

health club management

MAY 2010

HEALTH
CLUB SPA



INTERVIEW

HEATHER FRANKHAM

The CEO of Lifetime
on the changing needs
of the fitness sector



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remember the fun?

I've noticed lately that many clubs I've visited have been really quite serious places to be, with a corporate feel, focused exercisers, rather glum-looking staff and a subdued atmosphere. It just got me wondering if we're losing our sense of humour and to question how this is impacting on the motivation of members.

There are many things about the basic business model of a health club which make it less likely that a fun and buzzy atmosphere will occur organically: the majority of peak-time users visit the club alone and at different times, meaning social interaction in the gym is inevitably limited; members often attend only sporadically, making it less likely they'll get to know each other and form friendships; and most gym layouts are set up for the lone exerciser or those plugged in to headphones and simply zoned out.

Many clubs have cut back on staff during the recession, or put everyone on shifts, so it's often a different face on the desk. In addition, health club managers rarely take their role as hosts that seriously and are largely invisible to members. I've asked several managers lately if they make a point

of introducing themselves to members and walking the floor of the club on a regular basis and found they rarely do either.

The main areas of liveliness in a club tend to be classes with well-established, more extrovert instructors who develop a team spirit among their groups and inject some life into the proceedings, but these can be few and far between – and if instructors come and go, even less likely to happen. Meanwhile, for non-participants, these classes can sometimes cause 'upset' – if they're noisy, for example, while everyone else is soldiering on in silence.

Managers rarely take their role as hosts that seriously and are largely invisible to members. I've asked several if they introduce themselves or walk the floor and found they rarely do either

One of the most vital jobs we have is motivating and inspiring members, and in the early years of the industry this was a major preoccupation for operators, who invested time and resources into making their clubs high-energy, fun places to be. The fact that many were then owner-operated did make this easier to deliver; the more corporate nature of the industry today may in part be what's leading to the more sombre atmosphere. In addition, our preoccupation with all things medical may be creating a situation where exercise has become something to be taken far more seriously, on a semi-medical basis.

But does it have to be an either/or? No-one would argue against creating strong links with the medical profession, or against taking the whole matter of exercise prescription absolutely seriously. However, the genius of the health and fitness industry is our ability to combine solid expertise with a light touch and a liberal serving of motivation and bring it all together in an irresistible and life-enhancing whole. It seems sometimes we've forgotten we have that power.

It's important individual needs are taken into account when stepping up the motivational content, as everyone has a different profile in this regard. However, there's a good argument for reviewing things and making sure we haven't lost our sense of humour. We have great expertise to draw on in our industry when it comes to training staff in motivational interviewing, understanding exercise personalities and team building – but maybe we just need to lighten up a little too.

Liz Terry, editor

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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



ZUMBA takes IHRSA by storm p58



Handling spa prospect enquiries p63

contents

06 letters

Fitness instructors aren't trying to replace dance teachers, says IFS presenter of the year Greg Sellar

08 news round-up

New kids' gym for a Folkestone and a change of hands for The Health Club in Clevedon

14 international news

Gold's Gym in Middle Eastern expansion and the launch of a second Domyos site in France

16 fia update

Free membership profiles for FIA members, and Active IQ named as the Code of Practice assessor

18 people news

John Stransky resigns from his post as president of Life Fitness

21 diary dates

Including the FIA FLAME Conference and Festival del Fitness in Italy

22 competitive edge

Fancy taking part in the London to Bruges bike race? The Moontrekker challenge in Hong Kong? Find out about these opportunities, and more, in our charity events listing

24 everyone's talking about... testing kids' fitness

Is the introduction of an annual bleep test the way to do encourage our kids to be physically active?

26 interview heather frankham

Magali Robathan talks to the CEO of Lifetime about the changing needs of the health and fitness industry

30 running for government

With the General Election looming, the key health spokespeople for the three main political parties put forward their parties' views on health, fitness and wellbeing

34 zoning in

A new gym in Southwark is the product of a unique four-way partnership and the first budget club in London's zone 1

39 quickstepping

How do the various brands of dance mat measure up? We take a look at the offering from five different suppliers to see how they measure up

45 keeping them sweet at 16

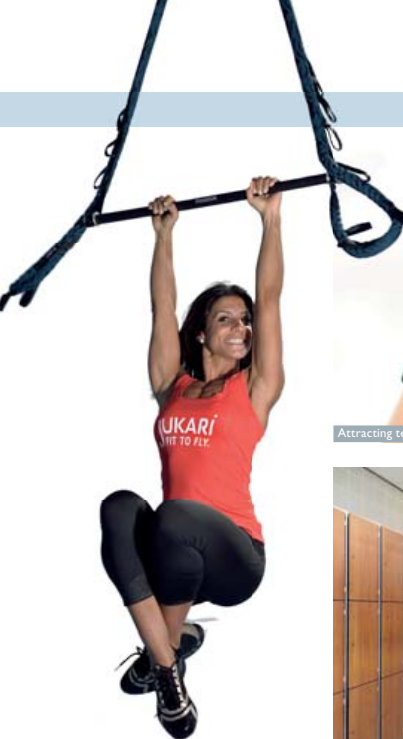
Why do so many kids drop out of physical activity when they hit 16, and what can health clubs do to better engage with this market?

50 kept in suspense

With suspension training taking the health and fitness sector by storm, Kate Cracknell outlines the benefits of this technique and tries out some of the class options currently on the market



Gym London: Zone 1's first budget club p34



Attracting teenagers to your club p45



Getting changing rooms right p66

54 health club spa touch and go



The short- and long-term effects of shiatsu massage have been investigated in a pan-European study

55 reaching out

There's a huge opportunity for operators to venture beyond the confines of the club and deliver their health and fitness services to the wider community. But how? Vicky Kiermander investigates

58 forward momentum

This year's IHRSA International Convention & Trade Show took place in San Diego, US, in March. Kate Cracknell asks a selection of delegates for their thoughts

62 health club spa spa news



Bannatyne invests £300k in its Inverness and Chafford Hundred spas

63 health club spa spa service



When it comes to handling prospect enquiries, new research suggests that health club and leisure centre spas are performing well in the context of the overall spa sector – but there's still work to be done

66 changing places

Getting your changing rooms right is key to driving participation among market segments such as women and disabled people. We report

68 fitness-kit.net special resistance equipment

A snapshot of some of the new launches in this product category

75 health club spa lightweights



The launch of the world's first 'beer health' centre, and a new record for the largest simultaneous massage



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buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p71



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



Dance-based classes: Less about technique and more about overall fitness

fitness-based dance as an entry point for the masses

I was very interested to read the feature on dance in the last issue of *HCM* (*HCM* April 10, p46). I'm glad to see yet another group exercise incarnation with the emergence of ballroom-based workouts; just as methodologies in personal training are evolving, so too are group fitness formats and I hope facilities embrace this change. It's only then that class numbers will grow and instructors, who should already be regarded as "superstars" for their unique abilities – the aspiration expressed by Fitness First in the feature – will be given the respect they deserve.

I think all contributors to the article have valid viewpoints. As fitness professionals, we're not looking to take the place of dance teachers, but instead provide a fitness experience based around dance that's less about technique and perfection and more about overall fitness and movement. For those members who

express an interest in ballroom fitness, they might like to use group exercise-based programmes to test the water before moving onto professionals for further in-depth tuition. We're not trying to be a threat to trained dancers, but more of a stepping stone onto further learning that only they can provide.

I'm aware of companies such as JUMPYBUMPY that run weekend ballroom fitness workshops. This fitness-based dance training is for fitness professionals who want to learn how to make ballroom dance both a workout and a class for all club members. The fact it's done in gym kit and without a partner (an option later provided) only adds to the appeal to those who might otherwise find ballroom dancing intimidating. That can't be a bad thing for all parties involved.

greg sellar

ifs 2010 international presenter of the year

future of fitness – it's about delivering on our potential

I was interested to read the feature on the Future of Fitness white paper (*HCM* April 10, p30). Anyone forecasting future trends and practices is always prone to the 'paperless office' syndrome – remember how we were told we would all now be working in paperless offices? However, the cornerstones of the white paper are already being openly discussed at national and club level, and among suppliers ranging from trainers to equipment manufacturers.

We already know, for example, that our facilities must become community hubs if we're to achieve our collective goal of getting more people more active more often, and indeed the concept of leisure hubs is not new: many operators already offer a wide range of services, from social events to alternative medicine treatments.

We're also already aware of the value of technology in improving member retention. Technology is key to enhancing the fitness experience through motivation, feedback, peer participation and so on. It also allows for the recording of all physical activity, not just gym-based programmes.

Every responsible operator knows that, to achieve their goals, they must tailor their model, proposition, message, communications channel and retention strategy. This is not the issue. The 'future of fitness' is about creating an environment where time and resources allow the industry to deliver what it already knows it should be delivering.

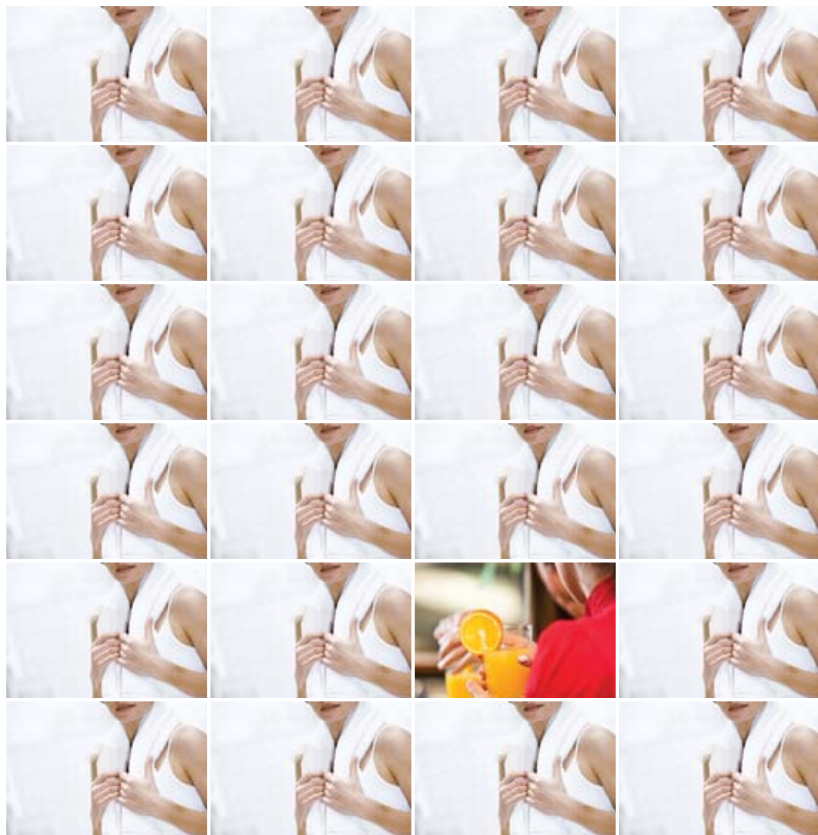
David Stalker

executive director, fia



Technology: Key to better retention

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update

news

kids' gym for folkestone centre

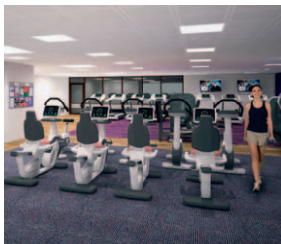
Folkestone Sports Centre is currently undergoing a £1.5m revamp which will include the introduction of a new, dedicated children's gym.

The refurbishment of the almost 40-year-old centre – which is being funded by loans from Charity Bank and Big Issue Invest and supported by Alliance Leisure – will see the creation of a new gym, café and bar area, as well as upgrades to the roof, pool plant, reception and foyer. A viewing gallery will also be created, overlooking the facility's two swimming pools.

The new junior gym will offer eight ZigZag Xer-Dance platforms as well as resistance and CV equipment, while the main fitness centre will move into the main building and double in size to 300sq m, featuring 65 pieces of resistance and CV equipment. The toning studio will move to the site of the existing gym and will have new Powertone and Easytone chairs installed.

Tessa Stickler, GM at Folkestone Sports Centre Trust, says: "As we are a charity, it was extremely difficult to obtain funding. Alliance Leisure worked with us over many years to get this project up and running and persistence has paid off.

The ethos of the trust is that we provide affordable sports facilities



The main fitness suite will double in size, to 300sq m, with 65 pieces of equipment

for the community; the fact that we now have a modern new gym doesn't change that in any way."

Stephen Parker, business development manager for Alliance Leisure, adds: "We're extremely pleased that this project is finally able to go ahead.

"There is no other affordable sports facility in the area, so it really was imperative that the facilities were upgraded and the buildings maintained to ensure that these amenities were not lost."

The refurbishment work, which is being carried out by building contractor Cosmur, will be completed mid-September this year.

fitness first relaunches club

Fitness First has re-opened its first ever club, located in Bournemouth, following a £200,000 refurbishment.

Upgraded features at the club include new CV stations, a dedicated group cycling studio, a large sauna and steamroom, monsoon showers, hot food service, free internet stations, free DVD hire and a members' bar.

Fitness First MD John Gamble says: "This is a landmark refurbishment for us given the history that surrounds the Bournemouth club.

"By making our clubs inviting places for members to work out, as well as offering them a host of other services and benefits, we hope people will visit our facilities more regularly and see the positive effects it can have on their health."



Fitness First's medical advisor, Dr Hilary Jones (left), opens the club with John Gamble



Plans for the Court Lodge school site have received council backing

green light for horley plans

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBBC) has approved detailed plans for the development of a new leisure and sports centre on the site of a former school in Horley, Surrey.

The multi-million pound scheme was awarded outline planning consent in March last year, although proposals were referred to the Government Office for the South East for consideration.

Existing buildings at the former Court Lodge Secondary School are set to be demolished during June, in preparation for the start of work on the new leisure centre. Facilities planned for the site include a 50-station fitness suite and an exercise studio; a six-lane, 25m

swimming pool with ramped access for disabled users; a teaching pool; and a four-court, multi-use sports hall.

Separate changing areas for males, females, families and disabled users and a reception are also planned as part of the development, as well as parking for cycles and 150 cars – to be shared with Horley Town Football Club.

Energy saving measures – including a wood-burning biomass boiler, low-energy lighting and wind catchers – will be implemented as part of the construction process.

