to address the deadly lifestyle trio of smoking, poor diet

and little to no exercise, by offering a programme which focuses on fitness and exercise training," she says.

The hub is designed to empower local women from ethnic minorities to change their lifestyle and reduce the incidence of illnesses.

The trust also organises a range of activities outside the centre – such as climbing, skiing, canoeing, horse riding and quad biking – to develop confidence in younger, demotivated women.

The Saheli Women's Group is currently planning to open a second Saheli Adventure Hub in Birmingham in the next 12 months.

## peak fitness upgrades gym

Peak Fitness Health Club in Tonbridge, Kent, has invested £70,000 on an upgrade of its fitness suite.

The 1,020sq m (11,000 sq ft) facility, which was established in 1995, has been refitted by Star Trac, with equipment including a range of CV stations, resistance machines and free weights.

Facilities at the club include an aerobics studio, group cycling studio, two free weight areas, a social and relaxation area, sauna, steamroom, sunbeds and treatment rooms.

## golf club opens new gym

Greetham Valley Hotel, Golf and Conference Centre near Oakham, in Leicestershire, has opened a new health club.

Supplied by Cybex, the 180sq m (1,940sq ft) club has been created in a space previously occupied by part of the hotel's golf shop.

The club has invested more than £40,000 in the creation of the gym, which offers 15 stations of Cybex CV and resistance equipment.



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## training &amp; supplier news

## news

## fitness first to train up staff

Health club operator Fitness First has appointed Premier Training to improve the standard of its UK workforce.

The health club giant is training up 500 members of staff and hoping to provide all of its fitness staff with a qualification at Level 3 NVQ, as well as making sure that its non-fitness qualified staff are trained to Level 2 NVQ.

Premier Training will deliver the NVQ Level 2 Certificate in Instructing Exercise and Fitness and the NVQ Level 3 in Instructing Physical Activity and Exercise. The modules leading to these qualifications will be the NASM Introduction to Personal Fitness Training and NASM Certified Personal Trainer respectively.

As part of its strategy to improve services for members, the group is also launching a drive to recruit 100 apprentices. These will be trained by Premier Training with funding provided, in part, by the government's apprenticeship scheme aimed at nurturing young talent and winning places in employment.



**The group aims to 'upskill' the majority of its fitness staff**

Keith Selwood, spokesperson for Fitness First, says: "We're embarking on this project in order to upskill our current workforce."

## training scheme for dc leisure

DC Leisure has rolled out a new training element designed to improve customer service levels among its fitness staff.

Working in partnership with training provider Lifetime, all members of staff completing the NVQ Level 2 in Fitness now undertake a NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service before progressing to the Fitness NVQ Level 3.

DC Leisure's group fitness manager, Sarah Leonie, says: "We feel that it's important for those finishing the Fitness Level 2 qualification to have the opportunity to consolidate their learning, put their new knowledge into practice and gain some experience before moving on to the next stage."

"The new element allows participants to continue learning during this time, as well as helping to deliver skills."

DC Leisure is currently working to identify new candidates via the Centre of Excellence for Fitness (CEFF).

## cybex fits out corporate gym



**The £80,000 installation included a new 13-station fitness suite**

Cybex has equipped a new £80,000 fitness club at the UK head office of Shire Pharmaceuticals in Basingstoke.

Called Shire Fitness Centre, the facility is housed in the company's new £15m, 5,575sq m (60,000sq ft) building, which is one of four buildings the company occupies in Basingstoke.

The 152sq m (1,636sq ft), 13-station club includes CV and resistance equipment, as well as a group exercise studio, therapy room, changing rooms and reception area. Currently around 265 members of staff use the gym.

## matrix targets the forces

Fitness equipment supplier Matrix Fitness Systems has tasked David Cox to lead efforts to increase sales to the uniformed services sector.

Cox will focus solely on managing the sales of fitness equipment to the military, police and fire services.

Cox says: "I relish the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Defence to provide fitness kit to the military."

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To find out more on how music can work for you visit **musicworksforyou.com**.



\* MusicWorks survey of 2000 people, conducted March 2009

<sup>†</sup> If you play recorded music in public it is a legal requirement to obtain the correct PPL licence, failure to do so may result in legal action. PPL is different from PRS for Music. PPL collects and distributes money on behalf of record companies and performs whilst PRS for Music collects and distributes money on behalf of songwriters, composers and publishers. Both licenses must be obtained to ensure all copyright holders are fairly paid.



**ppluk.com**

## in brief...

**maple leaf transformation**

A CA\$60m (US\$57m, £34.7m) sports complex is to be built at the historic Maple Leaf Gardens ice hockey arena in Toronto, Canada.

The Ryerson University Sports and Recreation Centre will be a mixed-use athletic and retail facility, with funding coming from Ottawa's economic stimulus plan (CA\$20m) and a fundraising campaign by the university and the Gardens' owner Loblaw (CA\$20m), as well as an auction of Maple Leafs memorabilia.

The complex, which is due to reopen in 2011, will offer an ice hockey rink; a four-lane, 200m running track; basketball and volleyball courts; a fitness centre and a gym.

Maple Leaf Gardens opened in 1931 as the home of the Toronto Maple Leafs, who played there until 1999. It has also served as a concert venue, hosting acts such as Elvis Presley, The Beatles, Frank Sinatra and Bob Dylan. It was acquired by Loblaw, the Canadian food retailer, in 2004.

**klinger leaves anytime**

Anytime Fitness CEO and co-founder Jeff Klinger has sold his interests in Anytime Fitness and its affiliates and has left the company. President Chuck Runyon assumes CEO duties.

"The growth of Anytime Fitness has been exciting and gratifying," Klinger said in a statement released by Anytime Fitness. "But I'm an entrepreneur at heart. I love to take a new idea and get it started. [Co-founders] Dave Mortensen, Chuck Runyon and I have been working alongside each other since 1989 and it's been a tremendous pleasure for me to work with these guys – they are like family – but I felt the time was right for me to move on."

**canadian merger**

Fitness World and Steve Nash Sports Club have merged to create the largest fitness brand in British Columbia, Canada: the combined chain offers 15 fitness destinations with plans for immediate expansion. The Fitness World clubs will now be known as Steve Nash Fitness World.

## ellipse opens in luxembourg

Ellipse Fitness & Wellness, a new premium facility in Luxembourg's Kirschberg business quarter, opened in October.

The club – the latest offering from proprietor Michael Tasca, who also runs five discount sites in Luxembourg – is named after the ellipsoid shape of the

building in which it's located. A €5m project, the club aims to offer a new model of fitness – what Tasca describes as "fitness with style" – and will cater for up to 3,000 members paying around €120 a month.

Facilities include cardio and strength areas, group cycling, personal training space, sauna/steam and a café/lounge. Woodway and Panatta are the main suppliers, with changing areas kitted out by Craftsman Quality Lockers.

Windows run from floor to ceiling, so natural light features strongly, as does Tasca's devotion to creating an organic feel inside the club: "Mother nature is not very square, so we've introduced organic shapes: the walls are curved, the interior almost heart-shaped," he explains. He now plans to open more premium sites.



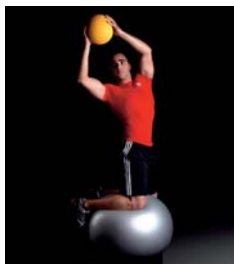
**Ellipse: Bright colours and organic shapes for a warm, welcoming feel**

## holmes place functional approach

Holmes Place Iberia launched functional training in its 28 clubs last month, training more than 80 PTs and kitting the clubs out with medicine balls, kettlebells and suspension training systems.

Nacho Negredo, academy manager for Holmes Place Spain, says: "In the past, training in the gym was limited to toning, strengthening or building muscles, without taking into account the role they actually play in the body. Nowadays, with the evolution towards functional training, the focus is on better preparing the body for the way we use it in everyday life."

"We want to help members improve their quality of life via exercise; functional training very much fits in with this."



**Training the body for everyday use**

## niche studio openings in canada

Toronto's first indoor cycling studio to make exclusive use of RealRyder stationary bikes opens this month.

CYKL (pronounced 'cycle') – a 167sq m club in the downtown area of the city – offers 31 RealRyder bikes and targets fashion-conscious urban professionals. Everyone's first workout is free; sessions thereafter cost C\$22 (£13) a time, with most lasting 45 minutes.

CYKL's partners are the locally well-known cyclist and indoor cycling instructor Kim Donnelly, Canadian

photographer Michael Williams, and Australian Geordie Anderson.

Also in Canada, RealRyder recently equipped Core Essentials in Nova Scotia, an independent studio that opened in November. Offering personal training, holistic nutrition, core training and group fitness, other suppliers to the 280sq m club include WaterRower, TRX, Extreme Kettlebell, Fitworks, Spartan Fitness, D-ball and Lebert Equalizer. There's no monthly membership – fees are based on workshops and cycling packages.



Life Fitness has equipped the crew and passenger fitness facilities onboard

## oasis of the seas sets sail

Royal Caribbean International has introduced the Oasis of the Seas, the largest cruise ship ever to set sail, complete with onboard fitness facilities equipped by Life Fitness.

Launched in December and with a maximum capacity of 5,400 passengers and 2,100 crew members, the ship offers two fitness centres: a 1,060sq m facility for guests, and a separate 240sq m gym for use by the crew.

"Fitness is becoming an integral part of the cruise experience, so we needed to build a facility that would impress our guests," says Joe Schlipman, director of onboard revenue for Royal Caribbean International. "Life Fitness offered

products that were durable, fit for heavy usage and innovative."

Royal Caribbean installed 30 Elevation Series treadmills, 18 elliptical cross-trainers and 11 exercise bikes in the Oasis of the Seas' passenger fitness centre, along with a full line of strength equipment and LeMond group cycling bikes. Group exercise classes are also available.

Other passenger attractions onboard include an ice rink, 21 swimming pools and whirlpools, an open-air Central Park, the Rising Tide Bar – a bar that rises between decks (the ship has 16 passenger decks) – a water theme park, a full-size carousel and the Royal Promenade with its bars, restaurants and cafés.

## first italian site for aspria

The Aspria Group has acquired its first club in Italy: the Harbour Club Milano.

Acquired in December, the club will continue to operate under the Harbour Club name. Spread over 16 acres, it offers a full range of indoor and outdoor sports and spa facilities, including an Olympic-sized outdoor pool within landscaped gardens, sunbathing and relaxation terraces, a 25m indoor pool, 16 indoor and outdoor tennis courts, state-of-the-art fitness facilities and mind-body studios. There's also a children's club, golf driving range

and practice area, conference rooms, members' lounge and restaurant.

A new spa, recently developed at a cost of €5m, offers a hydrotherapy pool alongside heat, ice and water experiences, relaxation and therapy suites.

Brian Morris, Aspria CEO, oversaw the original development of the site in the early 1990s, as MD of then owner London and Edinburgh Trust (LET).

The deal takes the Aspria portfolio to seven sites in Germany, Belgium and Italy, serving more than 30,000 members and day/overnight guests.

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And outside of the group situation, because Wattbike doesn't have a fixed crank it's perfect for individual training as well.

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## from the board



## adding value

dave wright • ceo •  
creative fitness marketing

No matter what the industry, existing and potential member companies always ask the inevitable question: what's the value of joining the professional trade body?

In the fitness sector, that question is particularly critical for independent operators – and until recently, the answer has not been very positive. But I can honestly say that the FIA is a very different animal today.

For example, a new independent operator membership package, developed in conjunction with IOU (Independent Operators Unite), includes pledges from more than 60 suppliers to offer brand new discounted services – almost £60,000 of savings across a dozen different categories from insurance to equipment purchase and servicing.

FIA/IOU membership also includes access to the new HCS pre-activity questionnaire and to high-profile, membership-boosting government-sponsored campaigns... the list goes on. Finally, and most importantly, I believe the FIA is determined to meet the needs of all corners of the industry, with a real commitment to get 100 per cent representation. I'm extremely excited about this. One industry and one voice to take us into 2010 and beyond.

Now, when the question is asked: 'Is there value in FIA membership?' There can only be one answer... yes. (For more details, turn to page 46–47)

## let's dance!

Hot on the heels of the FIA's MoreActive4Life campaign comes the next high-profile Department of Health (DH)-funded exercise initiative, Let's Dance with Change4Life.

The programme – aimed primarily at 7.5 million 'at risk' mothers and families who cannot find the time or who do not have the inclination to exercise – is underpinned by a £750,000 marketing campaign. National ads, magazine promotions and online marketing are all part of the potent mix that will promote this new Change4Life/FIA initiative.

Perhaps most exciting of all, participants can video their routines, post them on a dedicated YouTube 'Let's Dance with Change4Life' page and, if they've voted the best act, win the chance to dance one of Britain's top dance acts.

If you want to help your local community tap, jive, street-jazz, salsa and rumba their way to good health, contact us about the Let's Dance with Change4Life open weekend (6–7 March 2010). Call Karen Prothero on +44 (0)20 7420 8565 or email [letsdance@fia.org.uk](mailto:letsdance@fia.org.uk)



**Let's Dance with Change4Life: Open weekend takes place on 6–7 March**

"Any new healthy lifestyle initiative must be creative, fun, and most importantly sustainable – and dancing ticks all those boxes. What a great way of tapping into the current craze and getting more people, more active, more often," says the FIA's executive director David Stalker.

"We're delighted to be working with the Change4Life team once again, helping tackle the rising tide of obesity and associated illnesses. The government has been very vocal about our ability to help them deliver healthy lifestyle initiatives, and this latest programme reaffirms our position as an industry capable of making a huge contribution to improving the health of the nation."

## new additions to the vanguard group

The Vanguard Group, established in 2001 to accelerate the industry's representation in Westminster and Whitehall, has been strengthened by the addition of a further six industry-leading members.

The group of almost 30 members represents every corner of our industry, from operators to suppliers, training providers to media professionals. The Vanguard Group now stands as a powerful collective of companies which share the FIA's vision of a Healthy Britain and a Healthy Industry.

The latest companies to join the group are Feelfit TV, SLM, Mazars, Curves, Serco and Premier Global.

Vanguard members benefit from the FIA's insight into the development

of local, national and European health and business policy, the workings of key partners and the development of new campaigns and programmes for the industry. The FIA also raises the concerns of the Vanguard Group within Parliament.

Commenting on the growth, David Stalker, executive director, says: "It's encouraging that more and more organisations are recognising the need for serious advice and counsel from experts who understand the issues and know the people behind them."

"We look forward to working with each of our new Vanguard members to help them realise their own corporate and public affairs objectives."



## market intelligence



Media reviews are emailed out on a daily basis to keep members up-to-date

Following an audit of the market intelligence reports developed for members, the FIA has introduced some changes – encompassing content, look and delivery – to the media and issues monitoring tool, The Media Review.

News never sleeps, but people do, so the FIA team monitors the media on behalf of members and produces a manageable review of what's important to the health and fitness sector. The review also offers readers the chance to take full advantage of what the FIA has to offer by entering FLAME, booking a place on a seminar or signing up for LIW.

In turn, the FIA team relies on readers to answer questionnaires which help inform the reports.

The new Media Review, now sponsored by Power Plate, is distributed to FIA members and stakeholders every morning and features a brief but

comprehensive summary of 'what's in the news and who's making the news'.

"The news review highlights articles, features and trends that are driving the health, wellbeing and fitness agenda – things we believe every fitness professional would or, dare I say, should know about. It also updates readers on major upcoming FIA events such as FLAME, LIW and FIA-led seminars," says David Stalker, FIA executive director.

"Our intelligence-gathering unit acts as the industry's eyes and ears, but as any successful leader will tell you, no matter how good your intelligence is, it's worthless if those it's designed for do not read it. So I urge you, if you do not already, please do take a few minutes to read one or both of the intelligence reports we produce for you. And, if you're a regular consumer of them, please let us know what you think."

## diary dates

### THE FIA & LIW IHRSA TRIP 2010

The FIA/LIW will facilitate networking events for UK delegates attending the IHRSA Convention on 10–13 March. We will bring people together to do business, have fun and experience all that San Diego has to offer.

### THE FIA & LIW FIBO TRIP 2010

Facilitating networking events for all UK

delegates visiting the FIBO exhibition on 22–25 April in Essen, Germany.

### FIA GOLF DAY 13 JULY 2010

This will take place in Cheltenham.

### FIA FLAME CONFERENCE 2010

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# change4life grows up

Steven Ward,  
the FIA's director  
of public affairs  
and policy, reports  
on plans to roll  
out Change4Life  
in 2010



**C**hange4Life is now one year old. The campaign celebrated its birthday by re-evaluating its position, measuring its progress and making plans for the future amid the uncertain climate that we all face given the forthcoming General Election and the state of public finances.

## review of progress

The campaign team collects information on the public perception of Change4Life, specifically within key target audiences such as mothers. The data for November 2009 is encouraging: 91 per cent recognition of the logo (compared to 9 per cent pre-campaign), with 84 per cent saying the campaign had made them think about their children's long-term health and 80 per cent saying it had made them think about their children's physical activity levels.

This becomes even more impressive when put in the context of other government campaigns. With an 86 per cent general public recognition rate, Change4Life has been officially classified as the campaign that's most effectively captured public attention. The 'Think!' driving awareness initiative comes second with 81 per cent recognition, while a 48 per cent awareness of the 'Act on CO<sub>2</sub>' campaign puts this in third place.

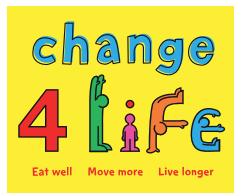
The impact that the campaign is having locally is also heartening – after all, the ambition of creating a true public health movement can only be achieved by mobilising people on the ground. There are 25,000 registered Change4Life local supporters, 51 per cent of whom are local authority personnel, and 18,000 packs have been distributed to schools to

promote the campaign. Meanwhile 14,000 healthcare professionals registered for materials and a further 17,590 orders have been placed by healthcare professionals on behalf of other people. In total, more than 5.5 million pieces of support material have been supplied, and an audit is underway to find out "how much yellow is out there".

But the big question is: how many people have changed their behaviour as a result? Ultimately, that's the challenge presented at our door and is, I'm told, the key focus for the campaign in 2010.

## looking forward

The campaign strategy has built steadily towards this moment: first to reach the 'at risk families', help them understand the health consequences, convince the parents that their children are at risk, teach them behaviours to reduce the risk, inspire them to believe they can do it, create the desire to change... and then give the FIA a call to provide a means to trigger action!