The town's existing Horley Anderson Centre will remain open until the new facility is complete in January 2012.

anytime plans entry into uk market

US-based health club franchise operator Anytime Fitness has revealed that it's looking to expand its operations into the UK after securing its 1,300th contract last month.

The group – which operates health clubs in 48 US states as well as in Canada, Australia and New Zealand – made the announcement as it revealed plans to further extend its reach across the globe.

In a statement, CEO Chuck Runyon said the group plans to open clubs

in the UK, Ireland, India, Mexico, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (see also *HCM* March 10, p32).

Commenting on the news, Joe Moore, president and CEO of trade body IHRSA, said: "The tremendous growth of Anytime Fitness demonstrates that the public will respond if you make it easy for them."

Runyon and co-founder Jeff Klinger – who has now left the business – opened the first Anytime Fitness club in Cambridge, Minnesota, US, in 2002.

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in brief...

new pool planned for ivybridge

South Hams District Council has earmarked £1m from its capital programme to be put towards a new £2m indoor swimming pool in Ivybridge, Devon.

The council believes that replacing the current indoor and outdoor pools with a new pool will be the best option, as the existing outdoor pool is now beyond economic repair and the current indoor pool is "nearing the end of its expected life".

The council says the next step will be establishing the business case before tendering any contract. It's hoped that work could begin on a new pool in 2012.

freedom leisure to invest £250k in sandwich

Freedom Leisure is set to invest £250,000 in the Sandwich Sports & Leisure Centre after confirmation that the trust is to continue managing the centre for a further 10 years.

More than £150,000 will be invested in new equipment for the gym, including Power Plate machines and Life Fitness Summit trainers, bikes, treadmills and cross-trainers. The centre's squash courts and exercise studio will also be revamped and the booking system upgraded when work gets underway at the beginning of June. The centre is set for a grand re-opening on the weekend of 12-13 June.



The project includes the creation of a new 90-station fitness suite

first phase ready at farnham

Waverley Borough Council (WBC) in Surrey has announced that the first phase of a £5m scheme to transform Farnham Sports Centre is due to be completed this month.

Wintry weather conditions at the start of the year caused slight delays to the project, but it's now expected that the centre's new 90-station gym, enlarged reception and revamped swimming pools will open this month.

The council has also confirmed that a "coffee house-style café" has been added to the centre's facilities, with the new reception's layout altered to accommodate the change.

A second phase – including the refurbishment of the sports hall, activity rooms, squash courts and dance studio – is expected to get underway once phase one is unveiled.

WBC is undertaking the renovation in partnership with operator DC Leisure, with London-based contractor ISG delivering the scheme.

fitness upgrade for ripon centre

A newly-extended fitness suite has opened at a leisure centre in Ripon, North Yorkshire, following the completion of a major £285,000 renovation project.

The scheme has been funded by Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) and Ripon City Council (RCC), and has resulted in the largest gym in the borough council's portfolio.

Ripon Leisure Centre's ground floor Brimhams Fitness Suite has become a free weights area as part of the project, with Technogym supplying 36 pieces of equipment for the 209sq m (2,250sq ft) facility. The renovation comes after HBC secured a deal to take over the freehold transfer of the site, having operated the complex as part of a leasehold/management contract with RCC.

Brimhams fitness manager Andy Hawkswell says: "The new gym is light and airy and provides the best environment for staying in shape."



The renovation comes after HBC secured a deal to take over the site

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Work begins later this month and the baths are scheduled to re-open in 2012

ironmonger row baths revamp

Final approval has been given for the redevelopment of the Ironmonger Row Baths in Islington, north London.

The Grade II-listed Turkish baths, swimming pool, fitness suite and laundry complex will be given a £16m revamp by Islington Council and the ECI New Deal for Communities.

Work on the building, which dates from the 1930s, will begin this month. The redevelopment will include improving the 30m swimming pool's heating, plumbing, ventilation and efficiency, and building a new, bigger training pool.

The Turkish baths will also be restored and refurbished and the

existing spa area be expanded. There will also be a new, larger health club facility with a new gym and two new group exercise studios.

A rather quirky detail is that the new complex will continue to offer laundry facilities, as it has done since it opened in 1931. This decision was made in response to feedback from local residents.

Planning permission was granted for the revamp earlier this year, and now listed building consent has been agreed by the government. The aim is for the centre to re-open in May 2012, in time for the 2012 Olympic Games.

council steps in for swindon site

Swindon Borough Council (SBC) has confirmed that it has agreed to work alongside trustees of the town's Highworth Recreation Centre in a bid to secure the facility's future.

Highworth Recreation Trust called on the council to intervene after fears were raised about the facility's finances.

An audit is now due to be carried out to determine the extent of the trust's debts. The centre, which is registered as a charity, is a joint venture between SBC and the Centre Management Committee.

new gym for gateshead site

Gateshead Leisure Centre re-opened on 17 April following a major £8m revamp – part of a wider council-led project to improve the city's leisure provision.

A new 650sq m (6,997sq ft), 150-station fitness suite equipped by Life Fitness has been created as part of the extensive renovation scheme, which has been designed by S&P Architects and carried out by construction firm Willmott Dixon.

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cleveland club changes hands

The Health Club in Clevedon, North Somerset, has been acquired by personal trainer Mike Neck and the club's general manager Jonathan Hughes.

The pair will take over the running of the club and have already outlined plans to redevelop the facility, which is housed in a Grade II-listed building.

The revamp will include a newly-mirrored group exercise studio, an upgrade of the club's resistance equipment, professional deep-cleaning of the club, new therapies, and an extension to the mezzanine floor. This extension is set to house a new cardiovascular section and will offer views over the town of Clevedon.

Mike Neck, who has worked at the club for the past two years, says: "It has always been a dream of mine to own my own gym, and I'm really pleased it's an established club in a great area."



The Health Club is housed in a historic, Grade II-listed building

"I believe The Health Club has a lot of potential. However, as with a number of the larger private clubs in the surrounding area, it has needed more resistance equipment and a bigger stretching area to go with our existing equipment. I'm very much looking forward to implementing all of the changes we've planned for the site."

independent clubs benefit from marketing help

Pulse Gym in Ripley, Derbyshire, teamed up with its local Sainsbury's store to raise money for Sport Relief.

The gym organised a sponsored row at the supermarket, with the target being the equivalent distance of rowing from Dover to Calais and back. The event – set up to raise money for Sport Relief – was one of a number organised by independent clubs across the UK, with the help of marketing agency Creative Fitness Marketing (CFM).



The Pulse team with Sainsbury's chief executive Justin King (centre)

free gym kit for ripped gym



Ripped Gym receives its Independent Operators Unite raffle prize

Michelle and Elvis Meade, the co-owners of Ripped Gym health club in Harlow, Essex, have taken delivery of a brand new Fluid E720 Cycle XT courtesy of Gymkit UK.

The equipment was donated as a prize for the raffle which was held at the Independent Operators Unite (IOU) party at Leisure Industry Week (LIW) last September. More than 50 suppliers supported independent clubs by donating around £100,000-worth of equipment and services to the raffle.

"The members love the new piece of kit – we've had a great reaction since it was installed," says Michelle Meade.



Fitness First will install **bodycore** vibration equipment in all its UK clubs

fitness first invests in bodycore

Health club operator Fitness First is to roll out whole body vibration (WBV) platforms supplied by **bodycore** across its UK portfolio of sites.

The verdict following a successful trial period is that the platforms offer great functional training options for all members. As the units are mobile, they will also be used in conjunction with cable systems, free weights and stability balls for advanced users.

"Traditional vibration plates work by creating instability in the human body, working at very high frequencies," says Derek Crawford, national fitness manager at Fitness First. "Each vibration

forces the body to perform reflexive muscle actions, speeding up the natural response of muscles to exercise."

He continues: "**bodycore** has developed a pure vertical movement, known as bio-oscillation, which is the most natural and efficient way of transferring energy into the body."

"The plates work at lower frequencies with no impact, and this form of displacement makes it safe, comfortable and highly effective for the user."

Flexibility and the low frequencies were, he adds, key benefits when considering possible uses for the kit; the big platforms can, for example, be used in pilates classes.

idea launches home training

IDEA Health & Fitness Association (IDEA), the world's largest membership organisation for fitness and exercise professionals, has introduced the IDEA Certificate Program, a video-based home-study programme.

The product has been created for fitness professionals who want to add to their skill set and includes two tracks: Group Strength Program Design and Choreography Class Design.

Successful completion of the test is rewarded with an IDEA Certificate of Completion. This certificate can be used as part of CPD programmes.

scifit joins fight against obesity

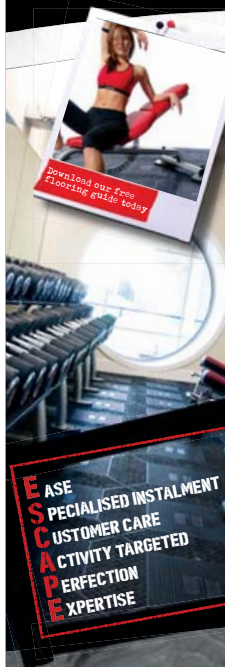
As part of NHS Rotherham's obesity strategy, the Rotherham Institute for Obesity (RIO) has recently taken delivery of two SCIFIT inclusive fitness initiative accredited machines: the PRO2 Total Body Exerciser and the ISO7000R Recumbent Bike.

Inclusive features include a removable seat for easy wheelchair access and a sturdy wheelchair ramp. To assist users with visual impairments, there are also a number of colour co-ordinated features.

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in brief...

south africa's safai launch

SAFai – the South African Fitness Education Institute – launched last month. With a goal of providing the most up-to-date and advanced fitness education to students, it caters for everyone from beginners to ongoing continuing education for the qualified fitness professional.

SAFai brings together a variety of qualifications under a single banner, with courses that mirror the global trends in fitness and wellness to maximise the versatility of its graduates. All qualifications are accredited with SAQA – The South African Qualifications Authority.

Spearheading the initial phase of the roll-out are three courses: Performance Boxing and Extreme Kettlebells from the UK-based Optimal Life Fitness Group, and Spinning® from Mad Dogg Athletics. Courses due to be added include Stott Pilates®, ViPR™, HumanSport®, bodycore Vibration Training and SAPD (South African Pole Dancing). These will be offered in the form of Skills programmes that will carry credits toward a qualification such as a National Diploma or Certificate.

new aif research division

The Australian Institute of Fitness (AIF) has created a new health and fitness research division: AIF Research. Established with an AU\$210,000 grant over three years, AIF Research aims to improve the health of Australians through an improved body of fitness knowledge for dissemination, training and implementation by the fitness sector.

To further develop fitness industry protocols that are safe and effective for the broader community, this research will scientifically investigate themes that include: measuring the long-term benefits of popular fitness activities; determining changes in physical characteristics as a result of strength training in children, overweight individuals and older adults; and determining reliable and safe training and exercise prescription protocols.

middle east strikes gold

Gold's Gym International last month announced the signing of a master franchise that will expand its brand into the Middle East.

The Abu Dhabi-based Al Ahli Holding Group (AAHG) has signed a deal with the Texas-based Gold's Gym

chain to open 26 clubs in the UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.

The deal also provides an option for Al Ahli to operate a further 66 clubs across a total of 13 additional countries in Africa and the Middle East. Al Ahli could potentially become the largest Gold's Gym master franchisee in the world.

Gold's Gym was founded in 1965 as a weightlifting shop in Venice, California, and has long been popular with celebrities such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tiger Woods, Hilary Swank, Keanu Reeves and Jessica Alba. It now has 700 gyms in 28 countries.

AAHG is a family-owned company with interests in sectors from plastic manufacturing to printing and publishing, transportation, engineering and real estate and the Dubai Outlet Mall.



AAHG will open clubs in the UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain

community club for singapore

A new health club has opened as part of the launch of the new 'community tower' in Pasir Ris, Singapore.

The community tower has been designed with local residents in mind, providing access to climbing and sports facilities such as abseiling; facilities include a 13m high climbing wall.

The site's health club, called Famili Club, offers a number of cardio and resistance stations and caters for adult as well as teenager fitness.

The Community Tower is open to the public at an entry fee of S\$5 (US\$3.60, £2.70) for members and S\$15 (US\$10.80, £8.10) for non-members, and includes equipment hire.



Residents in Singapore will be able to access the new facility

music usage verdict due in australia

The Copyright Tribunal has advised Fitness Australia that it will deliver its judgement on the Phonographic Performance Company of Australia (PPCA)'s proposed revision of the Fitness Industry Tariff on 17 May.

PPCA, the industry body representing the major record labels, has applied to the Copyright Tribunal for a 4,000 per cent increase in the fees gyms and facilities pay to play copyright-protected music in exercise classes. The fear is that, if this increase is approved in

Australia, music licensing bodies in other countries will make similar applications.

Fitness Australia is developing guidelines on how businesses can continue to play music without the need to hold or maintain a PPCA licence. These guidelines will be available free of charge to all contributors to the Operation M.U.S.I.C campaign.

US-based trade association IHRSA is also involved in the fight, galvanising the industry on a global basis to fight the possible rises and protect club profits.



The Golden Living template offers hotel-quality accommodation for patients

watg's 'facility of the future'

In the US, WATG has unveiled new 'Facility of the Future' interior design guidelines and standards for Golden Living – the award-winning care homes – in response to an emerging senior population with a desire for high-quality, wellness-focused recovery environments.

The facilities will emphasise short-term recovery care and promote an active lifestyle. Accommodation will be modelled on hotels and spas, with a focus on personal space, wellness and rehab.

"No-one wants an extended hospital stay," says WATG senior designer Meagan Jacobi. "The 'Facility of the Future' allows you to check into a 'spa resort' that's already considered your

rehab needs without forgetting about all the details that make a spa resort a place we want to be: a place to heal, to strengthen and to rejuvenate the spirit."

In addition to skilled nursing, an Aegis facility will offer physical therapy and wellness treatments to both in-house patients and the local community.

While best known for resort design, this is not WATG's first foray into wellness. The firm was the design architect for the Sacred Heart Medical Center in Springfield, Oregon, and the Four Seasons Westlake Village in California – a hotel and resort designed exclusively to teach people how to live better, healthier lives (see *Spa Business* 08/4, p46).

launch of second domyos club

Next month will see the opening of the second Domyos Club in France, with the relaunch of an existing club in Aix en Provence under the Domyos umbrella.

The Domyos concept was originally introduced in Lille and has proved such a success that the owner – Oxylane Group, which also owns the Décathlon brand of retail outlets and sports equipment – decided to transform its Aix club, originally opened in 2001, to the same model. The 2,400sq m site now includes a 700sq m gym floor as well as four studios offering 100 classes a week.

The two clubs target the mass market. Monthly membership costs €45, or €5 an hour, with the hourly rate contributing significantly to revenues – the Lille club sold 185,000 hours in 2009, with 5,500 people attending classes every week.

Located in 10,000sq m 'Oxylane Villages' that encompass restaurants and indoor/outdoor sports activities, easy access is at the heart of the concept, and 40 per cent of customers are said to be brand new to the gym environment.

A third site is planned for Lyon.



There's been a massive increase in demand for caffeine-based energy drinks. Can you advise on whether these have any detrimental health effects if used before or during training? For example, I understand that they can raise the pulse rate. Are there any risks associated with this when combined with training?

Caffeine has seen a huge surge of interest in recent years and now appears in a huge variety of products designed and marketed to support the needs of different people, including sports participants. In truth, caffeine does have a place in sport. There is a large amount of research, dating back to 1907, that reports the benefits of caffeine are applicable across a range of different sports, including both endurance based sports and short term, high intensity activities like football. The reason for this is that caffeine assists mental performance, which helps athletes of all levels focus, concentrate and achieve their goals during training.

However, caffeine has received some negative press because it may increase heart rate and cause dehydration. Therefore it is extremely important to monitor caffeine intake when training to ensure the effects are positive. Everyone is different, but the typical amount consumed by sports people (1-3 milligrams per kilogram of body weight: 70-210 mg) before or during exercise is unlikely to give rise to any detrimental health effects. However, in saying this, for caffeine sensitive individuals, pregnant women and those under 16 it is probably more responsible to simply avoid caffeine.

Nick Morgan

Head of Sport Science for Lucozade Sport

Email questions to:

nickmorgan@leisuremedia.com

WIN! Simply email your sports nutrition questions to Nick Morgan. All questions featured in this column receive a Lucozade Sport prize pack. So, email soon!



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from the board



keeping tabs

john gamble • md • fitness first

I am deeply envious of Tesco's CRM capability. The company knows what we buy, when we buy it, how much we buy and whether it's a new or repeat purchase. It can also track our spending patterns and 'stimulate' us with tailored offers if it thinks our spending is dropping off.

How many of us know whether Mr T works out every Tuesday and Thursday, or whether he comes sporadically? Do we know if Ms X likes a combination of studio classes and gym, or if she prefers to attend a class for three weeks then change? How many of us send out tailored promotions with specific messages to specific targets?

Data capture, analysis and interpretation is one of the biggest challenges I believe we face as individual organisations and as an industry. Some might argue that it's a time-consuming chore and that it comes between us and what we really should be doing. But Tesco sees it as a vital tool which forms the bedrock of its phenomenal commercial success.

I believe that deeper customer insights and more sophisticated consumer profiling are the key to better customer retention, improved acquisition and/or meeting financial and community involvement targets. This is definitely something we need to get better at and invest in.

fia national audit of fitness

The FIA, in association with The Leisure Database Company (TLDC), is offering FIA members a free membership profiling service to measure and increase participation locally. The free service will enable operators to assess their membership for the very first time, gaining an unrivalled insight into what makes their members tick.

The service also gives public facilities and the industry as a whole a chance to compare themselves against government targets to increase fitness participation.

After the audit, we will be able to lay to rest myths – that our sector only caters for the wealthy, for example, or for muscle-bound men – and demonstrate that our membership base is increasingly diverse. In our relations with other sectors, the audit will allow us to say with entire confidence that investments in health and fitness clubs are increasing participation in physical activity and, where data is available, to confirm increases among specific target groups.

The profiling service uses the geo-demographic profiling system, Mosaic UK, from Experian. The free Mosaic profile categorises people into 15 Mosaic Groups and compares a site's membership with its estimated catchment area, highlighting the successes and untapped opportunities.

David Stalker, FIA executive director, says: "The need for accurate data capture

often flies below the radar – that is, until someone asks simple questions about the kind of people who use our gyms. Then we realise the need for consumer insight."

"In comparison with other sectors such as retail, there's a great deal we have to learn about understanding the needs of our consumers. The FIA National Audit is plugging this knowledge gap, offering operators information on their consumers."

All health clubs and leisure centres wishing to obtain their free group profile should contact Natalie Gibson at TLDC on +44 (0)20 7379 3197.



© iStockphoto.com

Audit: Ending perceptions that fitness is only for muscle-bound men

fia announces code of practice assessors

The FIA is delighted to announce that, after a rigorous tendering process, Active IQ – a leading Ofqual-approved awarding body – has been selected as the assessor for the FIA Code of Practice.

FIA members will have access to e-clinics that will offer interactive advice on how to bring leisure centres up to standard on health and safety, staff training and customer care.

Members interested in becoming compliant with the Code need to complete an evaluation application form. Active IQ's FIA account manager will then organise a visit date and give any additional support needed.

This partnership could not come at a better time as more and more

operators are signing up to the Code of Practice every day and seeking counsel on how to meet the standards. The latest member to sign up to the Code is Spirit Health Clubs, which has become the first hotel chain to comply with the Code of Practice. Spirit has 39 clubs across the country within selected Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza Hotels.

Ross Cowie, UK and Ireland training and development manager at Spirit, says: "Hopefully more and more clubs will sign up to the Code of Practice and, with the appointment of Active IQ, all FIA members will have more advice than ever before to help them meet the standard and receive the important stamp of approval."

meet the team

hayley bevan

events & sponsorship manager

With the events season fast approaching and the race for the Oscars of the fitness sector – the FLAME Awards – heating up, we catch up with the FIA events & sponsorship manager, Hayley Bevan, to find out what she has in store over the coming months

WHAT DO YOU DO AT THE FIA?

I'm the events & sponsorship manager. Right now, the main focus for me and my team is the FLAME Conference, which is just around the corner.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE COME TO THE FLAME CONFERENCE?

We have some fantastic speakers who have loads of business-changing advice to offer. I can't wait to see the speakers – in particular I don't want to miss Graham Davies, who will finish the conference on a humorous note. And, of course, I'm eager to see who picks up the FLAME Awards at the Ball of Fire.

HOW DO YOU RATE THE FRONT-RUNNERS FOR THIS YEAR'S FLAME AWARDS COMPETITION?

The competition is stiffer than ever with high standards across the industry. There's no telling who will win and I'm



Bevan's main project at the moment is the annual FLAME Conference

not going to make any predictions, but I can guarantee that the winners will be celebrating in style at the Ball of Fire!

WHAT OTHER PROJECTS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN AT THE FIA?

This year, a big focus for me is the FIA's Professional Development Seminars, which go one step further in offering much more than the typical training day. Also, I'm busy making sure that all events have a birthday twist, as the FIA celebrates its 20th year this year.

DO YOU HAVE A JOKE FOR THE READERS OF HCM?

All too filthy to repeat I'm afraid!

new eating disorder guidelines

In association with Anorexia & Bulimia Care (ABC) and ISRM, the FIA has developed a new set of guidelines designed to help club managers deal with vulnerable exercisers who are at risk of, or already suffer from, eating disorders.

Supported by REPs, the new guidelines are part of a skills strategy designed to help fitness professionals deal more effectively with a wider community.

Now available free of charge to all FIA and ISRM members from the FIA and ISRM websites, the guidelines are

an accessible reference document to help all fitness professionals understand the condition, raising their awareness of the symptoms as well as psychological and behavioural indicators.

David Stalker, FIA executive director, says: "Every responsible operator has an explicit duty of care to everyone who sets foot on their premises, but to date we have had very limited information on how to identify and deal with anyone we suspect may be suffering from an eating disorder."

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Kevin Hubble, PT of the Year 2010

hubble wins pt award

Fitness First has named its Personal Trainer of the Year during the group's annual Fitness First PT conference, organised in partnership with Premier Global.

Facing tough competition from fellow Fitness First personal trainers throughout the UK, 33-year-old Kevin Hubble, from the group's Bournemouth club, was awarded the coveted title after the judges considered a number of factors including client testimonials, representation of Fitness First through the company's mission and values, personal and client development, and growth of business.

John Gamble Fitness First's managing director, says: "Kevin is a deserving winner of the award."

in brief...

seller lands presenter award

Greg Sellar has been named as the 2010 IFS International Presenter of the Year at the International Fitness Showcase in Blackpool.

Sellar describes the award as being the "major highlight" of a presenting career that has taken him to more than 35 countries over the past 15 years.

He adds: "I'm passionate about the fitness industry and excited by how it's evolving. Having travelled extensively for the last few years, I truly believe the UK market is in a world-leading position for programming, fitness concepts and education."

stransky resigns from life fitness

US-based leisure and marine group Brunswick has announced that John Stransky, president of its fitness equipment arm Life Fitness, has resigned with immediate effect.

Stransky will be replaced on an interim basis by Peter Hamilton, Brunswick's senior vice president and chief financial officer. Hamilton will be responsible for all Life Fitness business until a permanent successor is named.

Stransky took up the position of president of Life Fitness in 2006. He originally joined the Brunswick group in 1981 as product manager for pins, finishes and supplies at Brunswick Billiards. His subsequent roles at the company have included president of Brunswick Billiards and president of Brunswick Bowling.

Dustan McCoy, Brunswick chair and chief executive, says: "We wish to thank



Stransky joined Brunswick in 1981

John Stransky for his many contributions to Brunswick over the years. We wish him well in his future endeavours."

McCoy says that Brunswick will be considering a number of internal and external candidates to lead Life Fitness.

moore joins gymkituk

Refurbished fitness equipment provider GymkitUK has strengthened its UK sales team with the appointment of Austen Moore as the company's new commercial sales director.

Moore has been tasked with developing and expanding GymkitUK's client base in the independent operator sector. He will also be responsible for launching products within the commercial sector.

Prior to joining the company, Moore worked for Power Plate International as a regional manager. He initially

began his career in the health and fitness sector at contract management company DC Leisure, where he worked alongside current GymkitUK managing director Howard Braband; at the time, Braband was DC Leisure's director for group health and fitness.

Braband says: "It's great to welcome someone with Moore's experience onto our team. His in-depth knowledge of club operations, combined with years of selling fitness products at a regional level, makes him a valuable asset to our organisation."

new gm for bannatyne hotel

The Bannatyne Spa Hotel in Hastings has appointed Geoff Green as its new general manager.

Green joins the Bannatyne Group from Western House Hotel at Ayr Racecourse, where he held the position of general manager. Previous experience includes stints at hotels in the Middle East.

Green will be overseeing around 50 staff at the Bannatyne hotel. The property also includes a wellness spa and health and fitness club.

He says: "I'm looking forward to taking the staff team to new levels."

momentum expands staff

Business development specialist Momentum has strengthened its sales, instructor, personal training and management recruitment service with two new appointments.

Jared Margolis joins Momentum as new business development manager, heading up the sales recruitment division. Previously a general manager at four Fitness First clubs, Margolis started his career as a personal trainer.

Meanwhile, Angie Medcraft has been appointed as director of permanent recruitment, tasked with placement of management staff.

PEOPLE PROFILE



pete cohen

Cohen started his career as a fitness and aerobics instructor. He gained a degree in sports science and is now a celebrated weight-loss expert and the resident life coach at GMTV

How long have you worked in the fitness industry?

For more than 20 years.

What initially sparked your interest in the sector?

I've always loved fitness. I did a degree in sports science and from there it was a natural progression to work in the sector.

What health and fitness-related qualifications do you have?

I have fitness and aerobic instructor qualifications as well as a degree in sport science. I'm also a qualified physical education teacher. I have numerous other qualifications in psychology, counselling and personal development.

What led you to get involved in weight loss programmes?

I started specialising in helping people lose weight when I realised just how much of a problem it was, and how many people struggled to achieve weight loss. I realised early on that the problem was in the way people think. That's when I became determined to help people use their brains in more powerful and effective ways.

With so many hats on, what is your typical day-to-day?

My days are never the same. One day I might be filming for a TV programme and

the next I might be working with a sports person on improving their performance. I also do a lot of motivational speaking, as well as running workshops for large blue chip companies. Over the last two years, I've begun to spend more time in front of the computer writing my blog and running online workshops.

Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?

Nothing – apart from not taking myself too seriously!

What are your future plans, and what are you working on now?

The future is taking me in a number of directions with a number of TV projects, but my main aim is to continue to support people in the quest for a fitter, slimmer, healthier and happier life.

What drives you?

There's only one thing that drives me and that's the love of what I do. I love to help people help themselves. There's nothing better than supporting someone to change, so that eventually they enjoy what they do and take responsibility for it.

What do you think is the number one weakness in the industry?

I feel that we don't really address the needs of our customers. We give them what we think they want, but not what they need. Many people who join health clubs, or who think of joining, don't enjoy exercise. They don't really believe they can change, they don't feel good about themselves and they feel insecure. Until this is addressed, we will always have massive issues with retention.

If you have any stories for inclusion, please email them to us at newsdesk@leisuremedia.com



Cohen's work includes motivational speaking and running workshops

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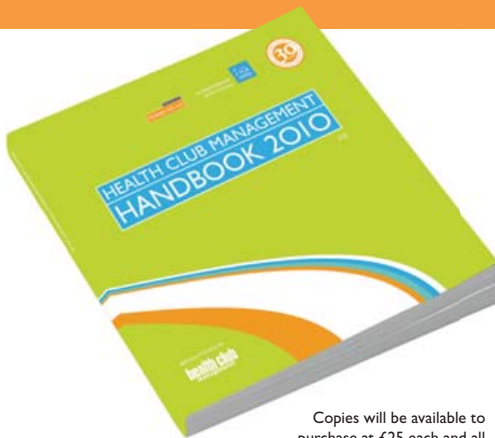
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MAY

15-16 | Fitness, Aerobics and Management Congress / EFAA Fitness & Personal Trainer Congress**Venue** Arnhem, The Netherlands**Summary**

Event for the Dutch fitness industry.

Web www.efaa.nl**22-23 | BodyPower****Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK**Summary**

The BodyPower show is focused on sports such as MMA and powerlifting.

Web www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk

JUNE

3-6 | Wingate Congress of Exercise and Sports Science**Venue** Netanya, Israel**Summary**

A congress for leading professionals and researchers in the field of exercise and sports science.