That's the story behind the genesis of Let's Dance with Change4Life. The success of MoreActive4Life led to a recognition that the FIA and its members provide an unrivalled pipeline of delivery: with more than 3,000 members across the public, private and third sectors, the FIA is seen as unique in its ability to galvanise its forces behind the common goal of more people, more active, more often. It's a perception that the FIA can only maintain as long as its members continue to deliver so spectacularly when called upon, but it does bode well for the year ahead.

This is more pertinent given the evolving focus of the campaign, which in 2010 turns its attention to the adult population. In reviewing levels of obesity across the adult population, it has been identified that obesity is most prevalent between the ages of 45–54 and 55–64. These age ranges account for 25 per cent of the population, or 15 million adults – and 63 per cent of them are overweight or obese. Many have experienced the first signs of ill-health and have shown interest in receiving health information. There's also a strong link to other DH initiatives such as the National Vascular Screening Programme. One participant in a focus group summed up the overriding sentiment by saying: "At 25, you don't think you're ever going to have an illness in your life. At 40+ you start thinking: 'I suppose its time I made a will'."

Among these age groups, people tend to see health as a lottery and deem today more important than tomorrow: a focus on quality of life now rather than quality (or quantity) of life later. They've bought into a culture of convenience and indulgence and see healthy living as requiring punitive and extreme changes to their lifestyle. However, despite being familiar with healthy living messages, they lack the specifics for change – the "where, how and what are my choices?" They're motivated by weight loss and its associated short-term health benefits.

To be effective, we have to find the means to bring the benefits of the future into the immediate present and provide the helping hand needed to draw people over the threshold and into our clubs. We need to find a way around punitive messaging and threats, tapping into the voice of the adult campaign, which is very much along the lines of "swap it, don't stop it" – be that snacks, drinking behaviour or portion sizes.

There's massive scope for communications directly to the public. The adult-focused advertising breaks on 15 February, focusing on the 'Jack the Lad' who's let himself go and encouraging him to politely consider that "spare tyre" that's weighing him down. A series



© ANDREW APPOINTMENTS

#### An audit is currently underway to find out "how much yellow is out there"

of key messages have been designed around diet and physical activity that specifically target the 45–65 age groups. This includes an "up and about" message that will encourage people to find ways to meet their 5x30, with walking being a key suggestion to help achieve that.

There will also be a major focus on employers as a means to reach the target audience. The FIA will be launching activities in this area, with some exciting developments that we'll be sharing soon.

#### ready, set... pause

The campaign is set to take flight. Were it not for the General Election (scheduled for 6 May) and the point at which the election-enforced radio silence kicks in, the Let's Dance campaign would provide us with the momentum to drive forward. However, I understand democracy is important, so we'll have to grin and bear it! The campaign will instead re-fire in June with a big push.

There's activity planned over the next year linked to football, cycling and walking. We'll be driving awareness of the MoreActiveLife campaign and the availability of MoreActive Health Packs

at FIA member sites. The FIA is at the heart of programme development across all of these interventions and campaigns, and will continue to drive them forward with a broad variety of partners from the public, private and third sectors.

There is, of course, one major assumption, and that is that whichever party, or combination of parties, wins the next election, they will be supportive of the ongoing campaign. In that sense, we can only go on their word – and Andrew Lansley for one, the Shadow Secretary of State for Health, announced at the FIA Industry Summit in November 2008 that support for the campaign would be continued under a potential Conservative government.

Given the fact that we have an ageing, sickening and fattening society, it's very unlikely that any government in the next generation will be able to hold back from engaging in a similar fashion. There may well be a drive for greater value for money, an improved sense of outcomes and a slightly different tone – but what will remain constant is the vital role of the FIA and its members in delivering change on the ground.

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**Beaumont: Building relationships**

## new gm for leeds esporta

Richard Beaumont has been appointed to the role of general manager at the Esporta club in Leeds, Yorkshire.

Beaumont joins Esporta after holding a number of roles in the leisure industry, including stints as operations manager at The Village Hotel in Bury and general manager for Greens Health Clubs based in Shipley, Wakefield and Sheffield.

Beaumont says: "Esporta has a great reputation in the city and my focus as its general manager will be to build and strengthen that name. "Some gyms claim to provide a great service, but often fail to deliver. At Esporta, we're dedicated to providing a first-class service to build long-term relationships."

## in brief...

### father of cv health dies

Professor Jerry Morris, the first person to discover the link between exercise and cardiovascular health, has died at the age of 99.

Born in Liverpool, Morris was heralded as one of the most significant figures in public health and the history of British healthcare.

He made one of the most important discoveries in post-war health after studying the link between lack of exercise and ill-health.

His research in the 1940s and 50s demonstrated the link between exercise and cardiovascular health.

## ukfn appoints board members

A further four members have been appointed as directors of the UK Fitness Network (UKFN).

The new directors are Steve Ward from Greenwich Leisure Ltd, Peter King from Fusion, Karen Burrell from Freedom Leisure and Ken Leggate from Redbridge Sports and Leisure.

The quartet was elected at the UKFN's first AGM earlier this month, to help shape the strategic direction of the organisation and lead on specialist areas such as IT, expansion and marketing.

UKFN is a non-profit company that aims to link up the UK's trust-managed leisure centres to make it easier for members of these centres to exercise. The network currently includes 136 sites across the UK.

Phil Rumbelow, UKFN spokesperson, says: "We have an excellent balance of representatives from both large and

**GLL's Steve Ward: UKFN appointment**

small trusts on the board, as well as a mix of important skills.

"We're confident that, with the new board in place, we can further expand the network across the UK."

## bannatyne names regional boss

The Bannatyne Group has appointed Colin MacGillivray as its new regional manager for the North East.

MacGillivray will manage around 280 members of staff and oversee teams at Bannatyne Health Clubs in Carlisle, Chester-Le-Street, Coulby Newham, York, Darlington, Durham and Ingleby Barwick. He will also be responsible for the 50-bedroom Bannatyne Hotel in Durham and the region's three Bannatyne Spa operations located within the Darlington, York and Carlisle health clubs.

MacGillivray began his career at Bannatyne in 2002 as fitness manager at the club in Ayr. He progressed up the ranks to general manager and then cluster regional manager before being offered the senior management role.

Nigel Armstrong, Bannatyne Group MD, says: "Colin has worked his way up from ground level and this experience will set him in good stead in his new role. We have very high expectations for regional managers to deliver at the highest level for all our health clubs."

### hr director for dc leisure

DC Leisure has appointed Clare Hayler as human resources manager. She joins the company from car rental firm Avis, where she spent six years.

Up until now, DC Leisure has outsourced its HR function to an external consultancy.

Hayler explains: "This is the first full-time, internal HR position at group manager level. It's a great opportunity to help shape the future direction of HR within DC Leisure and ensure all our policies and procedures are consistent and robust. I'm very excited about the challenge ahead."

### resort invests in fitness staff

Stoke Park Country Club and Resort in Buckinghamshire has appointed three new members of staff as part of its strategy to strengthen its health and wellness operations.

Daniel Gray has been named the resort's new group wellness manager, Sophie Mullings will take over the role of head of treatments, and Kelly Rush has been appointed head of fitness.

The positions have been created to integrate the current Pavilion building into a new Wellness Centre, offering a variety of options across the resort's spa and fitness amenities.

## PEOPLE PROFILE

### INDEPENDENT OPERATOR FOCUS



## lauren imparato

After a high-flying career at investment bank Morgan Stanley, Imparato set out as an entrepreneur and launched the I.AM.YOU. yoga studio in the heart of New York

### What was the motivation behind the launch of I.AM.YOU?

During my time at Morgan Stanley, I was given the space to express my entrepreneurial passion and drive right from the start, from that first day in sales. After nearly seven years of being an entrepreneur working for the company, it was time to be an entrepreneur for myself. As a result, at the start of 2009, I started developing I.AM.YOU. as a side project. I soon realised, though, that if I wanted to launch I.AM.YOU. before summer – and more importantly, ultimately turn it into the global lifestyle brand I had in mind – I would have to leave Morgan Stanley.

### What did you like most about working at Morgan Stanley?

My favourite thing about working at MS was the energy – that super-charged feeling I would instantly get when I stepped onto the trading floor, for example, or the adrenaline rush of closing a series of great trades back-to-back.

### What is I.AM.YOU and what's its unique selling point?

I.AM.YOU. is a lifestyle brand. Its first two tenets, and cornerstones for that matter, are yoga and music. At I.AM.YOU. studio, my focus is to provide an experience – a 360 degree sensorial,

personal and exclusive kick-your-ass yoga experience that will rock each student's mind. To enable this, each class is set to the tune-tailored music mix created by a resident mixologist.

The long-term vision/plan is to organically grow into the other aspects of the lifestyle we promote, which will include art, design, diet, health and wellness, as well as an overall way of life.

### How does your current day-to-day role differ from that with MS?

I.AM.YOU. and Morgan Stanley day-to-days are the same in that they're exciting, fast-paced, always changing and full of surprises. The biggest difference is the silence of my office and the studio compared to the constant clamouring and chatter of the trading floor. That said, when the studio fills up for a class or an event, all the chatter sweeps in wonderfully and naturally.

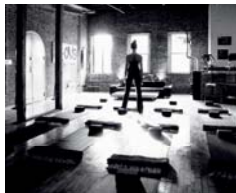
### How do you hope to develop I.AM.YOU in the future?

Since the launch in April 2009, the brand has been growing very rapidly but also very organically. I see us continuing to grow organically in the fields of yoga and music, as well as growing strategically with the other tenets of the lifestyle brand.

I've already launched the diet/wellness arm, NOURISHMENT, with detox programmes and private nutritional counselling. I'm looking to expand into Asia – hopefully by mid-2010.

### What drives you in life?

Learning. I love learning and, as a result, teaching. There's nothing that can rival that feeling of a light clicking on inside your head. There's only one life to live, so the more you can maximise it – intellectually, spiritually, physically, culturally – the better. As Gandhi said: "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."



The studio on Mulberry Street, NY

# HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK 2010



The 6th edition of the Health Club Management Handbook, published in association with the Fitness Industry Association (FIA), is being distributed in January 2010. The handbook is a comprehensive guide and reference tool distributed to industry suppliers and operators, FIA members and to industry buyers at events such as LIW, SIBEC and IHRSA..

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# diary

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## FEBRUARY

### 25-28 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute

Venue Alexandria, Virginia, US

Summary

More than 65 educational sessions, 27 top presenters and three pre-conference workshops: in sport performance, integrated back rehabilitation, and STOTT PILATES postural analysis.  
Tel +1 (858) 535 8979 ext. 7  
Web [www.ideafit.com](http://www.ideafit.com)

### 25-27 | FORUMCLUB 2010

Venue Bologna, Italy

Summary

The 11th annual international congress and trade show for health and fitness, wellness and aquatic clubs. Running alongside is FORUMPISCINE, the swimming pool show launched last year.  
Tel +39 051 25 55 44  
Web [www.ncforum.com](http://www.ncforum.com)

## MARCH

### 10-13 | IHRSA 2010 – Annual International Convention & Trade Show

Venue San Diego, California, US

Summary

The 29th annual exhibition, conference and networking event for the health and fitness industry.  
Tel +1 617 951 0055  
Web [www.ihrsa.org](http://www.ihrsa.org)

### 18-21 | ECA/One Body One World

Venue New York, US

Summary

A theatrical event with a strong dance programme plus yoga, pilates, indoor

cycling, management training, nutrition, exercise design and resistance training.  
Tel +1 516 432 6877  
Web [www.ecaworldfitness.com](http://www.ecaworldfitness.com)

### 26-28 | International Fitness Showcase

Venue Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK

Summary

Showcasing the latest exercise classes, along with workshops and lectures.  
Tel +44 (0)113 277 3885  
Web [www.chrysalispromotions.com](http://www.chrysalispromotions.com)

## APRIL

### 7-10 | ACSM's 14th Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition

Venue Austin, Texas, US

Summary

Translating recent scientific findings into applicable methods. Includes workout sessions with master trainers, demonstrations and panel discussions.  
Tel +1 317 637 9200  
Web [www.acsm.org/summit](http://www.acsm.org/summit)

### 14-17 | SPATEC UK & Europe

Venue Split, Croatia

Summary

A two-day forum for UK and European spa owners, directors and senior personnel to meet one-to-one with more than 70 international spa suppliers.  
Tel +44 (0)20 8547 9830  
Web [www.spateceu.com](http://www.spateceu.com)

### 22-25 | 2010

Venue Essen, Germany

Summary

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Tel +49 (0)211 90 191 131  
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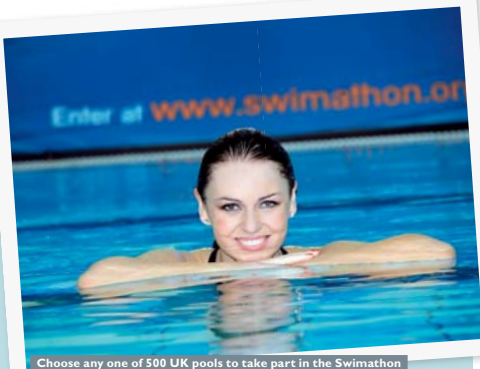
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# competitive edge

## 16-18 APRIL 10 swimathon

Pick one of 500 UK pools to take part in the 24th Swimathon. Over the past three years, more than 50,000 swimmers have entered this event, raising over £4.5m for Marie Curie Cancer and The Swimathon Foundation. It's open to teams or individuals. Distances vary from 1.5km to 5km and can be spread over the three days. The SimplySwim challenge allows participants to set their own number of laps. "Swimathon provides motivation and a personal challenge to swimmers nationwide," says Duncan Goodhew, Olympic gold medalist and Swimathon president. Details: [www.swimathon.org](http://www.swimathon.org)



Choose any one of 500 UK pools to take part in the Swimathon

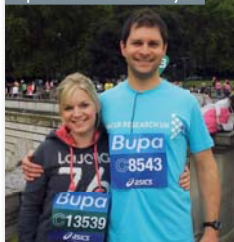


Light symbolises hope against cancer

## 17 APRIL 10 shine manchester

A brand new event for Cancer Research UK, this night-marathon is open to both men and women. Participants will walk for either 26 or 13 miles through the city of Manchester at night, passing well-known landmarks along the route. This event uses light to symbolise bringing hope to the darkness of cancer. The light also illustrates the charity's progress and ambition to beat cancer. Entry costs £30 per person. Details: <http://shine.cancerresearchuk.org/>

## Bupa London 10k: In its third year



## 16-26 SEPTEMBER 10 andes to amazon bike ride

This open charity event starts with a day exploring the ancient Inca capital of Cusco and the majestic Machu Picchu ruins before setting off on a route that covers around 60km a day. Along the way, participants will cover the Sacred Valley of the Incas and cut through the Andes with spectacular views of the cordillera Ausangate before descending into the Amazonian rainforest and the Manu Biosphere Reserve: home to toucans, monkeys, bears and more. The deposit is £550 per person and the minimum sponsorship £3,750. Details: [www.charitychallenge.com](http://www.charitychallenge.com)



Experience the colours of Peru

## 31 MAY 10 bupa london 10,000

Organised by the people behind the London Marathon, this event is now in its third year. It's a popular choice due to its relatively flat course and opportunity for fast times. The run starts and finishes at St James' Park and is on the route that's likely to be used for the 2012 Olympic Marathons. Runners will pass Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, The Houses of Parliament, The London Eye, St Paul's Cathedral, Nelson's Column and Buckingham Palace. Entry costs £25, with charity places also available. Details: [www.london10000.co.uk](http://www.london10000.co.uk)

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# tackling dementia

Exercise has been shown to help people with mild dementia. Given the UK's ageing population, could the fitness industry have a role to play in helping people who suffer from this disease?

**T**here are 700,000 people with dementia in the UK; Alzheimer's (the most common form) affects 417,000 people. By 2025, the number of people living with dementia will soar to one million. By 2050 it will be 1.7 million.

In December, businessman Sir Gerry Robinson featured in a BBC 2 series called: *Can Gerry Robinson Fix Dementia Care Homes?* More than 60 per cent of care home residents aged over 65 have a form of dementia, and Robinson's mission was to try to introduce some changes. In an article for the *Radio Times* he wrote: "It is widely accepted that, although the ability to memorise or record something

can totally fail for people with dementia, the capacity to feel remains strong... Why then do we so often leave them in soulless rooms, bored, with nothing to do and little personal contact?"

Evidence suggests that exercise can help calm people with a mild form of dementia, as well as improve the way they eat and sleep. It may even help to delay the progression of the disease. Dr John Ratey, in his book *SPARK* (see *HCM* July 09, p42), pulls together evidence from the past 10 years which highlights the power of exercise on the brain. For example, says Ratey, exercise has been shown to delay cognitive decline by as much as 10–15

years, and has also been able to cut the incidence of Alzheimer's in half.

Meanwhile, a study on exercise and people with memory problems by the University of Melbourne found that "the benefits of physical activity were apparent after six months and persisted for at least another 12 months after the intervention had been discontinued" (see *HCM* April 09, p44).

Given all of this, is there a role for the fitness industry to tackle dementia in the UK? Would it be possible to work together with care homes or other institutions such as the NHS? If so, how could such a partnership work? We ask the experts.

HOW CAN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY HELP PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)

## tony majakas

vice-president of health development • technogym



**"T**wo years ago, we installed an Easy Line circuit – comprising eight resistance machines – in a room in the Redholme Memory Care home in Liverpool. The Easy Line is simple to use, so we could train occupational health nurses and all care home staff – even the DIY man. As the resistance comes from a hydraulic cylinder, it's also safe to use.

Around 20 care home residents took part in, at most, a 30-minute session up to three times a week. Since then, there has been a 20 per cent reduction in falls – and, where a fall has occurred, it's only been a minor one with no bones broken. There's also been a reduction in medication, as well as notable improvements in mood: residents are not as aggressive, because they've been stimulated. Normally, dementia patients lose concentration when they eat and often wander off in meal times. However, we found eating patterns improved because the activity made them more alert and brought them consistency.

Our next aim is to gather structured evidence of these findings. Only then will the medical industry accept that the fitness sector has a role to play in tackling dementia. There are 21,000 UK care homes, each of which can benefit from structured exercise."

## sir gerry robinson

businessman



**"Y**ou can't reverse dementia, but you can delay its progression by keeping people active. I've seen that a simple daily task such as getting up to put out washing, or going a walk, can lift the spirits. Even if you can't pinpoint the change, there's no doubt that patients come back more animated and connected.

One home, Merivale [in the Midlands], shone through [in my documentary]. It was excellent at engaging people in physical and mental activity. Unfortunately, I suspect that, in the majority of homes, it's easier to leave residents sitting around: there's a very high acceptance of this.

I'm certain that any involvement from the fitness industry could be helpful. I see a direct correlation between keeping the body and the mind in good shape. Some interesting experimental work could be done to connect physical activity to wellbeing.

Putting in equipment could also have an enormous impact on a large number of people. As with most things, you'd need to ensure people were helped to use it in a sensible way, but with some [milder] levels of dementia, physical activity would definitely be possible and beneficial. With other [more advanced] levels, however, it might be more difficult to organise."





**Preventative healthcare: Exercise has been shown to delay cognitive decline by as much as 10–15 years**

#### eric b larson

executive director • group health research institute, seattle



“Our research shows that people who exercise three or more times a week have about a 35 per cent reduced risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease during a six-year follow up study. Exercise also preserves leg strength and balance, keeping people ambulatory for longer and reducing the risk of falls. It seems to lessen the risk of agitation too.

The fitness industry would do well to develop [exercise] programmes, for national health services and care homes, that cater to older people – and possibly special programmes for dementia sufferers and their care-givers. Such programmes should be geared towards functionality before they’re confined to chair-based activities. These need to involve aerobic fitness maintenance and enhancement and, for frail elders, should include strengthening muscles, especially those in the legs and around the ankles which can help an older person’s balance.

People who have cognitive impairment and who are very old are a special case. To be safe, such programmes would need to be performed with an exercise partner, which could be too expensive for a care home if a relative is unavailable. That said, a programme involving a relative would definitely be worthwhile.”

#### andrew ketteringham

director of external affairs • alzheimer’s society



“Exercise certainly has a role to play in improving the quality of life of people in care homes. It can encourage mobility, reduce stress and depression and empower people, giving them a real sense of purpose. It can also improve circulation, increasing the amount of oxygen being pumped to the brain, which can help slow the symptoms

of dementia. However, while some care homes already offer a varied programme of activities, this is not always the case.

An Alzheimer’s Society survey found that the average person in a care home spent just two minutes of every six hours interacting with any other person, excluding care tasks. We all have a role to play in changing this fact. Exercise can take many forms, from organised classes and games to day-to-day tasks such as cleaning or helping with meals.

There are potential advantages to the fitness industry playing a role in providing exercise opportunities for residents in care homes. However, if this is to happen, it’s essential that staff receive training to understand the specific health and safety risks, and that specialised programmes for older people – especially those with dementia – are devised.”

# DAVID BRAME



Given the opportunity to buy a stake in Bladerunner, David Brame took a leap of faith and put his house up as collateral. He tells Liz Terry about how the business has grown

**T**he new millennium found David Brame getting restless. The former operations director with Relaxion and Leisure Connection was feeling ready for a new challenge: "I'd seen a number of colleagues build up and sell successful businesses," he says, "and I was keen to do the same for myself." After an unfruitful VC-backed bid for Fitness for Industry (FFI), Brame accepted a post as operations director at management contractor Bladerunner, with strong ideas about the direction the company and its operations should be taking.

Bladerunner had just recruited technology entrepreneur Henry Beker as shareholder and chair and, after only a month with the business, Brame found himself in talks with Beker about the future of the health club contracting division. "I told him projects being tackled by other parts of the group were in danger of diverting resources from the fitness division, threatening to undermine the growth I believed was possible," Brame says.



Beker responded positively, suggesting a split in the business and offering Brame the chance to buy in to the newly independent fitness company by putting up his house as collateral. The deal was done, with Beker retaining the majority shareholding and Brame taking shares and the role of MD. A number of directors now also have smaller shareholdings.

Since the deal, Bladerunner has grown from a company operating 17 sites to one of the UK's biggest management companies, now running almost 100 sites and including the European Parliament, Rolls Royce and the MoD among its clients.

"In the first few years it was tough," says Brame. "Bladerunner wasn't a great name and wasn't that well thought of. I considered changing it, but the name does stick in your mind, so we decided we had to change what it stands for instead. We've built up a reputation for quality service and for being genuinely committed to the needs of our customers and flexible in our approach."

The company took a significant leap forward in 2003 when Brame finally snared the FFI business he'd gone after back in 2000, by buying FFI's corporate health club management contracts from Granada. In addition to boosting market share, the deal also helped the company to get its brand into the right sectors. A further acquisition came in November 2008, when the company bought operator ARK Leisure Management.



Bladerunner won the contract to manage the new facilities at Catterick Garrison for the MoD

Bladerunner runs a tight head office team and, rather than trying to be experts in all areas, positions itself as expert in fitness while recruiting partners in areas such as physiotherapy, occupational health and beauty. Functions such as HR, health and safety and quality control are outsourced.

#### **quality service**

The company offers three different types of contract: the first based on the payment of a management fee, the second a profit share and the third a full commercial option, where it takes all the risk – there are currently 25 of these deals in place.

So where does Bladerunner stand in the sector? “We’re one of the fastest-growing businesses,” says Brame. “[When it comes to commercial contracts,] if the market’s big enough, and we know we’re going to get at least a 30 per cent take-up, we can work out a business plan, tailor-making the solution, rather than saying, ‘this is the way you do it – regardless’.

“That’s why we’re growing: firstly, we tailor-make the solution and secondly, we deliver what we say we’re going to. Our philosophy is, don’t promise something you can’t deliver.”

“We deliver what we say we’re going to. Don’t ever promise something you can’t deliver”

The measures of success in corporate operations are different from those in the fitness industry: “Corporate clients want someone to be accountable,” he says. “It’s the environment they’re used to operating their businesses in, and it’s what they expect from us. We bend over backwards to keep clients happy, and our reaction to problems is immediate. We’ve also chosen to go with ISO accreditation, rather than Quest, because it’s a benchmark the corporate world understands. Our staff are also REPs accredited – normally to Level 3.

“We believe site managers should look at the operation they’re responsible for as their own business and be



Blood pressure readings taken at work can help in recruiting new members, while corporate clubs can have a strong social bias



accountable," he adds. "We have clear KPIs: the occupational membership ratio, the active ratio – the number who work out every week – which as a group averages 64 per cent, we have our own benchmarking through the ISO system, plus the income, budget and targets, so each manager can take pride in their performance and build it up.

"We aim to promote from within to create a strong company culture and we organise our clubs so that everyone multi-tasks – we don't have separate receptionists and instructors, for example. They do inductions, they do classes and they get involved with everything. This makes their jobs more interesting, which means we don't tend to lose them."

Bladerunner's effectiveness is reflected in the fact that the company only loses 3.5 per cent of members a year and has an average take-up of 40 per cent. Making members feel important is fundamental: "Once we get a gym open, we don't lose members," says Brame. "We look after them. The ratio of instructors to members is 1:200, so they get personalised treatment similar to that from a personal trainer.

"We pride ourselves on attracting people who wouldn't normally go to a gym," he continues. "Our standard induction programme, Fit4You, includes 45 minutes spent on a lifestyle assessment, which not only covers exercise habits, but also eating and drinking habits and objective setting. This information is used as a basis for setting a programme. Members then get introduced to an instructor who acts as their mentor."

Making corporate clubs more than just a place to work out and dispelling notions of them being intimidating is another area the company focuses on. "We work hard at the social programmes," says Brame. "We see the clubs as a hub within the company with a real buzz. Members can bring friends to gatherings, whether it's a game of bowling or a quiz night, so

the clubs become lifestyle-orientated rather than purely a fitness offering. We also run wellness treatments and seminars – club staff might go around the offices checking blood pressure and cholesterol – to create awareness of the gym."

### weathering the recession

In 2005, concerned that all the company's interests were in the corporate sector, Brame diversified into education – the company now has around a dozen contracts, which have all been won by referral. "We've built it up slowly as a side division so we don't have all our eggs in one basket, but we've never actually marketed ourselves into that sector," says Brame.

Bladerunner adds value for schools that find facilities costly to run, and that had previously kept them empty in the evenings and at weekends, by opening them to the public to generate revenue.

To Brame's relief, the recession hasn't had a negative impact on the business and, in 2009, Bladerunner won 14 new contracts, including the tender for the FA's new corporate gym at Wembley Stadium (see p76). "It's been very exciting and is going very well," says Brame. "I think it's a question of time and the profile we've got for ourselves now. People know we're around."

### MoD contract

Bladerunner secured the contract to run the sport, health and fitness facilities which opened at Catterick Garrison in North Yorkshire in July 2009. "It's a very similar set-up to our commercial clubs, where the employees – in this case the army – use it in core hours and the public come in and use it afterwards," says Brame. "I think we won the contract from the MoD because we understand about managing members and working closely with clients to balance their needs."

The MoD has used Catterick as a pilot for a new-style base, in part by investing heavily in sport and fitness facilities to attract and retain recruits and to improve quality of life for army families and serving soldiers.

In addition to the 40-station gym, other facilities include a studio, a six-court sports hall, a library and three pools, which the army uses every weekday between nine and five, with public access during the lunch break and after hours. There are plans to develop community use, with children's lessons, tournaments in the sports hall and use by local groups.

**The company doesn't pay ground rent, business rates or utilities for the majority of its contracts**

## NEW FACILITIES FOR CATTERICK GARRISON

The MoD has invested millions in building new sport, health and fitness facilities at Catterick Garrison near Richmond in North Yorkshire, for use by the army and the public. These are being managed by Bladerunner.

Among the new facilities are three pools which are used for training and rehabilitation by the army, as well as for teaching the Gurkhas to swim.



"The Catterick contract is unique and very competitive," says Brame. "If we save on costs, these savings go back to the MoD; if we exceed income targets, we keep a percentage; and if we don't achieve targets, we lose. Normally, if we're down on income, the natural thing is to make reductions in costs, but we can't do that at Catterick. From the client's point of view, the agreement really incentivises us to push hard to develop income streams."

The health club has 1,000 members so far, on a target of 850, which Brame is happy with, although the yield is less than forecast: "We need to get a few more members to hit our financial target, but we're nearly there," he says.

Brame believes Bladerunner's experience of running the facilities at GCHQ helped secure the Catterick contract: "We were up against all the big operators, but our understanding of the security issues helped our bid," he says. Meeting the security requirements of the military have set Bladerunner up to tender for other sensitive contracts such as the European Parliament, the contract for which was recently re-tendered and retained.

There hasn't previously been a strategy of growth for Europe, but now the infrastructure to support the European Parliament contracts in Strasbourg and Brussels is in place, Bladerunner is pushing forward in Europe and has just won the contract for Coca Cola in Brussels. The company plans to go after further European contracts, using the European Parliament as the flagship. "We won the European Parliament on a purely commercial basis," says Brame. "It's a beautiful gym with a treatment area, beauty clinic, studios and squash courts."

### going forward

Bladerunner's business model must be the envy of many an operator in these times of high utility bills. The company doesn't pay ground rent, business rates or utilities for the majority of its contracts, with the agreement normally being that Bladerunner provides the equipment and takes the revenue, limiting the risk to the company and making the contract easier to manage.

Corporate contracts also come with a ready-made clientele – potential members are on-site and can be easily reached and tempted to try what's on offer by an approach such as a wellness consultation or a head massage at their desk. With this in mind, and given the company's successes in recent years, Brame is

**Clients have closed their gyms only to re-open them when they see the negative impact this has on recruitment**

confident about Bladerunner's organic growth prospects. The one threat he's keeping an eye on is the growth of budget clubs: "We pitch our prices at a third to half of the high street. I look at prices across the region and make sure what we charge represents good value, but budget clubs are coming in at a lower rate and that could put pressure on what we're doing."

Brame would like to do more work with the HR departments of corporate clients to compare sickness and productivity rates between gym members and non-members. To date, none of the organisations the company works with will give access to this information, but he's hopeful that eventually this type of research can be carried out to the benefit of the wider industry.

He believes the corporate market will continue to thrive: "There's a growing belief that providing a gym has a very positive impact on productivity – we have clients that have closed their gyms down, only to re-open them when they see the negative impact it has on recruitment and retention. Invariably the decision to invest in an in-house gym comes from the managing director: if they're into fitness, they'll get the company into fitness too," he says. "They can be our greatest allies."

Brame concludes: "I'd like to think that every single one of our clients would give us a positive reference. We really look after them. For example, for Christmas, we flew them to Newquay for the day by way of saying thank you. We took a walk along the cliff and then went to Jamie Oliver's restaurant. You might say that was an extravagance because of the recession, but we wanted to thank them because we're so grateful to them for supporting us. The key is to treat people well – to treat them as you would want to be treated yourself."



**liz terry**

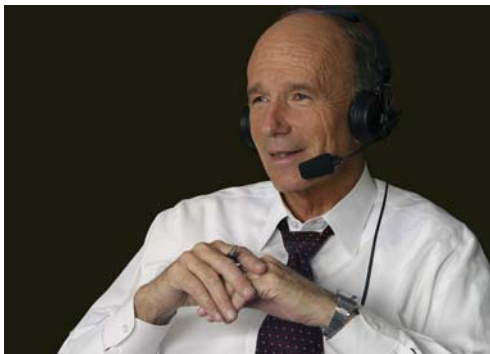
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# CATCHING THEM YOUNG



A research project spearheaded by 'father of aerobics' Dr Kenneth Cooper has shown that US schoolchildren who are physically fit not only get higher academic grades but also have fewer problems with attendance and discipline. Now a UK charity plans to bring the initiative over here. Rhianon Howells reports



**“G**ive me a child until he is seven and I will show you the man.” Originally uttered by a

Jesuit saint way back in the 16th century, this well-known saying still encapsulates a universal truth: that the best time to influence a person's mindset and behaviour is while they're young.

It's certainly a sentiment shared by Murdo Wallace, founder and chair of Wright Foundation Research, the non-profit arm of Scotland-based exercise referral organisation The Wright Foundation. With the National Heart

Forum reporting that 30 per cent of boys and 27 per cent of girls in the 2- to 11-year old age range will be overweight or obese by 2020, Wallace is so concerned about rising child obesity levels in the UK that he is currently seeking funding to replicate a pioneering, US-based initiative here.

#### ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The largest children's fitness study in the world, the project is the brainchild of Dr Kenneth Cooper, founder and chair of The Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas, Texas, and its research arm The Cooper Institute. Nominated to be US Surgeon-

**Dr Kenneth Cooper was twice nominated to be US Surgeon-General, but turned it down to focus on his passion: childhood obesity**

General twice during George W Bush's administration, Cooper turned down the opportunity on the grounds that they wouldn't let him focus on his core passions. "They wanted to concentrate on AIDS, avian flu and bio-terrorism," he says. "I wanted to concentrate on obesity, particularly among our kids, and the cost of healthcare."





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A number of studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between children's fitness levels and better academic performance

## OUR KIDS' HEALTH: KEY FINDINGS

The Cooper Institute's 2007–2008 children's fitness study analysed Fitnessgram results from 2.4 million students across 6,532 schools in Texas. Key findings include:

- Cardiovascular (CV) health, measured by a walking/running test, had a higher correlation to school success than body mass index (BMI)
- About 70 per cent of all students tested reached the healthy fitness zone for BMI; 30 per cent did not. Only 20 per cent of high school seniors (age 17–18) were in the healthy fitness zone for CV fitness, compared with 78 per cent of those aged 9–10
- At high-performing schools – those with the state's top rating of 'exemplary' – about 80 per cent of students were in the healthy zone for CV fitness
- At low-performing schools, rated 'academically unacceptable', slightly over 40 per cent were in the healthy zone for CV fitness
- Higher levels of fitness were associated with better school attendance
- Higher levels of fitness were associated with fewer disciplinary problems involving drugs, alcohol, violence and truancy

So instead of moving to the White House, Cooper stayed in Texas and launched the 'Our Kids' Health' initiative aimed not only at combating obesity among children in his home state, but also at gathering evidence that would force the US government, both at state and national levels, to start taking physical education seriously. In 2007, he successfully campaigned to make PE mandatory from kindergarten (children aged 4–6) through to eighth grade (age 13–14) and annual fitness testing a legal requirement from third grade (age 8–9) through to 12th grade (age 17–18) – although, because

the bill was passed as a 'mandate without funding', he had to raise the US\$3.1m needed to fund the project himself.

During the 2007–2008 school year, 2.6 million primary and secondary school students were tested using The Cooper Institute's Fitnessgram system. FITNESSGRAM® was developed in 1982 at The Cooper Institute by Dr Charles Sterling, who still oversees the programme. The objective was to increase parental awareness of children's fitness levels by providing an easy way for PE teachers to report results. Now in its ninth edition, the system includes ▶



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In 2007, Cooper successfully campaigned to make PE compulsory from kindergarten through to eighth grade, raising the US\$3.1m needed to fund the project himself

▶ six separate tests measuring five areas: body composition, aerobic capacity, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility. The tests determine whether students are in a 'healthy fitness zone' for their age and gender.

As schools were removed from the study where less than 25 per cent of students had participated, a total of 2.4 million test results went forward for analysis. Aggregate data from each school was then compared with academic test scores, school attendance records and the number of disciplinary referrals involving drugs, alcohol, violence and truancy.

The first-year results of the study, published in March 2009, showed a remarkable correlation between higher levels of fitness and better academic performance. But even more interesting was the revelation that lower levels of fitness were strongly linked to both poor attendance and serious disciplinary incidents. "There have already been 14 smaller studies showing a relationship between kids' fitness levels and academic achievement in school," says Cooper. "But we're the first to show the inverse relationship with absenteeism, discipline and drug problems."

Nevertheless, the study's strong correlation of fitness with scholastic success has attracted attention across the US and, according to Cooper, the project is set to roll out in several other states over the next 18 months.

Cooper is also excited about a new study being launched in partnership with NFL Charities, the non-profit foundation of the National Football League (NFL). Announced in December, the deal has seen NFL Charities award a US\$1.8m grant to The Cooper Institute to make Fitnessgram testing available for three years to a quarter of a million children, in 1,120 schools, across 32 NFL markets. The tests will be integrated into the existing NFL PLAY 60 programme, which challenges kids to be active for 60 minutes a day through a range of in-school, after-school and team-based initiatives.