Web <http://congress.wincol.ac.il>**10-13 | Festival del Fitness****Venue** Rome, Italy**Summary**

22nd annual exhibition for the Italian fitness industry, offering a wide range of interactive sessions.

Web www.fitfestival.com**28 - 1 July | 6th Annual International Conference on Kinesiology and Exercise Sciences****Venue** Athens, Greece**Summary**

A conference for scholars and students.

Web www.atiner.gr**The BodyPower show will be held at the NEC in Birmingham, UK**

JULY

5-6 | Facilities Management Forum**Venue** Stansted Airport, UK**Summary**

Focused on the ecological aspect of facilities management.

Web www.forumevents.co.uk**12-13 | International Council on Active Aging, UK****Venue** TBC**Summary**

The US-based ICAA will hold its first ever event in the UK this July.

Web www.icaa.cc**14 | The FIA FLAME Conference****Venue** Cheltenham, UK**Summary**

The FIA's annual educational conference will run alongside the Industry Summit.

The FLAME Awards ceremony also takes place at the event.

Web www.fia.org.uk

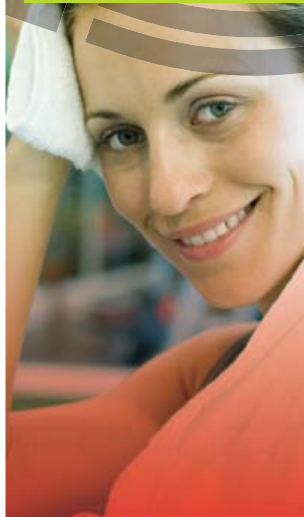
AUGUST

4-8 | IDEA World Fitness Convention**Venue** Los Angeles, US**Summary**

Aims to "inspire the world to fitness".

Web www.ideafit.com**19-21 | 29th Annual National Fitness Trade Show****Venue** Reno-Tahoe, Nevada, US**Summary**

Trade show for health club owners, managers and personal trainers.

Web www.nationalfitnessradeshow.com**The FLAME Conference includes the FLAME Awards ceremony****See it.
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MAY-END OF JULY 10

race for life

Cancer Research UK's Race for Life celebrates its 16th birthday as the 2010 series of races kicks off this month. Women across the UK, of all ages and fitness levels, can join in the celebrations and help raise money for research into cancer by entering one of more than 230 events. The 5km courses – which women can walk, jog or run – go on until the end of July. The entry fee for this year is £12.99.

The 2009 series was the biggest to date, with more than 730,000 participants. Cancer Research hopes to raise more than £60m this year. Details: www.cancerresearchuk.org



Women of all ages and fitness levels can take part in Race for Life



River Tees: Home of the new event

©NICE LANTAU ALSTAIR FORRESTER SHANKE

29 AUGUST 10

river rat race

This new event, by the Rat Race Urban Adventure team, challenges you to splash, jump, kayak and climb your way around a 10km-plus course against the backdrop of the River Tees in Stockton upon Tees. Run along the bank of the river and face adventure activities as you go – all on, near or in the river. Entry costs £35. The event promises to be the highlight of the town's 'Take to the Tees' August bank holiday weekend festival. Details: www.ratraceadventure.com



Choose a 25km or 40km route

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4-6 SEPTEMBER 10

london to bruges cycling challenge

Richard House, London's first children's hospice, has launched a new challenge for 2010 – a 200km bike ride from London to Bruges. The two-day cycle ride starts off in the UK capital, passing through the Kent countryside and the Nord Pas de Calais region of northern France. It finishes in Bruges, a beautiful, timeless city and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Registration costs £99 and minimum sponsorship is £1,200. Money will go to the hospice, which supports children with life-threatening or complex healthcare needs and their families. Details: www.richardhouse.org.uk



Event raises funds for kids' hospice

17 OCTOBER 10

mooktrekker

Now in its second year, this night trek in Hong Kong is "set to challenge the hearts, minds and legs of the most adventurous". There's a choice of a 25km or 40km route, each of which go through Lantau Island's country trails, including the sleepy village of Tai Tong Tsai and Hong Kong's second highest mountain: Lantau Peak. Participants set off at 9.20pm/11.20pm and are given seven/nine hours to make the finish line before sunrise. Minimum sponsorship is HK\$500, which will go to the official charity Room to Read. Details: www.moontrekker.com

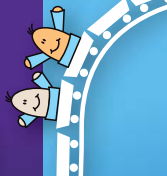
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everyone's talking about . . .

testing kids' fitness

The downward trend in the fitness of British children is something which has to be addressed. But is the introduction of an annual bleep test the way to do this?

With three million British children currently overweight, and fitness levels falling with each generation, rising obesity levels certainly need to be tackled.

In March, the government's chief medical officer Sir Liam Donaldson suggested that one way to do this might be to introduce annual fitness tests – an extension of the National Child Measurement Programme where children are weighed and measured as they enter and leave primary school. His proposal was for an annual bleep test for all secondary school children, with those failing to meet the minimum

targets being issued with a letter to take home to their parents.

Fitness testing is now being introduced to schools in the US since the launch of mandatory PE (see *HCM* Feb 10, p34). However, the US model does not use a bleep test, which is recognised as a tough option – running between two markers, placed 20m apart, before a beep sounds, with the beeps getting faster as the test progresses and the total number of runs completed used to calculate fitness.

The National Heart Forum estimates that 30 per cent of boys and 27 per cent of girls will be overweight or obese by 2020; fitness levels certainly

need to be tackled. But are tests the way forward, or will this just provide another outlet for the sporty kids to show off and the overweight ones, who already hate sport, to be further humiliated? Is there anything about failing such a test that would inspire them to become more active?

Alternatively, should the investment be ploughed into more projects to get children active, such as the free swimming initiative for those aged under 16 or the MEND programme, which helps overweight children raise their skills, and self-esteem, to a level where they can join in with, and enjoy, mainstream school sport?

SHOULD WE INTRODUCE BLEEP TESTS FOR CHILDREN? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

john searle

fia • chief medical officer



"This is a massive undertaking: there are 9.5 million children under the age of 18 in education in England and Wales, so I think a bleep test would put too much pressure on schools. My experience as a school governor has also proved that schoolkids are tested to bits – is it fair to lay another test on them? Thirdly, will it get

the results the government wants? Will it get schoolkids fitter?

I would much rather see an increase in government expenditure on exercise, activity and public health. In England and Wales, the government spends 70p per head of the population on activity each year, compared with the Netherlands and Denmark, where the investment is £10 per head each year. In my opinion, major public health measures in terms of sports provision, and making the environment activity-friendly for walking and cycling, would be more beneficial.

A bleep test wouldn't address the problem. We know we have an obesity problem: 16 per cent of children in the UK are obese. We need to find positive ways to tackle the issue. More can be gained from showing people where they could be, rather than making them embarrassed about where they are."

tam fry

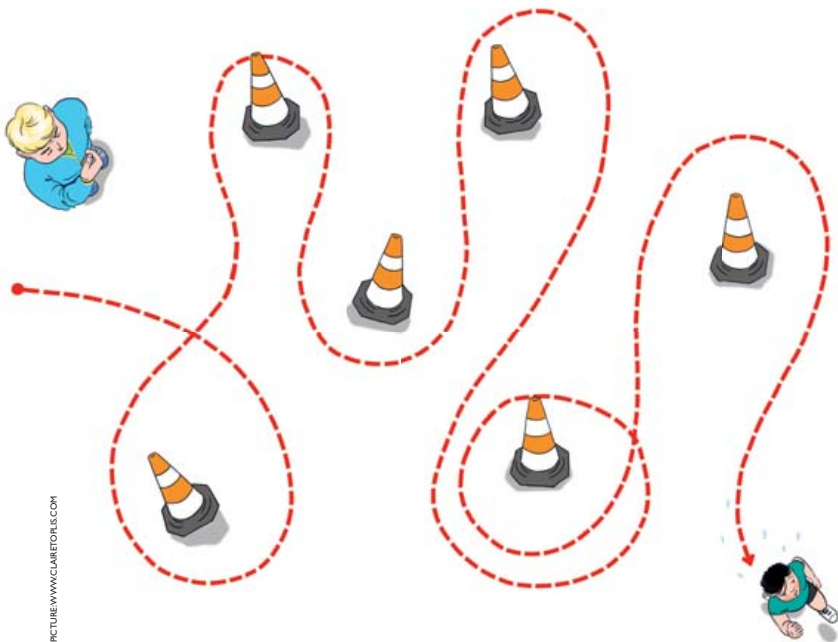
national obesity forum • spokesperson and board member



"The short answer is that, if people taking the bleep test are unfit, it's not a good thing. The test wasn't devised for the man on the street – it's for athletes. You would expect members of Premiership football clubs, elite sportsmen and women and members of the SAS to be taking it, but not your average schoolchild.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Health need to start thinking about getting schoolchildren to take part in regular activity before even considering the bleep test. If the government delivered on its promise of providing children with the opportunity to do one hour of exercise, five days a week, there could be some justification for running it at the end of the year. In my opinion, that would be the minimum precursor for implementing it.

Overweight children are at risk of collapsing if they attempt the bleep test. I think it's entirely inappropriate to put the unhealthy through this, and it's pointless without a programme of activity beforehand to build up muscles and stamina. Unless the government fulfils its promise of providing physical activity every day, then this isn't going to work."



PICTUREWWWCLARETOLLS.COM

Would fitness tests used with elite athletes, such as the bleep test, be relevant for use with the UK's increasingly unfit kids?

magnus scheving

lazytown entertainment • ceo and creator



I don't think we need an annual bleep test to demonstrate how unfit kids in the UK are becoming – lack of any form of structured daily exercise already shows this. There is no daily exercise factored into the school curriculum, or even as an extra-curricular activity in most schools.

The statutory requirement in secondary schools in the UK is just one session a week until they are 16 years old. This flies in the face of current government recommendations for school-age children to be active for 60 minutes at a moderate intensity every day. Figures show that 68 per cent of boys and 75 per cent of girls in the two- to 15-year age group fail to achieve this recommendation.

My TV programme, *LazyTown*, promotes the message to young children that it's fun to move the body, and the mind, every day. This early message has to be transferred into lifelong habits. If the government really wants to tackle this, forget the bleep test, but reinstate daily physical exercise into the school curriculum and make it fun. It won't just safeguard adult health in the future; it will also improve kids' intellectual performance now, which is a double win for a small investment."

paul sacher

mend central • research director



I only agree with this if the right support structure is put in place. There's no point telling children they're unfit without giving additional support.

The children who attend the MEND Programme have often had negative experiences of sport and physical education; I worry that if they receive a letter saying they're overweight and

unfit, it would just knock their confidence further, especially if the test is carried out in a group environment, which would give more opportunity for finger-pointing.

The tests would need to be done by someone skilled both in running tests and at passing on bad news. The National Child Measurement Programme measures children at school entry and at Year Six, and many school nurses have needed extra training to talk to parents who get upset when they're informed that their child is overweight.

Schools need to provide different forms of physical activity – like trampolining, dance, martial arts and swimming – which might appeal to those who struggle with mainstream sport. Many schools focus on the children who excel at traditional sports, but the needs of all children need to be considered."

HEATHER FRANKHAM



Magali Robathan talks to the CEO of Lifetime about the changing needs of the health and fitness industry

When I arrive at Lifetime's Bristol office, founder and CEO Heather Frankham manoeuvres her way past piles of boxes to greet me.

"Sorry about the mess, but we're moving," she says, ushering me into her office. Frankham doesn't look sorry at all, though; in fact she looks positively pleased. That's because the mess is a result of Lifetime's success. The company has seen such rapid growth that Frankham has had to rent an extra floor of office space in order to accommodate her ever-expanding workforce.

Lifetime offers a range of courses, apprenticeships and NVQs aimed at training employees for the active leisure sector. It's the seventh largest provider of apprenticeships in the UK – across all sectors – and its clients include LA Fitness, Leisure Connection, DC Leisure, Fitness First, SLM, Virgin Active and David Lloyd Leisure. More recently, the company has branched out into hospitality training, delivering customer service and food and beverage qualifications to Hilton Hotels. Its core business has been built on accessing government funding for training; around 80 per cent of its turnover is currently government-funded.

"I set Lifetime up to be about quality training," explains Frankham. "It's about providing real skills, not just pieces of paper. Unfortunately there are still courses being delivered by colleges and training providers using tutors who've never worked in our industry. While they may be able to teach the academic elements of the course, the reality of what it's like to work in a gym doesn't get taught. When we recruit tutors, we recruit people who work within the industry and we train them to be teachers or assessors. That way we can respond to what the industry actually needs."

This approach certainly seems to be working. Last year the company delivered training to more than 12,000 learners. In the past two years, it has more than

TRANSFORMING A GENERATION

This year is seeing the roll-out of the Transforming a Generation (TAG) charity, which Lifetime has been involved with since the launch of its pilot in 2008. TAG was set up by LA Fitness and FIA chair Fred Turok, with the aim of preparing 18- to 24-year-olds not in employment, education or training (NEET) for a job in the health and fitness industry. Participants take part in a six-week training programme, delivered by Lifetime, and then in a four-month work placement at a local gym. Each has a dedicated mentor and is taught a range of skills to help them find and secure a job,

as well as gain technical fitness instructor qualifications and customer service skills.

"It's about taking these individuals and giving them aspirations and self-confidence," explains Frankham. "The TAG programme is very important to us as an organisation. It's about making a difference."

Lifetime is the partner for the scheme, which has attracted £11.7m in funding from the Department for Work and Pensions. TAG launched in 10 UK training venues in January, and the aim is to get 1,800 young people to achieve a REPs Level 2 qualification and a job in the fitness industry.



In 2009, Lifetime delivered training to more than 12,000 learners

quadrupled its turnover, from £4.2m to around £17m, and has grown from 60 staff to almost 200. In the next 12 months it's forecast to deliver a turnover of £25m.

building the business

After graduating in 1991 with a degree in PE and maths, Frankham went into teaching. In her spare time she qualified as an aerobics teacher and ran classes at a local gym, spending her evenings and weekends teaching trainee instructors in Bristol and London. In 1993, she decided it was time for a change and enrolled on a Masters degree in exercise and health science at Bristol University, which she fitted around a part-time teaching job.

It was while she was teaching on an instructor course at Redwood Lodge – a Whitbread-owned hotel and country club in Bristol – that she spotted a business opportunity. "It was a lovely facility but the aerobics programme wasn't well attended," she says. "Instructors regularly failed to turn up and some classes only attracted two or three people. I put a proposal to them saying: 'I'll sort your aerobics programme out, I'll guarantee you the income you're currently getting and a share of the profits we make above

that.' We filled the classes and expanded the timetable. I got the right instructors in and made sure there was never a situation when classes didn't run, even if that meant I had to take them myself."

When a rival David Lloyd club opened nearby, Frankham was asked to stay at Redwood Lodge in a consultancy role, to look after the aerobics programme, develop the gym and work on retaining members. After six months she was asked to consult on three more clubs for Whitbread, and was then asked to act as group fitness manager on a self-employed basis. "One of the things highlighted was the need for training," she says. "The industry was just realising that it needed a recognised qualification for fitness instructors."

Frankham worked with Whitbread on pilot programmes for instructor training before realising the company didn't have the funding to roll them out across its

clubs. It was then that she decided to get involved with the newly launched apprenticeships through the then Training and Enterprise Council. "That was my first experience of accessing government funding for training, which I implemented through Lifetime," she says. "It was the beginning of Lifetime as a company, as opposed to me being a sole trader."

Lifetime was launched in 1995. Over the next few years, it focused mainly on apprenticeships, delivering training and sourcing funding for health and fitness operators. The early days, says Frankham, were all about survival. She had no capital and the company was built using small business development loans.

"Initially the business survived week-to-week, month-to-month," she says. "Because we worked nationally, but through a local training and enterprise council, the delays in funding were huge. Cashflow was a real issue."

**"I SET UP LIFETIME TO BE ABOUT
QUALITY TRAINING – PROVIDING REAL
SKILLS, NOT JUST PIECES OF PAPER"**

Lifetime's courses range from fitness instructing to life guarding; the company has also expanded into hospitality training

► the eureka! moment

The breakthrough came in 2002. "It all came together at that point," says Frankham. "We won a contract with LivingWell and got all their staff to REPS Level 2. As a result, we very quickly got referrals to do the same for other operators. That was when the growth really started to happen for us.

"I'd done the first year of an MBA programme with Open University, so I had a greater business understanding. We were beginning to get a reputation for quality and it was also a time when government funding [for training] was more available, so we had an opportunity to grow. It just all came together."

Since then the business has grown extremely fast, leading to a completely new set of challenges. "During 2008 we went from 60 to 180 team members," says Frankham. "We'd recruited our board of directors when Lifetime was delivering a £2m turnover. Suddenly we were delivering £10m and we needed a very different set of skills."

In 2009, Frankham therefore brought in several new directors: David Foster was appointed as COO, Nigel Wallace became director of training, Peter Mitchell joined as finance director, and Patrick Henchoz joined as a non-executive director. A final new appointment – Iain Beadle, sales and marketing director – was confirmed earlier this year.

This has freed Frankham up to take a more strategic role in the business. "The day-to-day operation is now with Foster and his team, which gives me a completely new freedom to do the things I love and enables the business to grow even more," she says. It has also allowed her to take on other commitments: in December she was voted on to the FIA board of directors, with responsibility for education.

branching out

Last year also saw the launch of Lifetime Awarding, established to meet the need for 'fit for purpose' qualifications in the fitness and leisure sectors. Recognised as an official awarding organisation by the qualifications regulator Ofqual in July 2009, it can now certify qualifications in the same way as other awarding organisations such as City and Guilds.

"Previously, the awarding organisation would design the courses we ran,"



says Frankham. "But that process is quite lengthy: by the time you had a qualification approved, the industry had moved on. It was frustrating. Lifetime Awarding is about being able to respond much quicker to the industry."

Future plans for growth include the potential acquisition of other training providers, as well as broadening Lifetime's offer. Building on its recent diversification into hospitality training, Frankham says she's looking into training provision for other sectors: "We'll look at aligned, customer service-orientated sectors: the entertainment and wellbeing industries, for example."

challenges for the industry

It's a tough time for the industry, says Frankham, with increased competition and the difficult economy meaning it's important for operators to work out where they sit in the marketplace. "Over the last 12 months we've seen companies redefining who they are and what their market is," she says. "The challenge for the sector, once operators have realigned themselves, will be to identify where the pinch points and opportunities lie."

Frankham hopes that a growing necessity to retain members will result in a move away from what she sees as a focus on sales figures at the expense of customer service. "We've had a period of time when operators have been very much driven by spreadsheets and numbers," she says. "General managers now spend their time behind a desk as

opposed to being out talking to members and driving good service in their clubs.

"Until recently, operators got enough walk-ins that they could still deliver what they needed in this way. Now, with increased competition, they can't rely on that; they've got to stop members leaving. The only way to do that is to improve the service or differentiate what they're doing. The realisation has hit in the last year that it's no longer just a case of focusing on sales and marketing. I think we'll see a swing back to how things used to be, with managers coming out of their offices, driving good service in clubs and coaching and mentoring their teams."

Other issues for the industry include the growing focus on the health agenda, she continues: "We're moving to support some of our employers in community-based activities, outreach work and in looking at the health, lifestyle and nutrition agendas, as opposed to pure personal training for those who can afford it. We're diversifying our product range to meet that growing opportunity."

When Frankham launched Lifetime, her goal was to earn enough money to buy herself a little sports car. Now, she says, it's a passion for work that drives her. "I love what I do," she says. "I love problem-solving and looking at the industry to work out where the next opportunity lies. That's where I get my excitement; much more so than from financial return."



magali roathan
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running for GOVERNMENT

Steven Ward, the FIA's director of public affairs and policy, reports on the upcoming general election

The General Election on 6 May 2010 will bring about a major change in the dynamics of UK politics. I have written in *HCM* before about the twin challenge of a mass turnover of MPs (a combination of retirement brought about by age, thirst for new challenges or the muck of the expenses scandal) and the imperative for vast spending cuts and increases in tax revenues facing whoever wins the next election.

However, on the agenda of public health, there is universal agreement that the challenges posed by the ageing, sickening and fattening population of the UK requires concerted attention. All three major parties recognise that there is insufficient progress being made across the inextricably linked challenges of the rise in

obesity rates, growth in lifestyle-related health conditions and financial costs associated with inactivity in old age.

Nonetheless, each party has a different approach to the same challenge. I spoke to the key health spokespeople in each of the three main parties on their approach moving forwards.

The nation's poor health places a strain on the NHS



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LABOUR: GILLIAN MERRON,
PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER

WHERE DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CURRENTLY STAND IN THE PRIORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH?

Physical activity is a departmental priority and it sits at the heart of the government's Change4Life campaign – a campaign that's helping people to eat well, move more and live longer.

In his flagship speech on 13 August 2009, the Secretary of State for Health said that "promoting active lifestyles is the simple answer to many of the big challenges facing our country today" and called for the NHS to be bold and creative to help people to be fitter and healthier. That's why physical activity is enshrined in the 2010 NHS Operating Framework, with Let's Get Moving – a new physical activity care pathway – providing a unique opportunity to embed the promotion of physical activity at the core of the NHS.

WHERE CAN IT GO FROM HERE?

We have a cross-government Legacy Action Plan to get two million more adults active by 2012, and *Be Active, Be Healthy* established a new framework for delivery of physical activity aligned with sport leading up to 2012 and beyond.

We need to take action from the ground up, as well as national policy direction and leadership. The fitness sector needs to be ready to broker the partnerships in local communities to make our vision of a more active nation a reality. This means that the private, public and third sectors have to become much better at working together.

WHAT ROLE DO PARTNERS SUCH AS THE FIA PLAY?

As Let's Dance with Change4Life has shown, the FIA is a key agency in making this happen on the ground. I attended the FIA-sponsored dance class in my constituency of Lincoln as part of the Change4Life free dance weekend. Through events such as this, the FIA has managed to mobilise the health and fitness sector to deliver on the public health agenda – an example being the support shown for MoreActive4Life.



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fia

Labour introduced the Change4Life campaign to get the nation more active

CONSERVATIVE:
ANDREW LANSLEY
MP, SHADOW
SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR HEALTH



**GIVEN THE
ECONOMIC CLIMATE,
ISN'T PUBLIC
HEALTH AN EASY
TARGET FOR CUTS?**

It's true that public health budgets have been seen as easy targets for cuts in the past, but this has been a false economy. In the face of the additional demands facing the NHS in the coming decades – an increasing and ageing population, costly advances in treatments and rising expectations – we have to get to grips with the real drivers of current demand on our National Health Service.

We've pledged to increase health spending every year to help the NHS meet the big demographic and public health challenges we face in the years ahead. We've also committed to supporting our new 'Public Health Service' with resources devoted specifically and flexibly to tackling these challenges. Under a Conservative government, public health budgets will be separately identified and allocated, and a greater proportion devolved to local communities.

**HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
IN SHAPING POLICY?**

The Public Health Commission looked at three areas of public health: diet, alcohol and health at work. Its expert advice informed our new 'Public Health Green Paper, *A Healthier Nation*, published in January this year. The solutions the Commission proposed

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The Tories, with FIA help, want to introduce discounted gym memberships

reach beyond the usual short-lived public health initiatives we have seen in recent years, and represent progressive steps forward which support our drive to encourage greater social responsibility on a voluntary basis.

We back many of its recommendations. We support the voluntary move towards a unified message centred on three themes – a healthy diet, energy, and responsible drinking – channelled through a single

vehicle, ie an improved Change4Life. These are specific examples of the influence of the Public Health Commission upon our policies.

**TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE
FIA FEATURE IN THE PLANS OF
THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY
GOING FORWARD?**

We want to work in collaboration with the FIA to incentivise small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage their workforce with the offer of free or heavily discounted gym memberships.

We've also made clear that we will work with business organisations, the NHS, local government and the Fitness Industry Association to establish local occupational health schemes, which can then be offered to small and medium-sized businesses.

We have to get to grips with the
real drivers of current demand on
our National Health Service

► **LIBERAL
DEMOCRATS:
NORMAN LAMB,
SHADOW
SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR HEALTH**



WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON THE CURRENT STATE OF PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY?

As a nation, we clearly haven't given public health the attention it deserves or needs. The figures speak for themselves: we are fatter, we drink more and we do less exercise than people in the rest of Europe. The cost to the NHS is enormous and we need to do more to address this.

Labour has spent the last 13 years imposing a constant stream of ill-thought out policies on local communities. Some of them have been successful – one significant change that will make a big difference is the banning of smoking in public places, which was the right thing to do because of the impact of passive smoking – but for the most part they have been a failure. Too often the view seems to be that you can change behaviour by exhortation from Whitehall.

Disturbingly, the Conservatives have taken to moralising about the causes of inequality. Instead of blaming people, we should be empowering them.

We also have to recognise that the causes of health inequalities are found well beyond the NHS. Unless and until we tackle these causes, our success will inevitably be limited.

Subject to this, there are steps that we can take to shift resources within the NHS towards prevention of ill-health, focusing particularly on disadvantaged communities. We should ensure that the financial incentives within the NHS are more effectively aligned with the objective of improving



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The Lib Dems feel steps can be taken to shift NHS resources towards prevention

health and wellbeing. We need to have Primary Care Trusts working with local authorities and business – such as the fitness industry – to improve the health and wellbeing of their communities.

NANNY STATE VS GENTLE NUDGES... WHERE DO THE LIB DEMS STAND ON THIS DEBATE?

There is a role for the state where people's activities are harming others: the ban on smoking in pubs and other public places is a perfect example of this. But when it comes down to the

individual's own health, then the approach should be to provide information, support and incentives to help people change their behaviour.

WHERE DOES THE FITNESS INDUSTRY AND THE FIA STAND IN THIS DISCUSSION?

There is an important role for the fitness industry and the FIA to play – and, of course, helping people gain access to facilities is a win-win situation. Partnerships between gyms and the local NHS can: help bring people into health clubs and gyms that wouldn't otherwise go; help the NHS reduce costs in the long-run by promoting healthy living; and generate extra revenue at off-peak times – a useful bonus for the fitness industry.



steven ward
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

The sector will play an important role: helping people to gain access to facilities is a win-win situation

ZONING IN

It began as a conversation over a pint in a pub but, within a year, a unique partnership had spawned the first budget health club in London's zone 1. Phil Rumbelow reports

At first glance there's little to suggest that Gym London, at the Colombo Centre in Southwark, is anything other than just another gym: a huge sunlit space features more than 90 stations of Life Fitness and Star Trac fitness equipment with a strong emphasis on cardio, while three plasma TV screens adorn one wall... But behind the scenes it's a very different picture: the newly-launched gym is the result of a unique four-way partnership between the Colombo Centre, Coin Street Community Builders (CSCB), Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) and Jubilee Hall Trust (JHT), of which I am CEO.

Located on London's trendy South Bank, the Colombo Centre is just a stone's throw from the Oxo Tower and the River Thames, and lies roughly

"THE NEWLY-LAUNCHED GYM IS THE RESULT OF A UNIQUE FOUR-WAY PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CSCB, GLL, JHT AND THE CENTRE"

halfway between Tate Modern and Waterloo station. Each morning, hundreds of office workers walk past the front door on their way towards Blackfriars Bridge and their day jobs in the City. The local area is also home to major international corporations such as Shell, Whitbread, IBM and ITV.

And yet it's also an area of significant deprivation, currently ranked as the 26th most deprived borough nationally and the ninth most deprived in London. The Colombo Centre sits in the northern part of Southwark, close to the border with Lambeth, in a neighbourhood that's traditionally been poorly provided for in leisure terms, separated by the river from the health clubs and leisure centres of the City and West End and with the nearest public swimming pool over two miles away in Tower Hamlets.

colombo's history

The Colombo Centre was established as a registered charity in 1985 with the aim of addressing the aforementioned lack of leisure provision. The centre, which was fashioned out of a former canteen, has for a long time provided affordable fitness, sports and social activities for local residents and workers, but was run on a shoestring budget until relatively recently.

At the beginning of the millennium, after Lambeth and Southwark withdrew funding, the centre was faced with bankruptcy within weeks. CSCB, a local development trust and social enterprise, organised an emergency package of

financial, governance and strategic support. Meanwhile, a renewed board of trustees appointed JHT to manage the centre; we were seen as a natural fit, being an independent charity based in central London and founded in the 70s with a similar ethos and objectives. Under our management, the centre has been run successfully since 2000.