What makes the NFL study especially interesting, says Cooper, is that as well as taking the research nationwide in a single step, it will allow The Cooper Institute to look at results for individuals – this in contrast with the Texas study which, for privacy reasons, limited analysis to whole-school results. "If we can look at individuals and their lifestyles, discipline issues and drug problems, then we'll be able to tell so much more [about the relationship between fitness and success in school]," he adds.

#### BRITISH VISION

It's not only in the US that Cooper's children's fitness study is creating waves. From the outset, Murdo Wallace has been following Cooper's efforts with

## GLOBAL OUTLOOK

**T**he global potential of Cooper's study is not limited to the UK. The Wright

Foundation recently signed a master franchise deal with a company in Australia to set up The Wright Foundation and Wright Foundation Research there, and is already in talks with the Australian government about rolling out the children's fitness study. Wright Foundation Research also has numerous Centres of Excellence affiliated to partner institutions in Europe, Brazil and Japan, which could be used as springboards. Meanwhile, Dr Cooper himself is in talks with the University of Munich about implementing a study in Germany, and he's been to China to promote the initiative there.

## NATIONAL ROLLOUT

The project has been so successful in Texas that many schools that were initially sceptical have been won over, and the cohort for the second round of testing – for the school year 2008–2009 – was even larger than for the first, with 2.8 million students.

As these tests were the first conducted after the launch of mandatory PE – 30 minutes five times a week, or 45 minutes three times a week – signs of improvement in fitness levels have been eagerly anticipated. However, although the complete results won't be available until later this year, the initial indications are disappointing, says Cooper. "There has been some improvement in the sixth to eighth grades, but overall the year two test results are not that different from year one. The problem is that many of our schools don't have qualified PE teachers, so the programmes are being poorly supervised."



interest, and early in 2009 he announced plans to replicate the initiative in the UK.

Last year, Cooper came to Birmingham at Wallace's invitation to speak at Leisure Industry Week. Several local authorities and primary care trusts (PCTs) expressed an interest in taking part in pilot projects, while the States of Jersey – the governing body of the British Crown Dependency – made fledgling plans to launch an initiative by autumn 2010.


With the recession squeezing budgets, government and PCT funding agencies have since asked to see the second-year results of the Texas study before committing, while financial cutbacks have also caused States of Jersey to put its plans on hold. Nevertheless, with the second-round results due to be published this autumn, Wallace is hopeful that funding will be forthcoming in time for a 2011 launch. "The US results have been so fantastic, we're optimistic that our proposals will be looked at in a favourable light by the end of the second year."

Wallace anticipates that the project will start small – three-year pilots in a few specific cities or regions – with a long-term view to rolling it out across the country. As in Texas, it will combine annual Fitnessgram testing with specially designed, in-school PE programmes of

**In the UK, annual Fitnessgram testing is likely to be carried out by school nurses or medical science students to avoid overburdening teachers**

at least three hours a week. However, in contrast with Cooper's study, it will focus solely on primary schools. While not going so far as the Jesuits, Wallace takes the view that, "once they get to secondary school, they're lost".

Also in contrast with Texas, Wallace says the tests here are likely to be carried out by school nurses and/or medical or science students to avoid overburdening teachers. He anticipates that a well-organised PR campaign will be needed to get both schools and parents on-side, but he's positive that, once the initiative is up and running, the results will speak for themselves. "Scotland is number two in the world obesity league after the US, and England is not far behind," he says. "Dr Cooper's work in Texas has already brought about changes in the legislation to increase children's physical activity levels, and we believe we could have similar success here in the UK."

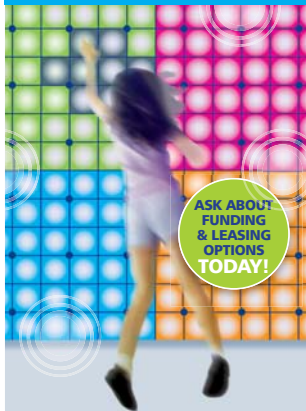
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# research round-up

## reality gap

Seven out of 10 parents think their child takes plenty of exercise, but research from the British Heart Foundation suggests otherwise

**P**arents have been told to "take off their blinkers" over how active their children are. A British Heart Foundation (BHF) survey among 940 UK parents of eight- to 15-year-olds found that 71 per cent of them think their kids are "active enough" – yet in truth, only 11 per cent are doing the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

### a sedentary lifestyle

The BHF parent survey coincides with the launch of *Couch Kids* – a more in-depth BHF report into children's physical activity levels in the UK.

The recommended daily 60-minute workout should be of moderate intensity and encompass activities such as brisk walking, swimming, cycling, PE, dancing and most sports. However, based on evidence gathered from National Health Surveys, the *Couch Kids* report shows there's still a large number of young people in England and Scotland – 30 per cent of boys and 40 per cent of girls – who are not meeting the suggested physical activity guidelines. These levels are significantly worse in Wales and Northern Ireland and are especially bad in adolescent girls: only 9 per cent of 15-year-old girls in England, Scotland and Wales reach the recommended target.

This is compounded by the increasing amount of time that young people are spending being sedentary, which could impact on their health regardless of how much exercise they get. The pattern starts at a very young age, with the median time spent in sedentary behaviour recorded at 79 per cent of monitored hours for three-year-olds. Meanwhile, among 14-year-old girls, one study revealed that the five top sedentary activities took up 4.38 hours per week day and 6.66 hours per weekend day,



Drive participation by promoting exercise as a chance to have fun with friends

while physical activity only accounted for 44.2 minutes and 53 minutes respectively.

*Couch Kids* points out that some valuable sedentary activities – such as listening to music, spending time with friends, homework and reading – take up a "substantial percentage of young people's free time". However, it's hardly surprising that watching TV, playing computer games and social networking take up the majority of time given the fact that 80 per cent of 15- to 16-year-olds have their own TV, 70 per cent have their own DVD player and nearly all have a computer at home.

### how can we motivate them?

Luckily it's not all bad news. One survey found that 61 per cent of boys and 74 per cent of girls aged 11–15 would like to do more physical activity – a particularly encouraging finding given the general trend towards inactivity among teenage girls.

So what motivates young people to be active? Empowering them by asking them what they want to do, giving them

a choice of varied activities and placing an emphasis on fun and enjoyment are all key recommendations from *Couch Kids*. The report identified aspects of physical activity that children value as:

- having a choice of exercise opportunities
- activity as a means of having fun and spending time with friends
- a sense of belonging (team sports)
- enjoying competition
- feelings of achievement

Girls in particular like to keep 'fit and healthy' and be in good shape, while older children see exercise as a way of "relaxing, forgetting their troubles and relieving stress".

Family life and parental support are also important factors. Parents can help to create opportunities for activity and give financial back-up, as well as providing transport and general encouragement. It helps if they're active themselves, with a positive attitude towards activity.

In addition, there was a call for more extra-curricular opportunities in schools, and making school facilities more accessible outside lesson times.

# fitness outcomes

Are government and the fitness industry working together effectively to deliver on kids' fitness?

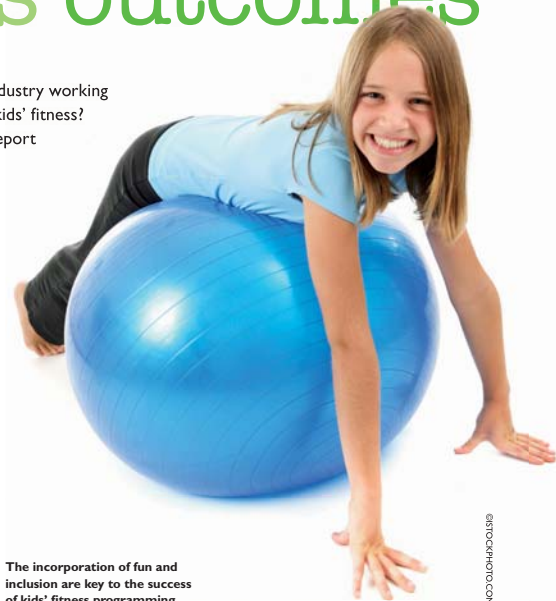
Ashley Newman and Ruth Bushi report

**O**ur fixation on childhood obesity isn't surprising given the government spotlight on the issue and the media coverage given to its Change4Life campaign. Then there's the constant stream of research and statistics, which currently put more than one in five children in the obese or overweight categories by the time they reach school age. The direst of predictions suggests almost 90 per cent will fall into those categories by 2050.

The Change4Life campaign is one of high-visibility education: five-a-day, portion and fat control, and getting kids moving. The roadmap is bite-sized – five-second TV slots around Channel 4's *The Simpsons*, for example, where Change4Life replaced Domino's Pizza as sponsor. Simple messages have proven successful and, with more than 400,000 families signing up to make a change within the first year, so far so good.

However, is this top-down educational approach effective on its own or, when it comes to implementation – whether by families or fitness facilities – are benchmarks and measurements also required to back up the general goals and guidelines being outlined? If so, do these benchmarks exist, and is there any guidance on what the protocols for measurement should be?

The simple answer, at least at this stage, would appear to be 'no'. While there are plenty of guidelines on how much to exercise and how often, guidelines



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**The incorporation of fun and inclusion are key to the success of kids' fitness programming**

for assessing the reach and effectiveness of programming to combat childhood obesity is still a grey area – perhaps for the very reason that government is still focused on obesity rather than on one of its solutions, namely fitness<sup>1</sup>.

## fatness versus fitness

Dr Gavin Sandercock, who led research into falling rates of kids' fitness released at the end of 2009<sup>2</sup>, stresses the importance of such measurements: "We found that 20

per cent of children of a normal weight are unfit, but also that about 20 per cent of obese children are fit."

There's already controversy about the accuracy of BMI in assessing children's health, yet while other nations such as Canada have been measuring children's fitness over the past 30 years, we've never done so in the UK. Why has the government never prioritised this?

Sandercock also doubts the government is getting the message about children's activity levels through to parents – a concern backed by a recent British Heart Foundation study which states: "While 71 per cent of parents think their children are active enough, only 11 per cent are doing the recommended daily 60 minutes of physical activity."<sup>3</sup> (see also page 38) ▶

**"71 PER CENT OF PARENTS THINK THEIR KIDS ARE ACTIVE ENOUGH, BUT ONLY 11 PER CENT DO 60 MINUTES' ACTIVITY A DAY"**

<sup>1</sup> Professor Alan Marjoni-Davis, president of the Faculty of Public Health, responded to the question last year: "We have been concerned about the sedentary lifestyles of children for some time...But the focus on obesity is right at the moment because it is more directly linked to chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease."

<sup>2</sup> Ten-year secular declines in the cardio-respiratory fitness of affluent English children are largely independent of changes in body mass index – G Sandercock, C Voss, D McConnell, P Rayner  
*Arch Dis Child* 2010;95:46-47 doi:10.1136/adc.2009.162107

<sup>3</sup> G243 Couch Kids – the Nation's Future Nov 2009, bhf.org.uk/couchkids





Wigan Leisure Trust launched Fitclub classes for kids – bespoke kids' programming distributed by Fitpro – in November 2009

## CASE STUDY – FITCLUB

**F**itclub features four group exercise classes: teamenergy (general fitness, 5–10 years), teamcombat (martial arts, 6–16 years), teamjam (dance, 8–16 years) and teampower (resistance-based, 11–16 years). Programme design concentrates on skill-related fitness, including agility, speed, reaction time and balance, and introduces logistics not necessary in adult classes, such as a 'time-out' zone within the studio area.

FitPro product development manager Vicki Mahony says: "It's difficult enough getting adults to adhere to gym-based exercise if programming isn't stimulating, interactive or creative enough. That difficulty is multiplied when working with children."

Long-term retention and motivation is therefore built into Fitclub with children in mind: three programme updates a year, choreograph options to cater for all abilities, and use of the latest chart music to ensure relevance.

In 2009, Core Life Fitness in Newton Abbott worked with local schools to introduce teamenergy. Sixty-five per cent of participants did no exercise prior to starting the programme and 50 per cent were classed as disaffected by traditional school PE. However, 85 per cent of all children reported becoming more active as a result of the programme, while 98 per cent said it was fun and enjoyable – 60 per cent saying this was because it made them feel fit and healthy.

Wigan Leisure Trust implemented its own fitness benchmarking and tracking methods on launching Fitclub: certificates of attendance, the development of sponsorship opportunities to reward kids as they progressed through the scheme, pre-screening with adaptations for deconditioned users/those with existing health conditions, and the provision of exit routes to ensure long-term habit formation.

Says FIA executive director David Stalker: "Fitness is key. As a nation we must assess how fit – ie healthy – our children are, implement a tailored programme and measure its impact against a benchmark to assess how effective the programme can be. How else can we assess what works and what doesn't, and if we made a difference to our children's lives?"

If the industry is to monitor its contribution, however, the impetus for guidance on such benchmarks may have to come from within. We already have a pretty good idea of what makes for enjoyable kids' programming, but we're also well-placed to consult on what effective programming looks like, with proven systems of measuring this already in place in adult fitness.

The measurements may be as simple as logging improvements in heart rates, but whatever they may be, ultimately fitness professionals – with their knowledge of what "being fit" at any age actually looks like – should play a key role both in developing these benchmarks, and in creating and monitoring successful programming.





The launch was attended by Andy Burnham, the Secretary of State for Health

**"KIDS' PROGRAMMING HAS SHOWN OUR SECTOR CAN BE FUN; NOW WE NEED TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT MEASURING OUTCOMES"**

In the meantime, where it happens at all, measurement is on an ad hoc basis, as Wigan Leisure Trust's health and fitness manager Emma MacSymons explains: "To my knowledge, there are no current industry recommendations for screening children. In implementing Fitclub programmes [child-specific programming distributed by FitPro – see case study, left], we tried to put the meat on the bones, backing up the programme with pre-exercise screening including a guidance document, registration and certificates of attendance."

#### fitness delivery

Beyond the issues of measurement, is the government practising what it preaches? Tam Fry, chair of the National Obesity Forum, sums up the barriers to play and activity: "Over the past 20 years, parks have been sold off, allowed to run down

or become total no-go areas. But perhaps the biggest problem is what's not happening in school – physical education has been allowed to disappear."

Stalker adds: "Change4Life has done a fantastic job in raising awareness and promoting an integrated [food and activity] solution. It now needs to invest in the delivery of activity in schools – developing and delivering activity programmes for children who are either alienated from traditional sports or simply not motivated by their teachers."

Broadly speaking, the options for delivering kids' fitness are two-fold: child-specific programming/equipment, or the use by children of adult equipment.

Child-specific programming often resembles established adult group exercise formats, although the incorporation of fun and inclusion are key to success (see Fitclub case study, left). ▶



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87 per cent of teaching staff said rowing helped engage previously inactive pupils

## CASE STUDY – CONCEPT2

Concept2 introduced its indoor rowers to 15 primary and 12 secondary schools between April 2007 and March 2008 – a move monitored by the Institute of Youth Sport (IYS) at Loughborough University, which interviewed teachers and pupils to assess progress.

Equipment-based exercise programmes make it easier to monitor the progress of children's fitness. However, Mike Antoniadis of The Running School says: "Some of the traditional tests [of fitness] are pretty useless, because not everyone can do them. So you need to find functional movements: can they run, can they jump, can they turn?"

Nevertheless, more than 90 per cent of teaching staff said the programme had helped to promote physical activity in schools and improve pupil fitness, while 87 per cent felt rowing had helped engage pupils who were not previously active and increased confidence among those disaffected with traditional school PE.

From the participants' perspective, more than 80 per cent of primary school children said they liked rowing because it made them feel fit and healthy, while more than 90 per cent of secondary school kids found rowing enjoyable. One male pupil commented: "In Year 7 I had asthma but, towards the end of this year, I've grown out of it. I think that's because of the rowing."

Introducing adult equipment without adaptation can be equally successful, as demonstrated by Concept2 indoor rowing (see case study, above). Taken into schools, these schemes directly target pupils, and – during an era in which few now walk to school or have active play times outside it – integrate daily exercise with the re-introduction of physical education to schools in a modified format.

Other opportunities include those marketed towards parents as extra-curricular activities, typified by fitness franchises such as The Running School ([www.therunningschool.co.uk](http://www.therunningschool.co.uk)), which include children's training in traditionally adult fitness pursuits.

However, while such programmes are welcome and worthwhile in changing attitudes to physical activity and health, it's not until the enjoyment and benefits of what they deliver is embraced by participants and used every day that real and lasting changes can indeed be made "for life" – and without effective tracking, we will never know if we've arrived at this point.

Children's programming has already proven that our industry can be fun – but we now need to get serious on outcomes and develop coherent protocols for assessing children's fitness.



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# virtual reality

Mike Hill summarises the key findings of the inaugural email-Focus survey, which looks at health and fitness facilities' handling of email enquiries

The inbound email handling element of our customer interface is crucial to business success; previous research by Leisure-net Solutions indicates that most potential members only contact one or two clubs/centres before deciding which one to visit, with an estimated third of enquiries coming in by email.

The email-Focus™ Survey was set up to help operators better understand the inbound email handling process, looking at what we're doing right and wrong as a sector and how we can do better. Carried out in September 2009, results are based on 60 enquiries sent from different email accounts (all set up by Leisure-net) to 30 private and trust-operated centres/clubs.

The survey scores all aspects of an email membership enquiry against best practice standards, including: how easy it was to send an email enquiry, response

times, whether a standardised response was given or whether extra information was included, accuracy of the information provided, professionalism of the email (spelling, grammar etc), how friendly the email was and whether it had a call to action. The resulting overall score is designed to reflect how well the response maximises the chances of getting the enquirer to come in for a tour.

## key findings

**Website:** Five of the 30 operators failed at the first hurdle, with the researchers failing to find an email contact or enquiry page within two minutes of visiting the operator website.

**Response time:** 21 of the 60 enquiries received no response at all within the pre-set cut-off point of seven days; 21 emails were responded to within one day; and 13 were responded to within four hours. This does not include auto responses, of which there was one, or the one 'out of office' message. The average response time of those that did respond was 1.5 days.

**Content/information:** Only one response was obviously a standard generic response. However, 35 per cent of responses gave no information directly related to the specific enquiry, and only 25 per cent were judged to have given a good level of information related to the enquiry.