The amount of use and the financial stability of the centre was turned around by an immediate refurbishment of the gym. The site was further transformed in 2005 when CSCB project managed the creation of two third-generation, artificial turf, seven-a-side football pitches and two multi-use hard courts on nearby derelict sites. These outdoor facilities were built using a combination of Section 106 monies, Lottery grants and charitable donations on land leased at a peppercorn rent for 40 years to the Colombo Centre by the two local authorities. The new facilities are hired out for much of the week to a variety of users, including dozens of local companies playing in football and netball leagues organised by Top Corner. However, they are available completely free of charge for community groups after 7.30pm from Monday to Friday and throughout the day at weekends.

The development of the derelict sites for outdoor sports use was part of CSCB's longer-term strategy for revitalising the area. CSCB had already transformed 13 acres of the South Bank into a thriving mixed-use neighbourhood of affordable housing, shops, galleries, restaurants, cafés and bars, as well as a park and riverside walkway, and its future plans include a new £25m indoor public leisure centre featuring much-needed swimming pools. However, the



The club is located on London's South Bank – home to corporations such as Shell and Whitbread, but also part of London's ninth most deprived borough



Gym London offers more than 90 stations of fitness equipment, as well as classes

new centre is unlikely to be ready for use until 2015 or 2016 at the earliest; in the meantime, it was felt that the existing facilities at the Colombo Centre required an urgent facelift.

balancing act

Although Mark Sesnan, MD of GLL, and I first conceived the partnership idea over a pint in the pub, it soon gathered momentum. Together we approached the Colombo trustees with a plan to substantially refurbish part of the existing centre to create a high quality, low-cost gym with larger and improved changing rooms. The gym – which would be operated by us as part of the broader Colombo Centre, but funded by GLL – offered GLL an opportunity to try out its proposed new budget model. Gym London, and in particular to pilot online joining and management systems; GLL has since opened similar concepts in London, in Camden and Merton.

The four partners quickly established the parameters of the work, with GLL lending Colombo £600,000 to pay

for the refurbishment of the centre – including redecoration, new changing rooms and an extensive range of new gym equipment – as well as a marketing package to support the new gym. A robust business plan and service level agreements between all parties were put in place to ensure that objectives were clear, responsibilities defined and risks managed. The loan will be repaid out of funds generated by increased use and membership, with GLL guaranteeing its business projections.

It helped significantly that all three partners were not-for-profit social enterprises with shared values – agreement didn't take as long as we first feared. The contractors, Createability, were set to work and delivered the 12-week project on time and under budget. ▶

THE PARTNERS

Colombo Street Community and Sports Centre

Established in 1985, the Colombo Centre is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It aims to provide affordable health, fitness, sports and social activities for the residents and workers of Greater London with the aim of improving their quality of life.

Coin Street Community Builders (CSCB)

A development trust and social enterprise established in 1984. It has overseen the completion of the South Bank riverside walkway, the creation of Bernie Spain Gardens and Gabriel's Wharf, the refurbishment of Oxo Tower Wharf and the building of 220 new homes for people in housing need. It provides a diverse range of arts, events and community programmes.

GLL

A social enterprise that exists for the benefit of the community. Based on charitable objectives, GLL is a non-profit distributing organisation that operates 70 public leisure centres within the M25 area, in partnership with 13 London boroughs, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Reading Borough Council, Bellingham Community Project, the London Development Agency and London Playing Fields Foundation.

Jubilee Hall Trust

Founded in 1978 to help save an historic Covent Garden market building from developers and preserve it for community sports use, the charity now aims to build strong, healthy communities by promoting the fitness and wellbeing of the individuals within them. The trust operates four health, fitness and sports centres in London – in Covent Garden, Hampstead, Westminster and Southwark – and also runs a range of community-based programmes.

"THE NEW GYM SPURRED US ON TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING WE OFFERED IN OTHER AREAS OF THE CENTRE"

- ▶ even working over the Christmas holidays to ensure that the new gym opened as planned on 25 January.

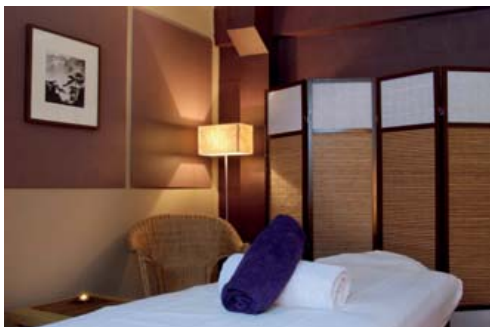
new facilities

Gym London at the Colombo Centre now offers a fully-equipped, air-conditioned gym from just £19.95 a month, or £26.95 for a gym and classes membership. This is a significant reduction on previous membership prices, which ranged from £27 to £46, and for a much improved facility. Customers can join online via a dedicated website and fast-track entry is possible thanks to a card-swiping system in the reception area.

The class programme includes the usual mix of cardio, conditioning and boxercise, all delivered in a huge, refurbished, sprung-floored dance studio. There's also a dedicated indoor cycling zone. Meanwhile, a holistic offering encompassing yoga, pilates and meditation is provided in conjunction with Breathe London, run by Andy Roberts. Breathe also uses two luxuriously appointed treatment rooms at the centre to provide a range of therapies (available at an additional cost) including sports and deep tissue massage, osteopathy, acupuncture, stress management and positive psychology workshops.

As part of its commitment to the local community, Breathe also runs a free drop-in meditation group, free staff development workshops for a local youth development charity, and programmes of holistic treatments for people with HIV.

Of course, the challenge was to achieve all of this without significantly impacting on the centre's other



The site includes Breathe London, which offers a range of therapies and treatments

activities, in particular the community programmes that included girls' boxing, Soccertots football coaching for under-5s, and seniors' activities ranging from badminton to bingo. But in fact, if anything, the new budget gym has spurred us on to increase the amount of community programming we offer in the other areas of the centre. For example, over February half-term, we used funding from Capital Radio's 'Help A London Child' to provide 78 local young people with taster sessions in a variety of sports including boxing, table tennis, basketball, tennis and dance. We're now looking at ways of expanding our offering with new concepts such as drama and singing lessons for children and adults, while retaining old favourites such as the seniors' Christmas party.

broadening access

GLL director Chris Symons says: "We were delighted to have been involved in this project, which has put new life into an important community facility. We believe that this new low-cost pricing model will make fitness facilities more accessible to more people during these difficult economic times."

So far the statistics bear this out, with gym membership more than doubling in the two months since launch to over 850 members – well on its way to the first year target of 1,000. One of the interesting questions has been whether the budget gym offer actually increases the size of the potential market by making it more affordable. The analysis at Colombo so far seems to indicate that it has: while the centre had always attracted a broader demographic than many other London gyms, the number of members coming from the 'K' group of Mosaic's demographic profiling system – typically those living in high-rise social housing and one of the least affluent population groups – has increased at a faster rate than most of the other groupings and now comprises 32 per cent of the overall membership.

As Colombo Centre manager Ashley Hargreaves-Smith comments: "We believe this is a win-win-win situation. We've improved the quality of the facility, increased affordability and access and, if we hit our projected targets, will generate new income which we can put back into developing our community programmes."



Gym London has attracted 850 members in the two months since it launched



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QUICKSTEPPING

How do the different brands of dance mat measure up? Kate Cracknell takes a closer look

Dance mats have captured the imagination for some years now. I remember, at my first LIV in 2006, the buzz around the ZigZag stand as live demonstrations took place on its new system. The popularity of dance mats has only grown since: trade shows now host events such as inter-school championships, with kids performing routines that demonstrate jaw-droppingly quick reactions; new systems and product innovations continue to be launched onto the market; and the benefits of dance mat use are witnessed among increasingly diverse population groups, from the grey market to those with mental and physical disabilities.

At face value though, as you walk around trade shows watching demonstrations on the various dance mat systems now available, they all seem fairly similar in concept – using your feet to tap pads on the mats in order to follow dance moves or participate in games which are projected on a screen in front of you.

We've therefore taken a step back, looking behind the scenes to compare and contrast the offerings from five different suppliers. We'll start with a side-by-side comparison and then go into a bit more detail on each of the systems.



at a glance...

ZigZag's dance mats have five pads, allowing for more complex moves and turns

	LAUNCHED	COST	MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CONNECTED MATS	MANUFACTURER	DISTRIBUTION DEAL	WARRANTY
CYBER COACH	2007 – first wireless dance mats 2009 – pressure sensitive wireless mats	From £2,000. A 10-mat system with dancing game costs £9,000 + VAT (and includes delivery and training)	64 offered commercially (although a world record attempt – 200 mats – is being attempted later this year)	UK-based. Designed, manufactured, sold and maintained by Quick Controls. Software written in Bolton; mats manufactured in Wrexham	Quick Controls is the manufacturer, not a distributor (Distribution in Scotland by Fair Sporting Masters; Cyber Coach Australia and New Zealand also launched in 2009)	Available for up to 10 years; standard warranty three years
PULSE	Original launch 2006. Latest version of the software launched April 2010	Package ranges from four to 32 dance mats. Prices start at £8,800 – finance and leasing options available	32	Positive Gaming, based in Sweden; manufacture of the dance mats split between Sweden and the Netherlands	Pulse has a three-year exclusive distribution deal for the UK and Europe, across all market sectors	Three-year warranty. Optional additional service agreement including annual service, telephone support and free software updates
SHOKK	Original launch 2007. Current system launched 2008	From £4,000 for a two-mat system	32	Manufactured by Game2Move and SHOKK in the Netherlands	SHOKK holds full exclusivity around the world	Standard two-year warranty; three-year extended warranty available
VECTOR GYM KIDS	February 2010	Four-mat system costs £4,180; eight mats £6,160; 16 mats £10,120; 32 mats £18,040	32	Manufactured by Maelor Display Systems in Wrexham, UK, under licence from Cyber Coach	VEQTOR Gymkids' deal covers schools and the leisure industry in the UK and Europe	One-year 'return to factory' replacement warranty
ZIG ZAG	Original launch 2004. Latest system launched 2009	Four- to 32-mat systems available, starting at £7,000	32	Manufactured by Andamiro in Korea	ZigZag is exclusive distributor for the UK and Europe across all markets	Two-year parts and labour warranty



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dance
mats



The Cyber Coach system currently allows for a total of 64 mats to be connected



cyber coach

The Cyber Coach dance mat system allows up to 64 mats to be connected wirelessly to a touch-screen controller, located up to 200m away and also linked to a projector/LCD screen.

Each of the pressure-sensitive mats has eight buttons on which a player can tread; underneath each button is a microprocessor that detects the weight and agility of the user, allowing players to have more control over, and input into, the games.

Sales have thus far focused on the education sector, with Cyber Coach offering 10 different games – such as Space Blaster and Soccer Sevens – to ensure all markets and requirements are catered for, including special needs, boys and the PE curriculum. The system includes more than 100 songs and an option to follow an on-screen virtual dance instructor. There are also four simultaneous difficulty levels, as well as internet connectivity to allow for online leagues and tracking of results.

A full day's training for up to 12 staff is included in the package, covering class set-up, monitoring players and tips for keeping everyone involved.

Quick Controls has a long history of supplying and maintaining computer systems for the likes of John Lewis and Marks & Spencer. By using this existing network of retail engineers, as well as drawing on the benefits of UK-based expertise and manufacturing, the company currently fixes 92 per cent of all problems within 24 hours of a call-out.

Future plans include the launch of three new games this year, upgrades to the dance mat game, a world record attempt in July – 200 players on one dance mat system at once – and research into the physiological benefits of using the system, currently being undertaken by Liverpool John Moores University, which is due to be published later this year.

pulse

Pulse's wireless Dance Machine dance mat system is used in conjunction with

A microprocessor detects users' weight and agility, affording players more control (Cyber Coach)



iDANCE software, the latest version of which was launched at FIBO last month.

Adopting a four-arrow dance mat concept, the system includes more than 130 step charts and songs and offers 3D graphics. It incorporates free-play as well as programmable competitions and classes. There's also a split-screen option that means players of different abilities can compete together on equal terms – the system caters for up to 32 players at one time on up to three separate difficulty levels, with a total of 25 skill levels from which to choose. Dance Machine offers real-time scoring and instant step-by-step feedback, plus analysis at the end of each session thanks to its in-built monitoring and evaluation software.

Charging the system during storage offers 70 hours of continuous play.

A training course on how to manage, promote and deliver fun sessions to different market sectors is available, covering areas such as planning, marketing, staff training, operating the system, and health and safety.

Pulse employs its own specialist interactive service engineers. With a 'fix or replace' policy, it guarantees to supply replacement parts within 24 hours and to repair on-site within 48 hours. Loan machines are also available.

Pulse is now looking into commissioning research from a local university to quantify the physiological

Pulse's Dance Machine has been used in schools to address issues such as anti-social behaviour, as well as physical activity drop-out among girls

and mental benefits of use of its dance mat system – better spatial awareness, co-ordination and vestibular sense, for example. Indeed, Dance Machine has already been used to great effect among a wide range of user groups, from schools – addressing issues such as low attendance, anti-social behaviour and physical activity drop-out among girls – to special needs groups and even sessions run by the charity Age Concern.

shokk

SHOKK's Game2Move connects up to 32 wireless dance mats, with its AA battery-powered mats meaning the system can keep going for six months with normal use – no need to recharge.

There's a split-screen facility to allow for competitive game play, as well as allowing varying difficulty levels within one session (a total of 11 difficulty levels are available). There's also an option to play 'live' over the internet, thereby competing with people across the globe. Game2Move can also be linked with SHOKK Tactics – SHOKK's exercise management system – to track and analyse activity. ▶



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"Dance Machine is great as it incorporates physical activity with fun"

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- Staff training is offered to ensure sustainability of the system, including a free half-day REPs-accredited workshop when the system is installed. An additional training course – covering topics such as mapping sessions to the national curriculum and evaluation of a site's current offering – is also available.

SHOKK provides all after-sales and customer service. Its online support aims for a 48-hour response time, although this can vary from a few hours to a few days if a new part needs to be ordered. Upgrades of songs, software and classes are available for customers to download on a quarterly basis.

Research has already been conducted which demonstrates a wide range of benefits, from cardiovascular fitness and motor control; through improved academic performance, concentration levels and behaviour; to better adherence to exercise and higher levels of energy expenditure compared to other school PE lessons. This research includes three dance mat-specific studies carried out in Holland plus one in the UK, as well as a further UK study, currently underway with Liverpool John Moores University, in conjunction with the rest of the SHOKK concept.

Future product developments include enhancements to the online capacity of the system, linked gaming and further integration with SHOKK Tactics.

Game2Move can also be linked with SHOKK Tactics to track and analyse activity

veqtor gymkids

The new Gymkids Cyber Dance system is designed to offer a high quality yet no-frills option, allowing schools and leisure centres that operate on a limited budget to offer dance mat sessions.

Wirelessly linking between two and 32 mats, the system is connected to a simple laptop. Produced under licence from Cyber Coach, Cyber Dance includes the Disco Dance software only, without the option of the virtual instructor that's available on the Cyber Coach system. However, four games are also available – including a soccer game and *Alien Bash* – to ensure appeal is extended to boys who may not wish to participate in dance.

VEQTOR Gymkids has recently acquired access to the Disney licence for fitness products and now plans to create Disney-themed dance games – such as *Hannah Montana, High School Musical* and *The Jungle Book* – by the end of 2010. The aim is to appeal to younger children, from five to 15 years old, by using music and themes with which they are familiar.

zigzag

ZigZag's Xer-Dance differs from other systems in that it includes five steps rather than four, which is said to result in more movement, activity and variation of steps, including allowing users to incorporate twists and turns.

The system's Pump It Up software allows for three levels of difficulty to run simultaneously, with users able to switch between levels mid-song; the dance mat recognises this switch and automatically adjusts the scoring. A leadership board and instant feedback for each player is also projected onto the screen – the software senses the level each user is following and is able to adjust the difficulty rating to suit the player mid-game.

The latest version of Xer-Dance also includes wireless score tracking cards. These allow the dance mats to recognise the individual user and automatically transfer their data to an online portal; users can then compare their scores with friends around the world. There's also an online competition feature that allows schools to compete against each other.

Running off three AAA batteries, which offer 1,000 hours of dance time, the mats need no recharging and sense when they're not in use, automatically switching off. Customers are provided with new chart music every three months, in 15-song bundles, which come with 15 levels of choreography to suit all skill levels. All service and maintenance is carried out by PTE, ZigZag's parent company, with a repair or replacement service promised within 24 to 48 hours.

A one-day REPs-accredited training course is delivered to all customers, while complementary sessions cover

Gymkids' Cyber Dance is a no-frills option, produced under licence from Cyber Coach, for schools and leisure centres on a budget





Dance mat research previously commissioned by SHOKK demonstrates a wide range of benefits, from cardiovascular fitness to improved academic performance

a wide range of topics – from making parties interesting and fun, through working with special populations, to child behavioural management.

Possible future developments include a karaoke and choral feature, along with additional online support for connecting to social networking sites.

Xer-Dance was used in a £47,000 research project, funded by Scotland's Chief Scientist Office, to look at the potential health benefits of active computer gaming for adolescent girls. The nine-month research programme, which took place at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, showed that teenage girls could achieve moderate

intensity exercise while playing on the dance platforms, with an increase in energy expenditure that was substantially greater than that reported for other active computer games including Wii tennis and boxing.

Dr Samantha Fawcner, paediatric physiology at Heriot-Watt University, says: "Health benefits from regularly playing on the dance mats are likely to be multi-dimensional and will help contribute to areas such as weight management, cardio-respiratory fitness and the development of bone density."

 **kate cracknell**
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*Source: Adolescent girls' energy expenditure during dance simulation active computer gaming, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

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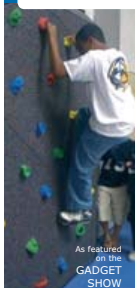


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KEEPING THEM SWEET AT 16

There is a massive drop-off in physical activity when kids hit 16, especially among girls

Sixteen. It's the age at which many gyms allow young people to join as full members, yet it's also the age when we see high levels of drop-out from physical activity. Why is this, and what can health clubs do to better engage with this market? Kate Cracknell asks the experts

ANDY JACKSON,
GLOBAL COMMERCIAL
DIRECTOR, FITPRO

Research over the last five or six years has shown there to be a massive drop-off in exercise and physical activity at the age of 16, particularly among girls.

For me it's pretty straightforward: the types of physical activity that are offered to them at school aren't necessarily linked to what they're likely to do when they leave school. If they go into a health club, they won't see any activities they recognise, so they're frightened and don't understand what to do, meaning they're unlikely to join.

Not only that, but girls in particular are often already disaffected by the competitive, generally cold outdoor

nature of most school-based physical activity. So how do you appeal to the non-sporting kids? Activities like aerobics and yoga are starting to appear in schools, which is a positive move as it engages with those who might otherwise drop out – as well as introducing them to the sort of activities they might do in health clubs.

The more experience young people can get of health club-type activities, the better. Ideally this would involve an instructor going to the school to deliver the sessions, creating a link between school and fitness facility. Or operators could pick the pupils up and bring them to the club for instructor-led group sessions; companies like DC Leisure have been doing this sort of thing for years.

The key thing for clubs to tap into is the pack mentality: teenagers generally are very insecure and like to do things

in groups. However, the focus in health clubs and even leisure centres tends to be on individual activity, and that can be quite a big gap to bridge. Facilities

have to look at how to get groups of teenagers to join, rather than trying to attract individuals.

Ultimately, teenagers are spontaneous and that's one of the hardest things. They don't decide what they're going to do until they get out of bed, and that's usually not until lunchtime! So weekly sessions might not actually be the way to go. It might be better to schedule activities in shorter bursts: putting something on for six weeks, for example, or offering activities as part of a drop-in weekend open day. ▶



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KEVIN YATES,
HEAD OF COMMERCIAL
DEVELOPMENT, LEISURE
CONNECTION

This is a difficult question to answer and one we've been looking at for years.

We're great at engaging with, and providing an appealing offer to, under-16s in the form of topical and fun classes, sports clubs and groups as well as swimming. Similarly, those aged 18 years and over tend to find our offering particularly appealing due to the price point, which offers them value for money whether they're new to the world of work or studying. So what happens in the couple of years in between?

Sixteen is a key age, but I don't think we'll get the results we want by waiting until this age to target them – indeed, if we do wait until this point, we may have lost the opportunity and end up fighting for a market that's no longer there.

We need to engage with children at a far younger age. Under-16s who find an activity or sport they thoroughly enjoy and are good at – especially fashionable activities like extreme sports – tend to be hooked throughout their adolescence. So we have to find out, by working with schools, what our kids enjoy the most. And we need to go out to them instead of waiting for them to come to us. We have to ask what they want and react accordingly.

My team is currently working alongside schools and colleges to ensure young people know where we are and what's on offer, as well as asking them what they want.

We understand that gyms can be intimidating, especially for teenagers who are growing into their adult bodies, which is why we offer a range of different opportunities to train. They can come in with a small group of friends and work with a coach; they can partake in new and innovative group exercise classes such as cheerleading, which can appeal to girls; and they can use downloadable programmes from our website, which will enable them to work out independently.



If we wait until kids turn 16 before we target them, we may have lost the opportunity

JONATHAN WILLIAMS,
CEO,
SHOKK

If we're going to effectively engage young adults aged 16 and over in health and fitness, we must start even younger. In the past, the fitness industry has largely ignored the teenage market, but the long-term value of this population segment is clear and something I've banged the drum about for some time. With the right support, clubs can approach the younger age group through family memberships, school sessions and youth groups.

This will lay the foundation at a time when body image and self-esteem are coming to the forefront and beliefs and values are being cemented.

Clubs must understand their end user and recognise that the needs of a 16-year-old are very different from that of any other age group. Are environments social and fun? Do they offer a welcoming, non-intimidating atmosphere? Staff are arguably the most vital ingredient in this process. The right instructors need to



be suitably trained to adapt service and sessions to any age group.

With this age bracket, an effective induction and retention/CRM system is particularly important, including multiple touch-points to maintain communication between facility and member. Incentives also play a key role – rewards for attendance, for example – while member referral and buddy workouts build on the social aspect. Setting goals will continue to challenge and educate teens, so keep it varied. This is a key point I made while helping to collate the NICE physical activity guidelines for young people, as understanding how to maintain an interest in physical activity is vital with this age group.

Like us, teenagers like to know they're receiving something entertaining, up-to-date, supported with good service, and value for money. Don't just market the gym and its facilities but show you have a real interest in their social wellbeing, introducing them to a complete lifestyle concept.

Staff are the most vital ingredient in the process – they must be able to adapt sessions to any age group



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Teenagers are often insecure and like to do things in groups – training with a friend can act as a security net for them

ROB BEALE,
GROUP HEALTH &
FITNESS MANAGER,
DAVID LLOYD LEISURE

We encourage an active lifestyle no matter what the age of our members, and this is reflected in our varied offering. At 16, teenagers are able to use all our facilities and attend classes; our aim is to get them ready for this from an early age, so it becomes a natural progression to full adult membership rather than 'all change at 16'.

We hold supervised gym sessions for eight- to 13-year-olds, for example, where our team take the young people

around the gym and create a fun yet structured environment for them to learn about exercise. They gain a strong understanding of how to behave in the gym and learn how to work out safely.

At 14, they can sign up to our free 'Start Up' programme that allows them to work out on their own. This three-stage induction programme starts by educating them about the kit and how to correctly exercise in the gym. Members get an individual programme card that's reviewed every four weeks with exercises to suit their needs. We monitor their progress, making sure they don't get bored and that they're maximising their membership.

Meanwhile, the 'Start It' programme consists of paid-for, one-to-one PT

sessions and caters for teenagers who need extra support in the gym, whether to aid recovery from an injury, to help with weight-loss or to provide guidance when training for a specific sport or event.

All our staff are fully trained to deal with younger members, and they all go through our REPs-recognised Junior Athletic Conditioning Course. This teaches them how to deliver safe and fun fitness sessions and gives them the skills and confidence to communicate with young people. ▶



THE TEEN APPEAL NEW INITIATIVES TO ENGAGE THE YOUTH MARKET

PipeDreams launched a new group exercise concept for teenagers at the end of last year: the Vew-Do Balance Board X-Treme Class. The 30-minute classes combine five components: upper body, lower body, abs/core, balance and CV. The 'cool' aspect of the board itself, which resembles a snowboard, is enhanced by the terminology and music used: exercises are referred to as tricks, the instructors are called Vew-Do Masters, and the play list includes the latest R&B, hip-hop and rock chart favourites. Teenagers partner up to learn the basic tricks before progressing to more difficult ones. The class can also be delivered as a circuit.

Revolutionary Products is working with Basildon Academy to create a climbing zone adjacent to the school's gym. Featuring four of Revolutionary Products' Freedom Climbers, as well as hand holes in the walls for free climbing, the zone will be designed with a mountain theme, its darker colour scheme and the overall 'cool' image of climbing appealing to older kids. Use of the Freedom Climber can also be tied in with the school curriculum, such as geography lessons, through a 'Climb Everest Challenge'. Schools are provided with maps of the world on which mountains are highlighted and kids pick one to 'climb'. The Freedom Climber's digital counter keeps track of the feet scaled by the kids each session as they work towards the total height of the mountain they've chosen.

Star Trac last year launched an updated version of its teenagers' Spinning® concept. The TeenSpin® programme is based on a range of motivating factors for teenagers – fun, achievement, strong leadership, entertainment, a sense of adulthood and learning – and incorporates games and team rides as well as a contemporary music playlist. From a practical viewpoint, it also sets in place a number of guidelines for teen-specific health and safety, including ensuring the child has passed the second phase of puberty to ensure bone strength and maturity, acknowledging that the 'right time' to begin an exercise programme will vary by individual; an awareness that exercises may still need to be tailored for each child; guideline heart rates based on teenagers' physiological response to exercise; recommendations regarding body temperature and hydration due to teenagers' propensity to overheat and cool

rapidly; a maximum of 100 RPM; a suggested minimum age of 12 due to height restrictions (4' 11") for use of the Spinner Elite bike; and a maximum of 20 participants per instructor.

Warrington School Sports Partnership (WaSSP) organised a free event for teenagers at the end of February. Taking place in a local nightclub, an aspirational environment for younger age groups, more than 150 teenagers attended the 'Wii 2 Real' event. ZigZag dance mat and Sportwall sessions, as well as games played between participants on Nintendo Wii consoles, were followed by an opportunity to experience the activities for real, with coaches on-hand from local sports clubs including Phoenix Boxing Club, Warrington Rowing Club and the Warrington Wolves Foundation dance troupe.

South Gloucestershire Leisure's Bradley Stoke Leisure Centre opened its new interactive fitness room, Studio:Tech, in March. Aimed at the teen market, the studio is the first in the UK to feature WebRacing™ – a cross between a cardio programme and a fast-paced virtual game in which users choose a bike or rower and race against each other on a big screen.

MARINA SAUNDERS, DIRECTOR OF SALES, ZIGZAG

We need to make our clubs more attainable to young children and teenagers so that, by the time they reach 16, they're already using them. If they've had a good experience pre-16, there's a much higher possibility they'll attend in the future.

Results, fun and social benefits are what make people come back. Results take longer to achieve, so the easiest element to focus on is fun. Young people often drop out of physical activity because it isn't fun and because there's little tailored towards them, so clubs should position sessions as

enjoyable past-times rather than enforced extra-curricular activities.

An ideal medium is an activity where skill levels don't matter – a circuit class or dance mat session, for example. Parties, too, can cater for a range of age groups, with activities geared towards a 'birthday experience' – four friends in the gym, rock climbing space or boxing circuit with a personal trainer, for example.

Classes that include partnering work will help youths interact and gain a level of familiarity. Include stations they can do easily to give them some sense of 'expertise' and comfort. They're



also more likely to attend if they have someone to go with: give out guest passes so they can bring a friend with them, as this can act as a security net.

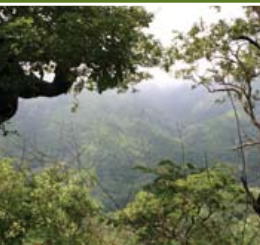
The most important thing is to treat them like adults and worthwhile customers. Recognise their likes and dislikes and take their choices into consideration as you would any other demographic group. Consider the music that's playing when they visit. And, if you're running specific classes, consider the environment too. In the same way you'd adapt your approach for older members, train staff to tailor their skills to the youth market and use younger instructors to carry out inductions.



kate cracknell
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kept in suspense

Whoever would have thought that just hanging around could be so good for your health?