**Professionalism:** Only 15 responses were judged to be professional in terms of layout, presentation, use of grammar, spelling etc. Around a third of responses included the use of slang/text speak, poor spelling and grammar.

**Call to action:** Of the 60 enquiries, only 20 responses included a strong call to action – suggesting a free day trial, for example. Some of the worst responses simply gave a link to the website for further information, or attached a pdf of prices/membership information.

Figure 1 shows how the industry as a whole scored in terms of the key survey criteria: with scores out of five, there's room for improvement across the board.

Figure 2 gives a breakdown of results. In general, the private sector performed slightly better in terms of response times, but scored the same as the trusts when it came to content and information. The private chains seemed to have a more standardised approach to email responses, which meant they scored better on professionalism but not so well on content. The two private sector operators that scored poorly did so due to lack of any response to two of the three email enquiries sent to them.

While it's hard to compare private health clubs and public sector leisure

figure 1 industry average scores



## box out

Leisure-net has also completed the third annual call-Focus survey into telephone enquiry handling. Among the key findings were:

- Only 59 per cent of calls were answered within five rings, down from 75 per cent last year, with the private sector answering calls significantly quicker than the public sector on a regular basis
- When the researchers asked about becoming a member, their questions were answered 'confidently and knowledgeably' in 90 per cent of cases, being put through to a membership advisor or given a time to call back when an advisor would be available

- In only 45 per cent of calls did the receptionist/advisor ask researchers about their goals or the services they were interested in using. Nevertheless, this was an improvement of 9 per cent on last year's results
- In only 9 per cent of calls did the mystery callers feel they were adequately told about the facilities and services at the centre/club – a dramatic drop from 44 per cent last year
- In 54 per cent of cases, the receptionist/advisor gave out prices before discussing any individual requirements with the caller – up from 32 per cent last year
- Only just over half of callers – 55 per cent – were asked if they would like to come in for a tour



**Membership enquiries:**  
Most people only contact one or two clubs/centres before deciding which to visit, and a third of all these enquiries come in by email

centres on a like-for-like basis – the public sector operator often does not have the dedicated staff and systems at its disposal that the private sector clubs do – nonetheless, as the public sector increasingly tries to compete with the private sector on both service and facilities, it's important that it understands how it compares on points of customer contact such as inbound email handling.

## recommendations

**Website/enquiry forms:** Operators must make it easy for potential members to make enquiries about the specific clubs they're interested in. Prospects should be able to fill in a simple form – they shouldn't have to provide too much personal information at this stage – or send an email within three clicks of the home page. They should also be told how quickly they should expect a response.

**Response times:** Most people expect a response to an email within one working day. A response within a few hours will delight them; a response within two or three days may be too late. Operators should therefore set up robust systems and procedures to ensure that stated

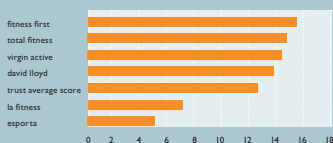
targets are met, and should certainly not rely on auto responses to hold the fort.

**Information/content:** Responses must be personal to the individual enquiry, not just a standard 'ring me for more information'.

There's a fine balance to be struck between getting the level of information and personalisation correct, but at the same time not giving so much away that the enquirer doesn't feel they need to follow up. The call to action should ideally include a real incentive for them to contact the centre/club – for example: "If you can ring me today, I can arrange for a free day pass for you straight away. My direct line is...".

**Professionalism:** We wouldn't expect staff to write letters or answer the phone without being given some standards, training and guidance, so don't let them loose on emails. Establish some templates

**figure 2 overall operator score averages (max score 25)**



and some simple dos and don'ts, but allow them to personalise responses within these guidelines. Above all, keep the spelling and grammar tight, and don't resort to text speak or being too informal: unlike face-to-face or telephone contact, when communicating by email you can't pick up pointers as to what sort of person you're talking to in terms of age, education and how they like to be communicated with, so you must play safe.

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INDEPENDENT  
OPERATOR FOCUS

## dave wright

The new FIA board representative for single site operators talks to Kath Hudson about making the voice of independents heard



**A**s owner of Feelgood Fitness & Ladies-only Suite, a six-strong independent health club operation – as well as CEO of Creative Fitness Marketing, a sales and marketing company specialising in the independent sector – Dave Wright has replaced Reebok Sports Club's Ian Mahoney as representative for independent operators on the FIA board. He talks about his plans to make the voice of independent operators heard.

**Q** Why did you want to be on the FIA board?  
I was nominated by a few people within the independent sector. I figured I could continue complaining, or get stuck in and make some changes from the inside. I aim to be the down-to-earth voice of the independent sector on the FIA board. It will be an exciting way to unite the whole industry.

**Q** Why do you think the FIA wanted you on its board?  
I had the great privilege of founding Independent Operators Unite (IOU) at Leisure Industry Week in September, in

an attempt to support independent operators. Five hundred delegates came to the meeting, which shows that they're looking for support and keen to band together. The FIA is keen to capitalise on that and get them as members; there are around 2,000–3,000 independent operators in the UK, but only about 200 are currently FIA members.

Independents want some form of togetherness. IOU will therefore become a collection of independent clubs ring-fenced within the FIA, but nevertheless sitting under its umbrella.

**Q** What changes do you want to make?  
The FIA has failed the independent sector in the past. At the moment, there's no value in an independent club joining the FIA, and the FIA would be the first to admit that. The association was formed by the multiple site chains and is geared towards them, especially with the block voting system – votes are commensurate with the size of the company, which makes the whole thing a bit of an old boys' club. That's one of the first things I want to change.

**Q** How can you encourage independent operators to join?  
What we need to do first of all is add value to the membership, as this will immediately enhance its appeal. One of the best ways of doing this is to use economies of scale to boost independents' buying power. I've written to every supplier and their reaction has been terrific, because they also know this is a huge potential market.

Another way to encourage independents to join the FIA would be for membership to include the provision of advice and support on issues like risk assessment, health and safety procedures,



Wright wants TV ads that encourage people to call and find their nearest FIA gym



## fia board 2010

ROB BARKER – representative for industry suppliers  
BLANE DODDS – representative for sport and leisure trusts  
HEATHER FRANKHAM – representative for educational providers  
JOHN GAMBLE – representative for multi-site operators  
GRAEME HINDE – representative for public sector operators  
ANDY JACKSON – vice chair  
ROBIN JOHNSON – representative for multi-site operators  
NIKI KEENE – representative for multi-site operators  
NEIL KING – representative for leisure management contractors  
SCOTT LLOYD – representative for multi-site operators  
TONY MAJAKAS – representative for industry suppliers  
STEPHEN STUDD – representative for SkillsActive  
HARM TEGELAARS – treasurer and EU representative  
FRED TUROK – chair  
DAVE WRIGHT – representative for single-site operators

PRS, employment issues and new legislation, and general business advice.

For many independent operators, fitness is a vocation rather than a business: they don't always know what they should be doing, which could potentially get them into trouble. For example, there was a tragedy at an independent gym recently where a piece of equipment fell on a member, hit him on the bridge of the nose and killed him. The owner of the gym hadn't undertaken a risk assessment, didn't know anything about servicing, and didn't have any health and safety guidelines or a pre-activity questionnaire. That tragedy may have been prevented if the owner of the gym had been part of a support network that informed him on these issues.

Independent operators don't always want to spend money on things like a legally drawn-up pre-activity questionnaire, and this is an area where the FIA can help, because it has already invested in that sort of thing.

But my job won't be to sell the FIA – it will be to make sure the FIA is the voice of the independent sector. There's a lot happening in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics, and I want to make sure I'm at the coalface when decisions are made and government handouts are awarded, so the independents are at the front of the line too.

**Q** What's the state of the independent sector now?  
In the UK, many people still think of the health club industry as being split into upmarket chains on one side, and spit and sawdust clubs on the other. I want to raise the standard of the independent health club operations. I'm not saying all independent operators need to pull their socks up, but I do think many could benefit from sound business advice.

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/IZENON



A friendly service is one of the key advantages of the independent operator

One of the things they're good at, though, is connecting with people and providing a personal touch. This approach – non-trendy but very friendly – is attractive to many people. Independents are nearly always priced better, too. However, one of the threats facing the sector are the low-cost clubs from Europe and the US, which are coming in offering membership at £9 a month with no contract. This is assimilating the independents' market.

**Q** What else should the FIA be looking at?  
Across the board, what really needs to be done – irrespective of whether it's chains or independents – is educating the public to exercise. Ideally we want to turn on the TV and see adverts showing

the benefits of exercise, with a phone number people can call to find their nearest FIA club. I personally believe the FIA could fund that. If 3,000 clubs were to pay an extra £10 a month, that's £30,000 a month, or £360,000 a year, dedicated to promoting exercise on TV.

The FIA is also lobbying government to make company gym membership tax-deductible. Currently – even though they're doing something that will save the NHS, and the economy, money – both employer and employee are taxed. But MPs are already listening more and now, with the Olympics, there's the potential to move forward. This is a time for the industry to be united, not fragmented.



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# good vibrations

Vibration training equipment is becoming standard in most gyms, yet often it's not taken full advantage of by members – frequently because they don't know how to use it. In order to instruct members, gym staff must also know how to use the technology – and this often requires specialist training. We ask manufacturers and distributors of vibration training platforms to provide their expert advice about the best way gyms can offer this equipment and train their staff – to provide a good service to their members, to stop the machines standing idle, and even to encourage cross-selling of other services.

richard mattis md, pipedreams (galileo)



**D**ue to the technical nature of Whole Body Vibration (WBV) training equipment, it's better that gym instructors have had prior training, not only so that they can explain with competence the applications and effects of WBV, but also to ensure that they have the confidence to take a member through the full range of basic through to advanced exercises.

Training to become a Galileo practitioner costs the operator £125 per person trained, but this is included with the purchase of the equipment. The Galileo Training Workshop, carried out on-site, is designed to enable students to integrate the Galileo WBV into existing anaerobic training protocols via a number of case studies, and includes exercises or training poses which cover individuals who are deconditioned right through to elite athletes. In our opinion, this approach works as it stops students treating the Galileo WBV as an exclusive piece of equipment.

We always focus on a junior member of management becoming a Galileo Champion who, in turn, will further train and develop their team. This approach means the Galileo Champion is able to mentor instructors and teach new staff the basics before we take over. However, our primary focus is customer-facing, and we've never had a situation where there wasn't anyone at a site who was able to use our equipment.

Our training workshop is REPs accredited and carries 10 CPD credits. Our training enables the student to train most gym members apart from those with disabilities. This requires more specialised training, which we also offer; we deliver a number of specialist training modules that are geared toward the medical sector, as we have a strong presence there.

We've been advocates of WBV being an integrated piece of equipment since we launched Galileo in the UK in 2005. It's a shame some of our competitors did not adopt the same stance then: if they had, more WBV machines would be better used now. Training is the common denominator here: if it's integral and of high quality, in our experience staff get behind the equipment, make it work on-site and pass on better quality training to members who, in turn, have the confidence to use it.

Members shouldn't be charged to use or learn to use WBV: if you charge for any equipment, you exclude most of your members who already pay good money for gym membership. WBV should be accessible to all so they can reap the benefits of the technology.

WBV is an attractive sales tool if utilised and marketed correctly. Membership will increase if operators seize the opportunity it presents by proactively selling the applications and effects of WBV to their members. ▶



Vibration training should be fully integrated into a gym's offering, says Galileo's Richard Mattis

lars harms head of education &amp; training, power plate uk



Once a fitness centre has installed Power Plate equipment, it's imperative that every member of staff that will be training members on the machine becomes certified to do so.

To become certified, they need to attend a one-day Fitness & Performance Core Fundamentals course, which is REPs accredited. Once certified, trainers can then choose to attend more specialist courses, such as Post Natal and Fitness & Performance Integration. Each certificate is valid for one year, so an annual re-sit is mandatory if trainers wish to continue training members on the machine.

An online learning tool is also available to trainers via PTontheNet.

When purchasing a Power Plate machine, training is not included in the overall cost. The price is dependent on the number of staff who take the course and whether the training is being conducted online or at one of the three Power Plate Academy sites.

If trained members of staff leave and there's no-one left to induct members, then the fitness facility needs to book new members of staff onto a training course. In the interim, staff can request information from one of the Academy sites in London, Harrogate and Edinburgh, or purchase the Fitness & Performance



At Virgin Active, Power Plate machines are well used by personal trainers

Core Fundamentals course from PTontheNet, to gain a basic knowledge of the machine before attending a one-day certification course. For insurance reasons, we recommend that trainers do not train members on the machine until they are fully certified to do so.

Once a trainer is a qualified Power Plate instructor, they can teach any

members at any gym, as long as their certificate is valid and they renew it on an annual basis.

If the club and the trainers really get behind the machine and the technology, then we find it's in constant use by members, whether in a class environment or on the gym floor. At Virgin Active, for example, the Power Plate sessions are the second highest performing gym floor class, and this is due to the fact that it's a major focus for the chain. The Power Plates are also heavily used by trainers and PTs and they're leading the way for members to use them on their own, too. As soon as a new member of training staff joins, they're immediately sent onto the Core Fundamentals course. This approach works very effectively for them.

The Power Plate is a versatile machine that can be used by a wide range of gym users: a young person wanting to tone up, an elderly client needing to increase bone density, an MS or Parkinson's sufferer for circulation/massage, or bodybuilders for 'prehab' and regeneration. The machine can be used on its own or incorporated into a wider training regime, and it has recently achieved its MDD (medical device directive) class II certificate, making it even more relevant as a medical tool.

The Power Plate machine may not be for everyone, but gym staff should approach every training method with an open mind.



Every member of staff using Power Plate must be trained by the company

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## simon wright md, dynamic activity

Vibration training can and should provide a good return on investment (ROI) for health club operators and for members who use it. In order to achieve this, however, it's vital that operators choose the right platform for their business goals and their members, with a clear plan of implementation. Just purchasing a platform and placing it on the gym floor will not get the required ROI.

Dynamic Activity views its **bodycore** platforms as 'functional training platforms': the effect of exercises can be significantly enhanced when used

in combination with vibration training. Operating the platforms only needs straightforward training, but training is required to deliver the functional exercises that can be performed on the platforms, in much the same way that training is required for kit such as TRX, kettlebells and BOSU balls.

We're working with some of the leading trainers, customising our training courses in conjunction with the needs and the kit available at a club.

With significantly smaller investment required to implement **bodycore** functional training platforms than

traditional vibration platforms, it's possible for operators to use them as part of a specialist training programme and still achieve the ROI required. In our experience, however, the best ROI is not achieved by charging for use of the platforms – it's not practical to restrict usage of specific pieces of equipment on the gym floor – but through additional personal training revenue, as well as through increased retention resulting from members achieving their goals more effectively and efficiently.



## graham taylor md, bodycoach vibration training systems uk

As with most serious fitness equipment and programmes, good quality training for members using vibration machines is absolutely essential.

Unfortunately, there are many vibration machines – across all brands – which lay virtually unused in clubs, because there's no effort being made to instruct members, or because the quality of instruction is poor. A lot of people are put off gyms in general, and equipment in particular, by poor instruction: a large proportion of gym members would use vibration training

if they were correctly trained. This training doesn't have to be one-to-one – small groups can be trained, during induction for example – but this training needs to be thorough, not cursory. It can take up to four hours per group. In some cases, members could be charged extra, but only for first-class instruction.

We recommend that staff should be trained by suitably qualified people, not by colleagues. They need to be fully conversant with the postures, techniques and physiology surrounding vibration training: the 'filter down' method tends to result in poor training for members,

which in turn leads to machines lying idle.

There's a cost for training, whether this is included in the equipment cost or negotiated separately. Clubs should try to train as many instructors as are necessary to ensure members get easy access to training: training several staff at once will also bring down the cost.

Ultimately, how staff are trained and how members are instructed is down to the management of the facility – but it should also be a case of co-operation between operators and suppliers.



## kevin barclay-webb ceo, advanced wellness distribution (vibrogym/pneumex distributor)

Vibration training is a specialised area. As well as the standard gym members who use the vibration plates, we use Vibro Therapy as a tool to attract parts of the community who might not normally use a gym – for example, for the grey market, people with disabilities or sports injuries, and for posture and gait correction. When dealing with these sections of the population, a great deal of responsibility is involved – it's very easy to cause damage to a client if they don't use vibration training correctly.

With this in mind, we advise that all clients – whether they're international athletes or people in their senior years – have three 20-minute personal training sessions with a qualified Vibro Therapist before they're allowed to use the equipment unsupervised. This ensures that the client can use the vibration plate in a safe and effective way.

The PT sessions also enable the trainer to give the client their own individual workout, which helps with upselling of further PT sessions – to continue regular training, to periodically upgrade the workout, or even for referrals.

I would advise that you do charge the client for the training sessions, but not too much. If you don't charge, the client won't respect the information given,

but overcharging will be off-putting. Use the sessions as a loss leader and charge around £30 for the three sessions.

To become a Vibro Therapist, all gym staff must be trained by us. We don't encourage staff to train each other as it's such a specialised subject. This costs £250 plus VAT for Levels 1 and 2 – a one-day course. Level 3 involves three-hour specialised workshops – golf-specific usage, for example – at £95 plus VAT.

It's vital that the gym's management and team buy into vibration training and invest in the correct training if they're providing the equipment, otherwise it's a complete waste of time having the machines in the gym at all.



Vibrogym equipment is used by gym members with medical conditions



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healthclub@leisuremedia.com



# USAGE INSTRUCTIONS

Sarah Owen asks manufacturers to give the low-down on their favourite piece of CV equipment

19" screen allows users to view the landscape they're cycling through



## EXPRESSO BIKE/JUNIOR EXPRESSO BIKE – PTE/ZIGZAG

The Expresso bike offers users the adventure of outdoor riding, but indoors, through a series of interactive workouts. Web-based technology and 19-inch screens allow exercisers to view the landscape, route map and other riders as they take part in any one of 30 on-screen tours as well as a range of games.

### TARGET MARKET:

The Junior Expresso can be used by children as young as 10. However, there's no upper age limit, with courses to suit all abilities – from a gentle mile-long ride to challenging courses of more than 20 miles, featuring climbs of up to 7,000 feet, which take even experienced gym-goers more than an hour to complete.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

Users can select courses or games to suit the workout time and intensity they require. Hi-tec graphics entertain and engage, while the constant need to adjust gears, steer and watch the clock and other competitors means the workout is both mentally and physically stimulating.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

The bikes are wirelessly connected to the internet and automatically link together in a class setting so riders can compete against each other. They also offer a unique 'power assist' option – similar to applying handicaps – so all abilities can compete fairly. Progress can be logged on the [expresso.net](http://expresso.net) website.

## ADAPTIVE MOTION TRAINER – PRECOR

Precor's award-winning AMT allows users to instantly change their stride, speed and direction naturally, without manual adjustment. This user-defined adaptive motion means no two workouts are the same, constantly presenting users with new challenges.

### TARGET MARKET:

The AMT's zero-impact makes it suitable for all gym users. New user surveys show 97 per cent of people who've tried it say they enjoyed exercising on it, while 45 per cent say it's become their favourite piece of kit.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

Users can follow a course of set routines specifically designed to improve fitness levels, burn fat, tone

or work towards a set goal – eg ski fitness. Alternatively, they can let their imagination and inclination set the pace and style of their session.

The AMT's instant change versatility also makes it perfect for fast-paced, engaging group classes combining fat-burning, body conditioning and increasing CV capacity.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

Independent research shows the AMT elicits higher oxygen consumption and calorie expenditure compared to many other cardio fitness trainers. This translates into a more intensive and challenging workout, producing faster results and improving cardio-respiratory fitness.



Naturally change your stride length – no need for manual adjustment

## DANCE MACHINE – PULSE

Based on the four-arrow North, South, East and West dance concept, the Dance Machine allows up to 32 people to play together at the same time.

### TARGET MARKET:

The main target audience for Dance Machine tends to be children, particularly those who are disengaged from traditional sports and activities. However, its interactive technology appeals to both children and adults alike, either as part of a standard group session or as a family activity. Pulse has also recently installed an eight-player dance mat system at an Age Concern Centre in Wolverhampton.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

The simple 'plug and play' system offered by the Dance Machine is truly mobile and features a powerful, real-time, 3D graphic game engine/software. Dance steps are projected via arrows onto a



Up to 32 people can play together at the same time on Pulse's Dance Machine

wall or screen and players follow them on foot-activated mats, which are wirelessly connected to a computer.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

As well as offering the usual health benefits of an aerobic, full body workout,

Dance Machine is also known to have successfully catered for groups with neurological disabilities such as dyspraxia, autism and dyslexia. It can help improve brain/body co-ordination, concentration, focus and spatial awareness.

## PRO2 ALL BODY EXERCISER – SCIFIT



PRO2: Suitable for all users

The synchronised arm and leg pedals of the PRO2 all-body ergometer are operated from a seated position. The upper and lower cranks can also be used in isolation with the simple removal/tethering of the non-required part.

### TARGET MARKET:

Its fully adjustable features mean it's suitable for all gym users. The swivel seat with side handles can be easily removed for wheelchair access, while wheelchair ramps, platforms and tie-downs are also available.

The PRO2 offers six programmes that provide a variety of training options to suit the needs of all users, from the deconditioned through casual gym-users to elite athletes.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

The programmes can be adapted to users' needs. For example, the ISO Kinetic strength programme sets effort against a given RPM. Once this has been exceeded, it increases relative to the effort exerted. Conversely, the low start-up speed and constant workload programme aids workouts aimed at weight loss or a gradual build-up of fitness levels.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

There are two variations of the PRO2 – the Sport and the Stage 2, which has full Inclusive Exercise Equipment Accreditation. Both have identical internal workings but different external features.

## M5 STRIDER – KEISER

Small and portable, Keiser's M5 elliptical is highly engineered to offer a super-smooth resistance system.

### TARGET MARKET:

Although it has been built with broad appeal in mind, the M5 offers nil resistance at start-up as well as a 'get on and go' capability, making it ideal for deconditioned and older users and for rehabilitation. At the other end of the spectrum, the M5's on-board



The small footprint M5 is an obvious choice for group elliptical classes

computer enables more advanced users to monitor their power output over any given period for a truly effective workout time after time.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

Similar in size to a studio cycle, the M5 is an obvious choice for group elliptical classes – an emerging trend as the cross-trainer grows in popularity. It also offers an alternative warm-up machine to the exercise bike and can be used on the gym floor.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

Designed with the operator in mind, the M5 has an innovative, low maintenance design, small

footprint and intuitive computer. It also offers portability, smooth magnetic resistance and a quiet ride – and consumes no energy, meaning that it has excellent green credentials. ▶

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## ESPINNER – STAR TRAC



Star Trac's eSpinner takes Spinning onto the gym floor

Designed to take Spinning out of the group cycling studio and onto the cardio floor, the eSpinning offers users the chance to experience the benefits of a Spinning class whenever they want, and on their own terms.

### TARGET MARKET:

The eSpinning's programming options are designed for everyone, from first-time riders to cycling enthusiasts and 'weekend warriors' looking for cross-training. Each ride is based on the proven methodology of the Spinning programme; options include endurance, interval, strength and race-day training.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

Beginners can use the eSpinning to familiarise themselves with Spinning, building their own programme and working with the on-screen instructor to increase their confidence and agility before joining a class. Meanwhile, more experienced Spinning fans can jump on and enjoy a class at any time, rather than having to fit in with a gym's timetable.

Users simply select the training type they would like, choose their time goal and intensity level, and then set off on a guided virtual Spinning experience. There's also a choice of music genres to motivate riders, including pop, rock and jazz.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

The eSpinning's chain-driven mechanism offers versatility in settings and gives users a realistic on-bike feel.

## VARIO – TECHNOGYM

VARIO lets users replicate their natural walking or running motion, including different stride lengths, but without impact on the joints. It also offers the choice of working the whole body by moving the machine's handles, or keeping them static and using just the lower body.

### TARGET MARKET:

VARIO allows individuals to work within their natural stride and is seen as a logical progression for those who use a cross-trainer, as well as for aspiring runners who currently walk on a treadmill. Its impact-free element also benefits the deconditioned, elderly and injured, providing an alternative way to train.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

As VARIO is built around natural stride length, an individual should start their workout using a stride length that feels comfortable. They can then work up to more challenging goals – including more strides per minute, building levels of resistance, integrating the upper body or increasing stride length – as they grow in endurance and confidence.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

Heart-rate training or pre-defined programmes can be used as motivational tools to keep users engaged – for example, using different stride lengths to change the pace during interval training.



VARIO: Replication of natural walking/running motion, including stride length

## KRANKCYCLE – MATRIX



The KRANKcycle can be used in a seated or a standing position

The KRANKcycle builds both CV performance and strength, as well as developing the core, while giving the legs a chance to rest. Regular use improves posture and corrects rounded shoulders, as well as increasing metabolism.

### TARGET MARKET:

Because of its seated position, it's suitable for most gym users. As well as toning and balancing the upper body, it's been proven to burn as many – if not more – calories as similar exercises that use the legs.

### USAGE AND RESULTS:

The KRANKcycle can be used on its own, in conjunction with a lower-body piece of equipment, or in a POWER Kranking exercise class – a comprehensive workout that uses all training intensities and combines intervals of maximum effort with limited recovery to peak heart rates and produce high-caloric burns.

### ADDED EXTRAS:

As well as the obvious two-handed position, the KRANKcycle can also be used with one arm only or cranked backwards, and can be used sitting or standing – either on one leg or two, or with the legs bent at different angles to increase intensity.

### XR6000 – OCTANE

This seated cross-trainer can be used for upper body only (pushing/pulling), lower body only, or for total body, and can go forwards and backwards.

#### TARGET MARKET:

As well as adding an extra option for all gym users, the xR6000 is ideal for rehabilitation work and for personal trainers who need to cater for a wide range of users.

#### USAGE AND RESULTS:

The variety offered by the xR6000 means it appeals to the whole spectrum of fitness users. Those just starting out in their fitness journey can enjoy a varied workout without overloading any muscle group, for example, while those doing rehab work can focus on the different areas they need to develop/rebuild. It's also



**Octane:** Flexibility in workout options

suitable for deconditioned users, who may find it easier to do seated exercise, while more experienced gym-goers find it challenges them in new and unexpected ways.

### ELEVATION SERIES 95T TREADMILL – LIFE FITNESS

Designed with the way people exercise in mind, this intuitive, dynamic machine ensures maximum workout efficiency.

#### TARGET MARKET:

With 52 programmes and three console options, it's suitable for all users. Group indoor running classes are also gaining in popularity, while its low speed settings (right down to 0.8kph) mean it's perfect for cardiac rehab too.

#### USAGE AND RESULTS:

The different console options provide great flexibility in workouts. For example, the speed interval programme allows a user to dictate the length and



speed of each interval, as opposed to using pre-set intervals. Meanwhile the Virtual Trainer programme, available on the Engage and Inspire consoles, offers an on-screen trainer to motivate users.

### 750 ARC TRAINER – CYBEX

Offering all the benefits of its award-winning predecessor but with a sleeker, curvier silhouette and design adaptations to help increase user comfort and reduce maintenance, the Arc can develop strength, speed, power and CV fitness.



#### TARGET MARKET:

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# social dialogue

Sean James looks at the relationship between CRM and social media

**S**ocial media. We're all familiar with the term, but what exactly do we mean by it? To set it in context, traditional media (newspapers, magazines, brochures, flyers etc) are defined as 'broadcast media monologues' – one-way communication on a one-to-many basis. In web media terms, this is essentially

Web 1.0 – websites that broadcast a message but that are not interactive.

The social media category, meanwhile, can be defined as 'social media dialogues' – two-directional and communicating many-to-many, based on the principle of democratisation of knowledge, information and communication. Distributed through social interaction over the internet, it transforms people from content consumers into content producers. This is what Web 2.0 is all about: websites and applications that are interactive. Social media takes that

**96 per cent of Generation Y (population birthdates 1980–1999) belong to a social network**

interactivity and democratically shares and discusses it. It essentially empowers the consumer and gives them a voice.

## social media in business

When it comes to customer relationship management, social media presents businesses with a bi-directional challenge. ►



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Used well, social media can help to develop a sense of community at your club

► If you engage with social media for your business, you need to take a much more hands-on relationship management approach and closely manage your social media group/fan page. The upside is that engaged social media increases the size and frequency of customer interactions, while in many cases the customers also create valuable content and become brand champions for you.

In many industries, social media is now a designated marketing area in its own right, commanding a discussion point in any marketing meeting alongside website and e-zine communications. So is it applicable to health clubs? It's perhaps too soon to say, as there are only a handful of operators engaging with it. However, outside of health and fitness, the take-up, continued use, apparent longevity and preference of social media websites – particularly with Generation Y – suggest we need to at least take it seriously, learning what it is and how it works.

Most businesses have a website nowadays, but you need to understand where your website sits within the digital

marketing hierarchy. Your website is your online shop window. Paper brochures now tend to be used only for outreach marketing – high street and exhibitions – and to provide take-away information for walk-ins. Your website is like a fluid brochure, allowing you to quickly and easily change your message, create instant offers and process enquiries.

However, if it's not interactive, it's still a Web 1.0 'broadcast media monologue'. It might be a great tool for people who are looking specifically for you to find information, but a mere presence is no longer enough. Nowadays, companies have to interact. Social media provides a platform to do this beyond the boundaries of the club – but if you're going to engage, you need to get it right. Think social dialogue, not broadcast monologue.

### social media and management software

The leading health and fitness membership management software companies have been offering interactive solutions for quite some time. These essentially allow

members to register interest in a club online (details going into the management system's prospect database), join online (details going into the management system's membership database) and book online (members log in and can book sessions, classes and so on).

A social media site for your club can use the above interactive elements embedded within your club's profile page. There are not many, if any, UK clubs doing this at present, but in the US there are a couple of excellent examples. For example, 24 Hour Fitness has a Facebook fan page with more than 60,000 fans, while Gold's Gym has one with more than 30,000 fans. Both companies have incorporated interactive aspects of their websites into their fan pages and actively engage with their fans. It's early days but, given the success of comparethemarket.com's campaign – the meerkat, Alexander Orlov has more than 600,000 fans – and others that have enjoyed similar social media success, it's likely that we will see more and more fitness case studies in social media in the future.

In addition, building on the success of the Web 2.0 utilities already developed and successfully operating online at many clubs and leisure centres, UK health club management software providers are now starting to develop some very interesting ideas for social media.

Darrell Boxall, MD of XN Leisure, explains: "Online interactivity was

A mere online presence is no longer enough; nowadays, companies have to interact



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► initially a government directive, and I think we all viewed it at first with some scepticism with regards to its likely usage and success. However, over 18 to 24 months, it's become very clear that online interactivity is not just a nice add-on but now almost an expectation. As a result, we've put a lot more emphasis on our online development and will be releasing an increasing number of tools and utilities."

In discussing specific applications for social media, Boxall agrees that the flexibility of the social media platforms mean that links and applications can easily embed some of the online tools that management system providers have already created. "We now live in a 'convenience age'. Technological advances mean that users expect convenience and 'social' solutions. We have to take that on-board in our next range of developments," he adds.

Like most other membership management software providers, SDA also has a comprehensive suite of Web 2.0 utilities to enable member interactivity with a club online. But it has gone a stage further: 24 months ago, the company made a decision to embrace social media. Now all SDA organisational processes, as well as the product portfolio, embrace a collaborative approach to products and services – both between SDA and



PHOTO: PHOTOFEST.COM/AMBERN/VIEW

**Twitter allows your customers to instantly broadcast their review of your facility**

its clients, and between its clients and their members.

For example, SDA has integrated popular social media platform Twitter into its Leisure Point software. MD Stuart Dyson says: "Using our Application Planning Interface (API) and Twitter, health club members can 'tweet' other members or club staff whenever

they check in or make a booking, for example. The 'tweet' can go to whoever the member wants it to go to and is completely automatic. We're effectively encouraging friends, family and workmates to become part of the retention team rather than the club trying, and often failing, to do it all."

### help at hand

There's no denying that social media is powerful, providing a good platform to engage health club members beyond the boundaries of the club. It can be an excellent marketing tool, strengthening customer communications and customer relationships and reinforcing the 'community' atmosphere of your club.

However, just like proper use of your management system, to use social media effectively you need to understand it and know how to use it. You need to know how to post, how to reply, how to moderate, how to add events, add applications and embed links. So yes, it's another piece of technology to learn and manage. Yes, it's more work. But judging by successes in other industries, it could well be worth it. And it's not a lonely path you'll be taking: club management system providers are already one step ahead of you and are keen to get involved in helping, advising and providing solutions to help you engage.



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## SOCIAL MEDIA – BASIC STATISTICS

- By this year, Generation Y (population birthdates 1980–1999) will outnumber Baby Boomers, and 96 per cent of them have joined a social network
- Social media has overtaken porn as the number one activity on the web
- One in eight couples married in the US last year met via social media
- Years to reach 50 millions users: radio, 38 years; TV, 13 years; internet, four years; iPod, three years... but Facebook added 100 million users in less than nine months and recently announced 300 million users, while iPhone applications hit one billion in nine months
- If Facebook were a country, it would be the world's fourth largest – between the United States and Indonesia
- The fastest-growing segment on Facebook is 55- to 65-year-old women
- 80 per cent of Twitter usage takes place outside of Twitter – people pick up and post tweets without having to actually visit the Twitter website, updating anywhere, anytime. Imagine what that means for bad customer experiences...
- Generations Y and Z consider email passé; in 2009, Boston College stopped distributing email addresses to incoming freshmen
- The second largest search engine in the world is YouTube
- 25 per cent of internet search results for the world's 20 largest brands are in fact links to user-generated content
- 34 per cent of bloggers post opinions about products and brands
- 78 per cent of consumers trust peer recommendations – but only 14 per cent trust advertisements

Source: 1 media connection, December 2009



# year of change

How will this year's inevitable upheaval in the political landscape affect the physical activity sectors?  
George McGregor investigates

**W**hatever the political complexion of the next government, it faces a mammoth and compelling priority that's likely to stretch through the next two parliaments and potentially beyond: restoring the health of UK public finances. Budget cuts are inevitable. So how will this affect the sports world in general, and the health and fitness industry in particular?

## culture, media and sport

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is key to the fitness industry, encompassing as it does both sport and the 2012 Olympics. It may be tiny in terms of budget, particularly in comparison to the billions spent on hospitals and schools – DCMS spends just £1 of every £300 spent by government, with the current total DCMS budget

(revenue and capital) sitting at £2.1bn (DCMS ministers have no say on precisely how the £9.3bn for the Olympics is spent, having only a general overseeing role). However, it has one of the broadest reaches of any government department, with responsibility for sectors touching the daily lives of most UK citizens.

As 97 per cent of the total DCMS budget is allocated to around 55 sponsored bodies, including Sport England, any tightening of the DCMS budget will fall disproportionately on these organisations. Many have already had to announce either cuts or restructuring. A number of programmes running across the fitness industry are funded by Sport England, and DCMS budget cuts would likely affect them.

DCMS issues are not typically battleground issues at General Election time, lacking the political

**Making a splash: By 2012, Labour hopes to roll out its free swimming initiative, making it available to everyone across the UK**

salience of health, education and the economy. Nevertheless, each of the competing DCMS teams – led by Ben Bradshaw for Labour and Jeremy Hunt for the Conservatives – is seeking to demonstrate that they would be more sympathetic and effective custodians of the nation's cultural and sporting heritage, and more effective supporters of the "New Economy".

On sport, the parties will try to maintain a truce on the Olympics and both will strongly support England's bid for the 2018 World Cup. However, dividing lines are beginning to appear on other issues. Whoever ends up as Secretary of State is likely to face the same daunting challenge of overseeing a department whose budget is likely to be frozen or reduced in real terms. Difficult decisions will have to be taken about what to cut and what to protect. These will inevitably produce a fierce kickback from those who rely on funding.

**"SPORT ENGLAND CURRENTLY FUNDS A  
NUMBER OF PROGRAMMES IN THE FITNESS  
SECTOR, BUT DCMS CUTS MAY AFFECT THIS"**

## ► the olympics

The public will not countenance a further increase in the Olympics budget beyond the £9.3bn allocated, but calls on the contingency within this total have already been made – the recession has meant government has had to step in to fund the Olympic Village, International Broadcast Centre and Main Press Centre. Meanwhile, the cost of security is also expected to escalate, and it will be very tricky for ministers to decline requests by the police or security services to take added measures to protect athletes, visitors and the media.

Labour has sought to argue that hosting the Games represents a unique opportunity to help the country ride out the recession and keep international investment flowing at a crucial time. Labour is also highlighting the speed of the build programme, with one-third already completed and construction of the Olympic Stadium and Aquatics Centre well underway.

The Conservatives are much more wary about the Games' cost. Shadow Sports Minister Hugh Robertson has previously castigated Labour "incompetence" for tripling the Olympics budget and raiding the Lottery to fund the Games, diverting resources away from grassroots sports clubs. A priority for the Conservatives will be to return the athletes' village to the private sector as soon as markets allow.

## "THE CONSERVATIVES WILL STRESS THE NEED FOR INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH"

There has even been speculation that the Conservatives would back an 'austerity Games' more in keeping with the economic climate. This is exaggerated: Cameron will want to wrap himself in the Union Jack and bask in the bounce his administration will gain for running a successful Olympics, especially given that the Games coincide with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the national celebrations this will generate.

### sporting legacy

The centrepiece of Labour's Olympic legacy plan is the launch of Free Swimming – a two-year, £140m initiative funded by the DCMS and other government departments. Launched in April 2009, 260 councils are now offering free swimming for people over 60, with almost 200 also doing so for children and young people. By 2012, Labour hopes to roll out Free Swimming to everyone.

The government is also committed to encouraging two million people to be more active by 2012: one million through sport and another one million by being more active in their everyday lives – for example, by walking and

doing gardening. Under-16s at school are to be offered five hours' PE a week as well as sporting opportunities, at a total cost of £782m. However, there have to be serious doubts about the deliverability of these plans given very tight budgets; even if resources are made available, it will be a huge task to encourage people to actually become more physically active.

The Conservatives have been scathing of the lack of progress in putting in place a strategy to deliver a sporting legacy. The Conservative programme will borrow heavily from the cross-party Independent Sports Review *Raising the Bar*, co-authored by former Sports Ministers Lord Moynihan and Labour MP Kate Hoey.

The Conservatives are likely to:

- Deliver additional financial support to sport by re-focusing the National Lottery – in conjunction with the National Lottery distributors – to establish a community sports funding stream
- Encourage Sport England, UK Sport and the Youth Sport Trust to work together to drive sporting participation in the UK, with school and community sport prioritised
- Re-invigorate competitive sport at school through inter-school fixtures and an Olympic-type event
- Emphasise primary school provision and school club links
- Enable local people and sports clubs across the country to match money raised locally to improve sports facilities

### public health

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, health was the battleground issue at General Elections: Labour accusing the Conservatives of planning to cut NHS spending and privatise services; the Conservatives attacking Labour for being in hock to their health union paymasters and for putting producer interests ahead of patient interests. Usually the best the Conservatives could hope for was to limit the electoral damage from the health issue.

The next General Election will be very different: the Conservative Party leadership has cleverly sought to avoid the NHS being a major dividing line between the parties. While Labour and the Conservatives will no doubt revert



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▲ The fitness sector could benefit from a shift in policy from prevention to cure





to type in the run-up to the General Election and seek to take lumps out of each other on health policy, the reality is that there is little that distinguishes their respective policy positions.

The Conservatives have highlighted the contrast between the ballooning of health expenditure over the past decade and the widening of health inequalities between the social classes. To address this, they propose a number of structural changes to help promote public health. They will ring-fence the public health budget, re-name the Department of Health as the Department of Public Health, and establish local Directors of Public Health appointed by PCTs and local authorities to manage public health budgets and improve co-ordination between them. They will also strengthen the Chief Medical Officer's Department, making it more independent of ministers. The CMO's Department would advise the Secretary of State, who would be directly responsible (rather than a junior minister) for public health.

The jury is out, however, on whether these will end up as mere cosmetic changes or whether they will genuinely drive a re-focusing of the priorities of the NHS towards prevention rather

than cure; on past experience, token changes to the NHS structure have failed to deliver their desired outcomes.

The Conservative default position on public health is that legislation will be used as a last resort. Building on their enthusiasm for a behaviouralist model of public health, they have embraced 'nudge theory' promoted by US academics Richard H Thaler and Cass R Sunstein – an approach that highlights the best option, while still leaving the other options open for those who actively want to choose these, as a way of encouraging more people to make the right decision. The Conservatives want to empower people and local communities – and to work in partnership with business, local government, communities and families – to deliver a healthy living agenda in schools, workplaces, local clubs and through NHS services.

Shadow Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has welcomed the publication of a Public Health Commission report entitled *We're All In This Together, Improving the Long Term Health of the Nation*. The Commission was an independent expert committee convened by Lansley – including FIA chair Fred Turok – which set out a range of recommendations

▲ **The Conservatives will aim to re-invigorate competitive sport at school through inter-school fixtures and an Olympic-style event**

to encourage business, charities and public sector organisations to tackle issues around diet, alcohol consumption and physical activity. We can expect the Conservatives to use this model as and when they enter government. Responsibility Deals will be struck in these areas, with a voluntary approach tried before legislation is countenanced. The need for individual and corporate responsibility will be stressed.

#### to be determined...

The sports and fitness industries should take solace from cross-party support of the Olympic sporting legacy and public health. However, the task of restoring the health of UK public finances is monumental and the priority for both parties. Neither has fully costed their budgets and, when the time comes, further tightening is inevitable. No-one is immune.



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## health club spa

edited by kate cracknell. email: kate.cracknell@leisuremedia.com

## first raison d'être branded spa

Spa development and management consultancy Raison d'Être launched its first branded spa in November.

The new Raison d'Être Spa, located in The Grand Hotel Stockholm in Sweden, is the brand's flagship site – a joint venture between its development company, Raison d'Être Spas, and the hotel.

Spread over two floors, the 1,400sq m (15,069sq ft) spa offers eight treatment rooms complemented by state-of-the-art fitness and wellness facilities.

The 225sq m fitness suite – equipped by Life Fitness and Eleiko – incorporates designated functional training areas, with equipment including medicine balls, balance boards and kettlebells. The cardio area is in a separate enclosed room, with a slightly lower temperature to ensure comfort for exercisers. There's also a yoga studio, swimming pool and several dry and wet relaxation areas.



**The spa merges a Nordic theme with a contemporary design**

In addition, guests can enjoy Nordic Bathing – said to cleanse and invigorate with the use of extreme temperatures delivered via saunas and cold baths.

Membership, which costs €2,250 a year, is limited to 300 members to ensure a sense of privacy. Hotel guests also have access to the facilities.

## customer insight for spa sector

Leisure-net Solutions is expanding its mystery shopping services into the European spa industry.

The company's annual HAFOS survey already offers data on consumer attitudes towards fitness, health and leisure. This has now been extended to look at public perception of spas; results will be released at SPATEC in April.

A call-Focus survey for spas is also being launched, again in-line with the existing health club survey, to assess the way that spas answer both telephone and email enquiries. It will include calls and emails to more than 100 sites across health club, hotel and independent spas.

MD Mike Hill says: "We're taking our leisure- and fitness-related insight into the spa sector. Learning what spas are doing right and wrong, and how they can do better, is crucial to business success."

## upgrade for sensory spa at bannatyne health club in carlisle

Bannatyne Health Club in Carlisle has announced a programme of investment in excess of £75,000, including a major redevelopment of its Sensory Spa.

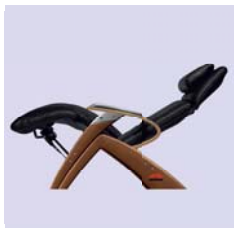
Enhancements at the spa will include a new relaxation room with four specialist water beds, as well as a new dual treatment room where couples and friends can enjoy a range of relaxing and rejuvenating treatments.

The new spa facilities will be introduced following a redesign of a section of the health club's interior. The new additions will complement the spa's three existing treatment rooms and its nail bar, all of which are open to both members and non-members.



**Couple's treatment: Duncan Bannatyne and his wife**

## new wellbeing division for johnson health tech



**Zero Gravity chairs: Feet higher than the heart for improved circulation**

Johnson Health Tech has launched a new wellbeing division: Inner Balance.

In terms of strategy and sales, the wellbeing arm will be run separately from the fitness business, which in the UK encompasses Matrix Fitness Systems and the Horizon and Vision brands. However Jon Johnston, MD of Johnson Health Tech UK, says this new venture "was a logical move for Johnson to diversify its global business. The wellness industry perfectly aligns with Johnson's corporate mission to improve people's health and wellbeing".

The first products will launch in the UK this month, distributed by Inner Balance UK. Designed to be stylish and high

quality yet affordable, the range includes massage chairs, foot spas, 'plug in and go' saunas and Zero Gravity chairs. The latter have a 180-degree recline, designed to reduce compression of the spine and relieve back pain, as well as increase blood circulation by placing the feet higher than the heart. Airbag massage is also incorporated to further reduce stress.

Key target markets for Inner Balance include hotels, corporate facilities, local authority sites and independent operators – facilities that wish to create a wellbeing offering, but that have limited budget and/or space. The range will also be sold through retail channels.

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# CREATING AN EXPERIENCE...

Successful spas are those that create an experience rather than merely offering a range of treatments.

Kate Cracknell asks our panel of experts for their advice on how health clubs can achieve this

## NICK COUTTS

CEO, HOLMES PLACE IBERIA

In my opinion, most health club spa offerings are hard-pushed to compete with the more extensive day spas and luxury hotel spas, which are able to create their experience around excellent levels of service and treatment quality as well as by investing significantly in their facilities to create a luxurious feel. In addition, hotel spas are often created to add value to the main business, i.e. the hotel – they may not have to deliver financially as standalone businesses.

As health clubs tend to spend significantly less per square foot than hotel or day spas, with a significantly smaller total floor space, compromises will normally have to be made. If they are to achieve a viable business model, operators must focus extra hard on the elements of the client experience



that they can influence with less investment. High quality design and marketing must be the starting point – it's possible to create a sense of luxury and quality through great creativity in design.

However, the most powerful element in creating the best possible client experience is the team that delivers it. Spa clients must trust their therapist, and this can be achieved through professionalism – performing the treatment in a confident, controlled, competent manner – and empathy, via an engaging, warm, personalised, confidential and friendly style. Therapists who can balance these two traits will build relationships, resulting in high levels of repeat business and, generally, secondary sales. My advice to operators is to structure a recognition and reward system that compensates therapists for repeat business.

## JUSTIN MUSGROVE SPA DIRECTOR, BANNATYNE



Assuming you're offering fabulous treatments, a positive spa experience offers visitors true value for money. The inclusion of relaxation areas for use pre and post treatment is one effective way to enhance your spa experience and add true value. This aspect creates a point of difference from typical high street salons.

Another benefit of visiting a health club spa, rather than a standalone, is that users can be offered full use of the facilities and services provided by the health club. For example, spa visitors enjoying a pamper day at a Bannatyne Spa have the option to make use of any fitness classes, including tai chi, yoga and pilates. This promotes an overall experience of wellbeing, addressing relaxation and rejuvenation for both mind and body. Our health clubs also have great wet areas, including spa pools, saunas and steamrooms – a must for any good spa.

It is, however, of upmost importance that you have professional and caring staff. A spa experience is nothing without the right people making it happen.

"A BENEFIT OF VISITING A  
HEALTH CLUB SPA RATHER  
THAN A STANDALONE IS THAT  
USERS CAN BE OFFERED FULL  
USE OF THE FACILITIES"  
JUSTIN MUSGROVE

By providing access to fitness facilities, health club spas can offer a comprehensive wellbeing experience



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**DR JOHN BRAZIER**  
KORE THERAPY  
CONSULTANT



**U**nfortunately the term 'spa experience' is often associated with pure relaxation, excluding result-orientated treatment: people tend to go to a therapist or practitioner to be treated for a condition, and to a spa for relaxation. However, through education and the media we're now moving away from the 'have a spa treatment, it will relax you' era and towards the 'improve your health and wellbeing, strength and performance at our facilities' era. This is important as, if you offer only relaxation, you miss out on a large proportion of your potential market, including most male clients; men often want results, so tend not to go to a regular spa.

Health clubs are in an enviable revenue-generating position because people already come to them wanting more than just relaxation. Operators can therefore focus on clients' needs and desires as a whole package. Consultations to evaluate each client's issues should lead to a package of appropriate treatment and training that uses all the services on-site, from treatments to gym programmes and classes. This keeps income within the organisation, rather than diverting revenue to external treatment specialists such as physios.

By adopting this broad-based approach, health clubs can attract a wide variety of clientele without the expensive aesthetics that other spas may need to attract business. By investing wisely, a health club can offer outstanding treatments in a nice environment that members and locals will call on as their needs present themselves – but with a much smaller initial investment.

The quality of therapists is becoming the most important factor in supporting clients' needs: your staff need to be knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their role and about the company. Much-needed revenue generation can often be accessed through staff enhancement training – for example, therapists learning results-focused techniques that can help recovery from, say, back pain or injury. Encouraging therapists through further education and into a consultant role will also help them feel comfortable spending time talking to clients, thereby ensuring clients receive the most appropriate treatment and advice.

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**Operators need to educate consumers in the preventative health benefits of using a spa, says Berni Hawkins**

**BERNI HAWKINS**  
SPA CONSULTANT



**R**esearch recently commissioned by SPATEC EU, from

Leisure-net Solutions, states that the top three reasons why people don't go to a spa are: the perception that it's too expensive/not value for money (58 per cent); that they don't need to, or see no benefit (26 per cent); and that they don't feel they would fit in or enjoy it (17 per cent).

To create a spa experience, therefore, not only does the operator need to be true to its own brand or type of operation, but it also needs to create an offering that's appropriate for its client base, and it needs to educate the consumer in the value of spa.

In the case of health club spas – although some of the more superficial 'feelgood' treatments should also be available – this education could focus on the true interpretation of spa, communicating the health benefits and highlighting the notion that prevention

is cheaper than cure, whether through water therapies, massage, therapies to enhance recovery after sporting activity or therapies to help build a foundation for peak performance.

Companies in the fitness sector that already do this well are Bannatyne and Fitness Express. Bannatyne has almost a 'spa concierge' service, calling the client to let them know what to expect; by informing the client that they're coming for treatments and services in a health club, expectations are managed – and in most instances exceeded, with clients able to use the full range of fitness and wellness facilities.

Meanwhile, Imagine Spa by Fitness Express follows a more traditional approach to spa. The starter package focuses on the use of the thermal experiences, first educating the consumer on the benefits of thermal and water therapies before up-selling them to additional services such as massage and facials.





# ...& DRIVING RETAIL

Once operators have created the desired health club spa 'experience', how can they maximise retail sales off the back of this?

**JUSTIN  
MUSGROVE**  
SPA DIRECTOR,  
BANNATYNE



**R**etail is made possible in the first instance through the correct product house selection. If you get this wrong, you simply won't retail. Meeting the needs of your client base is fundamental to successful retailing.

Training of the therapy team is also key. Homecare is an essential part of providing a thorough service, so commercial training is vital. Providing a good commission structure and challenging KPIs are our secret to good retailing.



**BERNI HAWKINS**  
SPA CONSULTANT

**S**implicity is the name of the game. Work with your product house to have only the services and retail that works for you – sometimes less is more. It's not necessary to offer vast choice, listing each ingredient in every product and what they do. In fact, clients tend not to understand what they need anyway, and will find an extensive retail area intimidating. They rely on their therapist to recommend products; when professionals don't do this, because they feel it's a hard sell, it actually causes the client confusion.

I would currently gauge an industry standard conversion of retail at 15 per cent of the headline treatment rate. However, as a client, I'm always sorely disappointed if I don't receive a recommendation, as I feel only half the job has been completed.

Not only that, but recent research from the US shows that, where treatment appointments slip from once every four weeks to perhaps once every six weeks, retail sales go up – especially on products that prolong results. If therapists don't recommend home care, the great results achieved within a service are not continued through use of homecare products and consequently the results don't last. At this point, a client can become confused as to whether the treatment actually had value.

◀ **Sweet smell of success** Selecting the right product house for your brand is key. Get this wrong and you won't retail, says Musgrove

The importance of the consultation process should never be underestimated. Too often we only ask medical-type questions, or questions that clients answer as they feel they should, rather than necessarily truthfully – how much water do you drink, do you smoke, do you have a skincare regime etc. However, if we use the consultation to focus on positive aspects, understanding the lifestyle of the client and why they may do the things they do, this changes the tone and the client feels positive about the experience they're about to undertake, rather than feeling they're on the 'naughty step'. Having built up positive rapport and trust between client and therapist, recommendations of homecare/retail will come more easily.

Massage is still the most popular and profitable treatment, yet the majority of therapists say it's not possible to retail from massage. This is incorrect. Clients want to prolong their post-treatment feeling, and most product ranges have a retail item that can continue treatment of the customer's 'need state'. This is also true of facials.

The level of retail sales ultimately comes down to thorough treatment and product knowledge training, ensuring that the therapists believe in the products and can recommend confidently. Taking training one stage further and helping therapists understand the personalities of their clients, and how they like to be communicated with, can further build confidence and thereby sales.







**Beautician-plus** Therapists need to be skilled and empathetic, but they must also know how to make a sale

## NICK COUTTS

CEO, HOLMES PLACE IBERIA

**A**s already discussed, all spa clients will purchase based on the level of trust their therapist has managed to build with them. However, the therapists who consistently achieve the best retail sales do so not only on a platform of trust, but also because they consistently follow a set process of retail product recommendation. This is critical: it's quite possible to have a team of fantastically empathetic, popular therapists who have a high level

of repeat business, but if they aren't motivated to up-sell retail, your retail sales are unlikely to be significant.

When up-selling or making retail product recommendations, what seems to work best for our therapists is when they build the continuous 'home-based self-treatment' concept into the overall explanation that they offer to their client during the spa treatment.

I believe, within the health club spa setting – although I imagine one would expect significantly higher percentage

retail sales in hotel spas and day spas – that anything above 20 per cent retail is good going (ie: for every €100 sold in treatments, an additional €20 being generated through retail sales). However, I would always propose to build into the commission/reward structure an element that's directly linked to retail sales; in my experience, if retail sales aren't an area of focus, they will naturally decline to less than 10 per cent. ▶



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At-home products  
should be discussed  
during and as part of a  
treatment, not simply  
tacked on at the end

**DR JOHN BRAZIER**  
KORE THERAPY  
CONSULTANT



**B**y offering a consultant-led visit, the client

feels they are being guided to what suits them best, with advice on the best forms of treatment and/or exercise to ensure all their needs are met. This creates trust and confidence in the total service which, as all sales people know, produces an opportunity to sell product, membership, repeat treatment and so on.

At the end of the experience – whether it's a whole day or a single treatment – the client should then return to the consultant to discuss any further needs. These may be home exercises, product sales or re-booking for more of their experience.

The worst type of sale is an inappropriate one – when the client doesn't know what it's for, or if it's really needed. This happens in many spas, usually immediately after a massage because the masseur has a sales target to reach. If the client buys, it will usually be very little. Instead, consultants should introduce samples of the product in their room, where it's relatively easy to sell it.

**SUSIE SANTIAGO**  
FOUNDER, THE  
SANTI PROGRAMME



**O**n a daily basis, and for all your

spa sites, measure the average spend on services and retail, as well as the percentage of retail to services sales – operators should aim for this to be 50 per cent (so, if you sell a treatment for £100, you should sell the client £50-worth of products afterwards) as this is where the real money is made.

Also look at what percentage of customers re-book and how quickly they return. If you can encourage clients to re-book, and to book back in sooner than their current visit pattern shows, you will increase the number of visits they make to you each year and thereby their annual spend with you.

Discuss all these measures with your staff, explaining how it will benefit them, as well as the benefits for clients and to the business. Remember to give praise when due and coaching when needed.



**kate cracknell**  
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

## show preview

## professional beauty london

The UK's premier trade health and beauty event offers new product launches, unmissable free masterclasses and a relaunched nail competition

**F**ollowing on from a busy Christmas period, many salon and spa owners now finally have a moment to look to all that 2010 will bring. And where better to plan for the year ahead than at Professional Beauty London? Taking place on 7–8 March 2010, the show will play host to leading brands including Dermalogica, Guinot, Collin, Eve Taylor, Jane Iredale, NSI, Salons Direct, Millennium Nails and Perron Rigot – all of which provides the perfect opportunity to discover the newest launches and do business with leading suppliers from across the industry.

#### new, new, new

This year's show sees the introduction of the New Product Showcase, a dedicated area designed to showcase launches from the last 12 months, all in one place.

The exhibition also brings together even more ideas, products and great deals from across the entire beauty industry. Suppliers of skincare, nail brands, cosmetics, tanning products, equipment and supplies will be on-hand to ensure salon owners and managers, beauty and holistic therapists, nail technicians and students can source from the latest launches and get the best deals for their businesses.

#### free learning opportunities

Professional Beauty London will also host another series of free masterclasses. Taking place every day, these informative sessions are guaranteed to help you build your business and your profits.

Question the experts on topics including how to keep your business healthy in a recession, understanding your clients' behaviour, increasing your coverage in the local press, and building your career in nails. And that's not all – hear from industry leaders including Andy Rouillard, Gill Morris, Ella Tracey and Marion Newman and discover their top tips for revolutionising your career and your profits.



The show will play host to leading brands, with a number of show-only offers

If you're a fully-qualified therapist or salon owner looking for a new revenue stream, don't miss out on this great opportunity to learn from the best. For full details, visit [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/masterclasses](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/masterclasses)

#### show off your nail skills

With 14 categories for both novice and experienced technicians, the ever-popular International Nail Competition will return this year under a new name – 'The Nail Championships'. As well as your favourite categories, new for this year are two group entries and a brand new DIY category. Winners will receive a trophy and a range of prizes sponsored by leading suppliers, while each competitor will be given a goodie bag full of products to take away. For entry information, visit [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/nailcomp](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/nailcomp)

#### special offers

With so much on offer, exhibitors are keen to introduce you to their products, with many savings and unbeatable show-only offers available. Pre-register

at [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/ticket](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/ticket) and your badge will be sent out to you along with your free show preview – detailing all the special show-only offers available so you can plan your money-saving in advance.

#### ABOUT PROFESSIONAL BEAUTY LONDON 2010

**Dates:** 7–8 March 2010

**Venue:** ExCeL London

**Opening times:**

7 March 10.00am – 6.00pm

8 March 10.00am – 5.00pm

**Ticket information:** Entry is free to all those who work in the professional health and beauty industry, provided they have registered in advance. Free registration is available online at [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/ticket](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london/ticket) quoting Priority Code: EHCM. Entry on the day, without pre-registration, is £20.

# spa appeal

HEALTH  
CLUB SPA



Sian Brenchley rounds up the findings of Mintel's recent Salon and Spa report

**S**pas are commonly considered the perfect complement to the health and fitness industry, but Mintel's latest research reveals a number of consumer attitudes that still need to be addressed to ensure relevancy and to maximise awareness among prime target audiences.

Definition is the key issue identified in the new *Salon and Spa* report. Mintel asked respondents to define a spa, explain what services a spa should offer, and what facilities it absolutely must have in order to qualify as one – revealing an interesting gap in perception. The Spa Business Association defines a spa as having to provide at least one water-based treatment. However, although a handful of respondents in the Mintel survey mentioned some water treatments – most notably spa pools – people were more likely to focus on the way in which a spa makes them feel, rather than the sorts of treatment available. For the majority of consumers today, spas represent escapism, pampering and retreat.

## new markets

A worrying finding of the research is that more than six in 10 adults (62 per cent) say that salons and spas have no appeal; feedback from respondents suggests much of this may be down to the belief, most prevalent among men, that spas are boring. Pressure to buy expensive treatments and diversification into fine dining, eroding what a spa should represent, also come into play.

Mintel's research also reveals that 28 per cent of consumers think of a spa visit as a 'special treat', rather than an ongoing lifestyle choice. This has not driven the purchase of spa vouchers as a gift, however, with just 3 per cent of adults receiving these in the last 12 months.

Nevertheless, despite an apparent lack of appeal to the majority, it's not all bad news. An estimated eight million adults say they've always wanted to go to a spa. In demographic terms, these people are likely to have children, with the spa offering a means of escapism from family responsibilities. Parents of young children

(under the age of five) have a particular propensity to want to visit a spa.

There's also a direct correlation between household size and the desire to go to a spa: three in 10 adults who live in households of five or more people have always wanted to go to a spa. Those in households with three or more people are also more likely to regard the spa as a place to go for relaxation and escapism.

These adults represent a key gifting opportunity: as parents, they may find it difficult to justify splashing out on themselves at the spa, instead preferring to direct the money towards the children. Targeting the partners of these adults, encouraging them to purchase spa vouchers as a treat, could help bring the 8.2 million adults who've always wanted to visit a spa into the market. Younger adults (aged 16–24) who haven't been to the spa, and for whom time and cost may be the two key obstacles, are another potential target market.

## disposable income

The current economic climate has also presented its challenges to the industry over the past year and will undoubtedly have an impact on shaping consumer attitudes in the year ahead. Of most concern is that a quarter of consumers now believe spa treatments to be too expensive. In addition, while Mintel estimates that almost four in 10 UK women have not changed their beauty routine in response to the recession, 55 per cent have made cost-cutting measures, including increasing time in between salon visits, stopping going, or switching to at-home alternatives. More than two in five (44 per cent) use these cost-cutting strategies to maintain their beauty treatments at a lower cost.

There's little difference in spend on beauty treatments depending on whether a woman is married or single. However, women are significantly less likely to have

**Definitions** Only a few respondents associated spas with water treatments; more focused on the way a spa makes them feel



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**Popularity rankings** In the survey, 14 per cent of respondents said they'd had a body treatment, such as a massage, in the previous year

made changes to their beauty treatment routine if they're married or living as married rather than single: just over three in 10 single women say they have made no change, compared to more than two in five women who are married or living as married. This could at least in part be accounted for by the additional security of a joint income.

However, as the household size increases, the responsibilities towards the family weigh more heavily: more than four in 10 women in one- or two-person households have maintained their beauty treatment routine, but this falls to less than one-third of women in households of three people.

### treatment choices

When looking at treatments in more depth, gender issues are highlighted once again. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 82 per cent of male salon or spa attendees have had just one treatment, compared to 48 per cent of women. Around three in 10 women have had three or more treatments in the last 12 months, compared to just one in 20 men.

Interestingly, age also plays a part when it comes to how adventurous

**Attracting adults who've shown an interest in spa, but never been, could bring in an additional £740m**

consumers are with their treatments. Despite being more likely than other age groups to have had just one treatment, younger demographics (most notably 15- to 34-year-olds) nevertheless include a significant number of people who use spas more regularly: almost three in 10 have had three or more treatments, compared to just one in seven adults aged 55 and over.

Today, the most popular type of treatment among UK consumers is a manicure/pedicure, with 34 per cent of spa-goers saying they've had this treatment over the past year. Hair removal using wax, sugar or threading, and use of the sauna or steam room, prove to be the next most popular treatment options, with both being undertaken by 20 per cent of spa-goers in the past year. Meanwhile it seems facials and body treatments are of equal popularity with spa-goers, each undertaken by 14 per cent of those going to spas. Least popular at 4 per cent – reflecting both the limited number of spas with the capability

and the niche consumer interest – are non-surgical treatments such as laser treatment, Botox and teeth whitening.

### reaching potential

Not only are attitudes towards spas changing, but so is the demographic of potential clients if targeted in the right way. Attracting the adults who haven't been to a salon or spa, but who are interested in visiting, could bring an additional £740m to the industry – a significant opportunity for operators willing to engage with them. Tapping into this latent consumer demand will be key to success in 2010.

Effective communication will also be vital: overcoming the perception that spas are boring, gaining buy-in from men and addressing issues of cost can all be addressed via marketing designed to reach the elusive potential client and drive repeat business.



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WHEN THE FA RELOCATED  
ITS HEADQUARTERS TO  
WEMBLEY LAST YEAR, IT  
BUILT THE STADIUM'S FIRST  
EVER STAFF GYM. KAY  
GLOVER REPORTS

**T**he legendary Wembley Stadium is one of our most loved national landmarks and has been home to some extraordinary events since it began its life as Wembley Park Leisure Grounds in 1880. Highlights include hosting the first ever FA Cup final in 1923, the 1948 Olympic Games, the 1966 World Cup and Live Aid in 1985, and most recently the stadium's re-invention in 2007.

Many of our sporting heroes have displayed their skills on Wembley's famous pitch in front of millions of spectators – but what about the people behind the scenes? In August last year, the headquarters of the Football Association (FA) moved to Wembley, and all 550-plus staff who work for The FA Group are now based there. Until this point, however, there had never been a staff gym at the stadium.

"We wanted to give staff something they had never had before – something we knew they would appreciate and use. Given the nature of our work, most of us have an interest in sport and fitness, so the introduction of a staff gym to the stadium seemed like a natural step. It's important for us to have happy and healthy staff – staff welfare is central to our business strategy," says Greg Gillin, director of facilities management for The FA Group.

Indeed, the staff wellbeing programme includes a variety of other employee benefits including an on-site occupational nurse, physiotherapy, chiropody, sports massage, beauty therapy and both

hearing and eye testing. There are also tennis, netball, football and running clubs. One of the biggest challenges for the Wembley gym team has therefore been to integrate the facility with everything else that's already on offer.

The gym has been paid for by The FA Group and is designed to be self-funding: staff pay a small membership fee, but any profit will be ploughed straight back into the facility to benefit its members.

#### inviting environment

The decision to build a gym was taken in March 2009 and, by August, the locker/changing rooms earmarked for conversion had been transformed into the 140sq m

(1,500sq ft) open space that's now the fitness suite. Its location at basement level, near the main staff entrance, was chosen for both its accessibility and the fact that the gym can consequently be used all year round, without needing to be closed during major events taking place at the venue. Alongside the gym are two group exercise studios, one of which is used on match days as warm-up room for players.

"Our expertise is in staging world class events. We're not fitness experts so, when the decision to build a gym was made, we put the business out to tender. We selected Life Fitness to help us create and maximise the space, and Bladerunner to help us manage it," says



**All-embracing** The Life Fitness-equipped gym incorporates a number of different zones to appeal to experienced and new users





# wembley wellness

Gillin. "They helped us look at the long-term picture and develop and implement a plan of what was needed to meet our objectives and targets. They were both involved from the start of the project and their advice and guidance has been invaluable throughout."

Says Rob Jones, territory development manager for Life Fitness: "Working on the Wembley Gym has been brilliant. They were really open to ideas, and our collaborative partnership with them and Bladerunner ensured the process from conception to completion was seamless. We all had a very clear vision of what we wanted to create."

The 20-station gym features top of the range Life Fitness kit including the space-saving Optima strength range and the Life Fitness Inspire CV range, which offers state-of-the-art options such as iPod connectivity and access to the Life Fitness virtual trainer programme via USB. Other products include Schwinn group cycling bikes and Escape Fitness body pump kits, steps and boxercise sets.

Creating the right atmosphere was a key objective for Wembley. The gym has therefore been designed to

**Wembley** The stadium plays host to a wide range of sporting and music events – and is now the home of the FA

incorporate different zones intended to optimise an individual's path through the gym, enhance their personal training development and create a spacious feel. Initial feedback has been excellent: "I love that I have access to a gym that's actually in my place of work. It's much cheaper than my old gym and I use it far more. The atmosphere is great and it's so easy to use," enthuses one member.

Another objective was to produce a gym facility that appealed to a broad spectrum of employees with different levels of fitness. Special attention has been given to ensuring that experienced, friendly and motivational staff members are always on-hand to give advice and make everyone feel welcome. Opening hours are 7.00am until 10.00pm to accommodate the different working patterns at the company and a broad spectrum of classes are available, including studio cycling, aerobics, circuits, legs-bums-tums, yoga, pilates, boxercise and body conditioning.

## a popular choice

The gym has capacity for a membership of approximately 350–400 and already has 200 members. "Membership take-up was really fast, so we knew very early on that what we had created was what the staff wanted. People with existing gym memberships elsewhere were quick to swap," explains David Brame, MD of Bladerunner.

Marketing has been a key factor in the gym's success to date. The facility has a dedicated website that's regularly updated, with news also going to all staff via the company intranet. During the launch period, banners and posters were also put up around the stadium and a number of promotions were launched, including free goodie bags, health checks, open days and an 'introduce a friend' initiative.

Brame continues: "Our focus for 2010 is to encourage other members of staff who are perhaps not so involved in fitness to join the gym and to start making healthier lifestyle choices."



kay glover

healthclub@leisuremedia.com



## One-stop shopping with Proactive Health

Proactive Health is one of the leading mail order companies in the health and fitness industry. Its 2010 catalogue is packed full of commercial health, fitness, pilates, therapy and wellness products designed for group fitness studios, personal trainers, pilates instructors and physiotherapists.

The catalogue is split into sections including aerobics, aqua fitness, resistance and mats for the busy studio; dumbbell, sports, boxing and circuit training; core stability, cardio and burst training; pilates and mind-body equipment; therapy for back care, kids' therapy and development; sound systems and music CDs.

It includes ProActive's own-label products plus brands including York, Fitness, STOTT PILATES and GoFit.

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For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to [www.fitness-kit.net](http://www.fitness-kit.net) and type the company name under 'keyword search'

## Two new catalogues from Pulse Fitness

Pulse Fitness has published two new catalogues aimed at the youth fitness market – for its Active Wall & Floor and Dance Machine products.

The Active Wall & Floor provides interactive entertainment, creatively engaging and interacting with users while they dance, play, learn and work out. Meanwhile, the Dance Machine provides a full turnkey package to schools that includes an easy to operate and engaging product. Said to be ideal for all stages of the PE curriculum, as well as for cross-curricular activities, Pulse worked closely with



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pulse fitness

educational partners to ensure the Dance Machine enables schools to see the best return on their product while integrating a fun, new activity into their overall fitness objectives.



## Precor unveils latest additions

Precor has unveiled its latest catalogue. One of the sections focuses on Precor's Experience Strength C-Line, whereby every component the user touches has been created to enhance their workout experience. This range has been created from high quality materials to provide a robust and durable strength solution. Precor has also teamed up with Apple to offer Nike+ personal

tracking workout data to its members. By plugging in an iPod to the PEP docking station on Precor's cardio equipment, the machine will automatically send the member's workout data to their iPod. Members can then plug the iPod into their computer to automatically upload workouts to [www.nikeplus.com](http://www.nikeplus.com)

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So far, Buelteman has created 80 images that uniquely capture the ephemeral beauty of plants. His work can already be viewed in the Sense spa at Rosewood Sand Hill in California, as well as in Miami's Fontainebleau hotel spa. Details: [www.buelteman.com](http://www.buelteman.com)



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## DISNEY-FICATION OF SPA IS NO MICKEY MOUSE



Spas for children are popping up across the globe, with Disney a particularly popular theme.

The Gran Hotel La Florida in Barcelona, Spain, has launched a children's spa menu based on Disney characters and themes. The Fantasia menu includes Sleeping Beauty facials as well as Cinderella pedicures and is aimed at six- to 12-year-olds. Details: [www.hotellafloida.com](http://www.hotellafloida.com)

In June 2008, the second Disney salon for children (pictured, left) – the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique – opened in the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World in Florida.



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The spa at The Wynn Las Vegas, US, has partnered with the Zero Gravity Corporation (ZERO-G) to offer a weekend package where guests can soar into luxury.

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The flight lasts for approximately two hours and delivers 15 weightless intervals, each lasting about 30 seconds. The aircraft interior has padded floors and walls and video cameras. Details: [www.gozerog.com](http://www.gozerog.com)

## snail secretions in skincare

"When it was discovered that handlers on a Chilean snail farm had exceptionally smooth hands, the beauty industry took notice," wrote Emily Hebert in an online article entitled Bizarre Beauty Rituals.

One such company is US skincare brand Bioskincream, which gathers a fluid ingredient produced by a species of the brown garden snail known as *helix aspersa* müller. When stressed, the snail secretes a substance – *helix aspersa*

*müller glycoconjugate* – to protect, moisturise, heal and renew its skin.

The skincare company collects this substance – in a method that apparently doesn't harm the snail – and stabilises it to use within products to protect, deeply moisturise, renew and trigger the regeneration of skin damaged by acne, injuries, over-stretching, photo-ageing or dermatological/medical treatments. Details: [www.bioskincream.com](http://www.bioskincream.com)

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