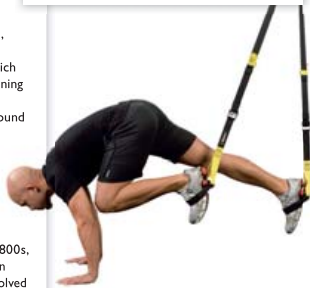
OK, fair to say there's rather more to suspension training than that, as I discovered for myself when I tried out a couple of the offerings currently on the market – it's actually a pretty tough workout. But it's certainly the hanging aspect that injects the novelty factor into the sessions, as well as opening the door to a wide variety of unusual exercises and movements that simply wouldn't be possible on traditional gym equipment.

All in all, it's easy to see how the popularity of this training method is growing so rapidly: it's different, it's fun and, if my aching muscles the following day were anything to go by, it also yields results.

That result-yielding potential should, however, come as no surprise: this is no passing fad, as Tommy Matthews, MD of The Optimal Life Fitness Group – which launched its Advanced Strap Training Course last month – explains. "Suspended training has been around for many years in one form or another. Most people would be familiar with gym rings and their use in the Olympics, but physical culture centres (gyms of old) all used rings as a tool for training and strength development as far back as the 1800s,

"The development of suspension training as we now know it has evolved from these rings: with a few adaptations to the kit, we now have an abundance of versatile systems out there that allow the general user to take part."

With suspension training taking the health and fitness sector by storm, Kate Cracknell outlines the benefits of this technique and tries out some of the class options currently on the market



▲ The TRX Suspension Trainer is one of the best-known strap-based systems

strap systems

The simplest, cheapest and most common form of suspension training are the strap-based systems. A number of these were exhibited at IHRSA this year, but probably the most well-known brand is TRX, distributed by Escape Fitness and launched in 2005.

"The TRX® Suspension Trainer™ is a highly portable performance training tool that leverages gravity and the user's body weight to enable hundreds of exercises for every fitness goal, simultaneously building strength, balance, flexibility and core stability. That's all you need: the TRX and your own body," says Wendy de Knoop, sales and marketing for Escape Fitness.

Matthews continues: "Suspension training delivers a total body workout involving compound movements. Although the straps are fixed to an anchor, they move freely, challenging the user to move their body weight around an unstable point. To perform the movements well requires good joint integrity, muscular balance and the ability to maintain strength across the body. People who throw the term 'core



AntiGravity Yoga allows even beginners to safely undertake advanced inversions

"THOSE WHO THROW THE TERM 'CORE TRAINING' AROUND NOW HAVE ACCESS TO A TOOL THAT TRULY INTEGRATES THE CORE"

**"SUSPENSION TRAINING
HAS BEEN AROUND FOR
MANY YEARS IN ONE
FORM OR ANOTHER"**



▲ The movements require good joint integrity and muscular balance

training' around now have access to a tool that really does integrate torso/core strength with the rest of body, as well as improving shoulder stability. The straps also allow us to perform horizontal work that's often missed when standing on our own two feet."

De Knoop adds: "In real life, our bodies move to the side, backwards, forwards and diagonally. Shouldn't we train the same way? Unlike traditional weight training that tends to be linear and follow one plane of movement, suspension training encourages multi-planar training that mimics real life movement. This will bring a muscular balance to your body, increasing performance and preventing injuries."

In the US, TRX has not only been installed in health clubs but is also being used by the military and by professional athletes competing in the likes of the NBA and the NFL. "However, suspension training caters for all levels of fitness, even the deconditioned user," says Matthews. De Knoop adds: "It also attracts men who have traditionally shunned group fitness classes. Clubs are reporting almost 50/50 men and women in their TRX classes."

TRX sessions are certainly attracting a broad spectrum of users at Outklast Fitness, an independent gym in Nottingham, where the paid-for sessions also provide a secondary revenue stream. Owner Luke Staton explains:

"We use the TRX in almost every aspect of our fitness programming – one-to-one personal training, small group training and circuit training classes.

"Its versatility allows us to use it with exercisers of all ages and abilities. It's invaluable in sport-specific training, for example. One of our clients is the Welsh number one under-18 golfer and another is a 14-year-old ABA national champion. At this age, we develop muscular endurance, core strength and flexibility using body weight resistance and the TRX rather than by lifting weights.

"We also run a weekly session for people with learning difficulties and autism, who love the TRX because it supports movement-based exercise, and because the routines are easy to follow and remember. TRX is also very inclusive, so we can incorporate it when working with partially disabled people and those rehabilitating after injury or illness."



The JUKARI Fit to Fly programme was developed by Reebok and Cirque de Soleil

the low-down

SPACE REQUIRED: Each individual TRX weighs less than 2lbs and a dozen can be stored in a small crate. Quick to set up and take down, they can be attached to any secure overhead anchoring point (wall, tennis court fence, beam, post etc), so no permanent TRX area is required. However, freestanding frames, available in a range of different lengths, have been designed to facilitate group training, with the capacity to train up to 24 people at once.

COST: £149.95 per TRX. Door anchors cost £23 each; frames start at £990. Clubs report excellent returns on investment, with systems paid off in the space of a few weeks to a few months.

TRAINING: One-day course delivered by a TRX master trainer. A group course is also available for those wanting to run group training sessions on the TRX.



AntiGravity Yoga uses elements from dance, pilates and calisthenics to provide a total workout that's also designed to be fun

► **antigravity yoga**

AntiGravity, an acrobatic performance troupe specialising in aerial arts, was founded in New York in 1990 by Christopher Harrison. A former Broadway dancer and world-class competitive gymnastics specialist, Harrison has also been involved as producer/ director/ choreographer in projects ranging from original Broadway productions to the Olympic Games.

Launched in 2008, AntiGravity™ Yoga was designed to inspire others with Harrison's passion for acrobatics. The innovative suspension training programme uses the troupe's special AntiGravity Hammock, but with modified techniques to ensure it fits the yoga mould and caters for the everyday exerciser. By adding elements from dance, pilates and calisthenics, it offers a complete workout that increases participants' overall health and physical agility while having fun.

Connected from two overhead points, the hammock acts as a soft trapeze, supporting participants in movements ranging from simple suspension techniques through to advanced inverted poses. The benefits are said to be wide-ranging, from the relief of compressed joints and the spine to improved body awareness and overall agility. Having tried out AntiGravity Yoga

for myself – at the Aspria club in Berlin, Germany – I can also vouch for its ability to deliver a tough upper body and core workout, to get the heart pumping, and to facilitate deep stretches. The support of the hammock also allows you to hold challenging yoga postures for longer, and in the correct alignment, leading to a real sense of achievement – not to mention great results.

Best of all, the use of the hammock makes the whole class great fun – we were treated to our own personal training session which must have gone on for an hour and a half, yet it flew by in what seemed like a fraction of that time.

Even beginners can safely and confidently perform advanced yoga inversions, hanging upside-down with the hammock wound around the legs for support – the most genuine manifestation of 'suspension training' I've seen yet, and so much fun that you honestly forget how hard you're working. Other exercises range from pull-ups to planks, handstands to hamstring stretches, and swinging while seated in the hammock to simply relaxing in a cocoon at the end of the session.

By the time we left the studio I was sweating, with tired muscles, but felt energised and had a huge grin on my face – probably the best class I've ever done

and, if my club were to offer it, I'd be at the front of the queue for every session.

Marika Molnar, president of West Dance Physical Therapy and director of physical therapy services to the NYC Ballet in New York, agrees: "AntiGravity Yoga is revolutionary. The technique gives people a low-impact cardiovascular workout while strengthening the musculo-skeletal system. I found it challenging for my brain and body to move in 3D, with endless possibilities of positions and shapes."

the low-down

SPACE REQUIRED: Concrete ceiling required, with a 4m x 2m area needed for each hammock.
COST: €400 per hammock, plus around €30 per ceiling attachment. In addition, an annual licence fee must be paid. This will vary according to the number of hammocks a club has installed. In year one, for example, a studio holding up to 15 hammocks will cost €1,900 (going down to €1,000 by year three), while a studio of up to 35 hammocks will cost €3,500 in year one (going down to €1,900 by year three).
Costs provided by Aspria Berlin.
TRAINING: €1,000 per instructor for two weekends of training.
DISTRIBUTION: Discussions are currently underway to finalise a UK distribution deal.

"ANTIGRAVITY IS PROBABLY THE BEST CLASS I'VE EVER DONE - IF MY CLUB OFFERED IT, I'D BE FRONT OF THE QUEUE EVERY TIME"



JUKARI was developed to provide a whole body workout with a combination of cardio, strength, balance and core training

jukari fit to fly

A survey of 15,000 women across 25 countries in 2008 found that, while nearly half of all women know that exercise and keeping fit is very important to their overall health, less than 25 per cent participate often in fitness. Research commissioned by Reebok to investigate the reasons behind this indicated that 61 per cent of all women would work out more if it were more fun, with 54 per cent of those questioned saying they felt exercise was a chore.

That same year, Reebok and Cirque du Soleil came together in a new partnership – their aim: to make fitness fun again for women. “We set ourselves the task of creating the ‘smile while you’re sweating’ workout,” says Leslie Calvagne, training director at Reebok. The result was JUKARI Fit to Fly™.

A whole body workout that delivers a combination of cardio, strength, balance and core training, JUKARI is designed to be accessible to all women regardless of fitness levels. It uses a specially designed piece of equipment, the FlySet, which resembles a circus trapeze. With a bar that can be varied in height, the FlySet is suspended from a 360-degree swivel point in the gym ceiling and allows for a series of moves that are said to strengthen and lengthen the body while creating the sensation of flying.

Lyn Heward, creative director of the Reebok-Cirque du Soleil programme, explains: “From day one, we committed to making sure every move would be inspired by real moves Cirque du Soleil

artists do. Anyone taking the Fit to Fly class must leave it feeling they’ve experienced something different.”

The Reebok Sports Club in London’s Docklands was the first site in the UK to offer JUKARI. “I think it’s an amazing exercise routine and it’s been well received,” says MD Ian Mahoney. “It’s different and has two key ingredients that, in my book, give it an excellent chance of becoming a long-term established feature of our timetable – namely, it’s both fun and challenging.”

I went along to try out the class for myself and it certainly was both of those things. The upper body was taxed through pull-ups, legs worked through side-kicks and squats with the FlySet used almost like a ballet barre, and the bar removed and replaced with foot stirrups for extra-challenging planks, press-ups and shoulder bridges. Certainly it was more fun than your average class and I got to the end of the session feeling I’d had a good workout.

However, although the session included a small amount of jumping and spinning while hanging from the bar, I have to confess I never felt any real sensation of flying – the promise that lies at the heart of the workout – and I was therefore slightly disappointed. I also occasionally felt the moves were only tenuously linked to the FlySet; we would easily have been able to do some of the exercises without it. JUKARI will no doubt gain loyal fans – one of the girls in my class told me she goes four times a week – and I’d definitely try it again, but I have to admit I was expecting more.

Perhaps really feeling as though you’re flying in JUKARI comes later, as you get stronger and more able to do advanced moves. However, having already done the brilliant AntiGravity Yoga, where a huge range of exercises are possible thanks to the hammock’s total integration into every move – sitting in it, hanging from it and so on – and where quite advanced manoeuvres are possible from the word go, I was hoping for more variety and, if I’m honest, even more fun from JUKARI than I actually got.

the low-down

SPACE REQUIRED: Specific measurements not supplied but, says Mahoney: “You need a minimum height and enough space to make participant numbers worthwhile.”

COST: Costs not provided by Reebok. However, says Mahoney: “It’s not something you can enter into lightly. There are training costs, licence fees and set-up costs.”

The Reebok Sports Club includes classes within its monthly membership, but the option would certainly be there to charge extra for this value-added offering as a way of offsetting installation costs. **TRAINING:** Originally delivered in North America, but training camps are now being set up in Europe.



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research round-up

HEALTH
CLUB SPA



Greater insights into the short- and long-term effects of shiatsu massage have been revealed in a pan-European study

touch and go

Shiatsu massage, which originated in Japan in the early 20th century, is a key offering for most spa menus. Despite its long history, however, there's limited evidence of the benefits of the practice in Western countries. The European Shiatsu Federation (ESF) – comprising professional associations from eight countries – therefore commissioned the University of Leeds to carry out a study to look into the short- and long-term effects and experience of the massage.

gathering data

The report, which was originally published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*¹, was based on 633 shiatsu clients picked at random from Austria, Spain and the UK.

Each of the clients was observed for six months and filled in a questionnaire about their treatment on four separate occasions: after their first treatment, up to six days after that, three months later and then at the end of the six months.

the results

In this study, a typical shiatsu client was female, in her 40s and employed. Eighty-four to 88 per cent of participants had used shiatsu before and described their health as being "good" or better.

The dominant reason for the first ever use of shiatsu by clients was curiosity; by the time they participated in this survey, it was "to maintain or improve health". The top reason for having shiatsu, in terms of symptoms, was to relieve problems with muscles, joints or body structure, followed by tension or stress and low energy or fatigue.

The effects of shiatsu were measured in five areas. First was symptom severity, which was assessed on a five-point scale: zero being "not severe at all" and four being "very severe". The scores significantly improved over the six months for all symptoms among



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Participants in the survey used shiatsu "to maintain or improve health"

participants in Austria and the UK, but only in the "problems with muscles, joints or body structure" and "tension or stress" symptoms in Spain. Typically, symptom severity decreased over the first three months and was then maintained over the next three months.

The second measurement was in shiatsu-specific effects. At the end of six months, a high proportion of clients agreed that shiatsu had helped improve their overall health, been effective in treating symptoms and helped improve self-awareness and positive attitudes.

The third assessment focused on clients' uptake of advice from practitioners. After six months, 77–80 per cent of participants indicated that, based on advice, they'd made changes to their lifestyle – particularly increased amounts of rest and relaxation, exercise and changes to diet.

Next, researchers looked at healthcare use; 15–34 per cent of clients reported

a reduction in their use of conventional medicine to treat the symptoms they went to their practitioner about.

The final area looked at clients' expectations and satisfaction levels. Across all countries, an overwhelming number of clients (90 per cent) indicated that their expectations were either "met" or "exceeded" at six months. Around half (47 per cent in Spain) to three-quarters (74 per cent in Austria) of clients were "completely satisfied" with their shiatsu treatment.

Only nine clients recorded a negative response – such as experiencing a worsening of pain in the affected area or a distressing emotional reaction that lasted a week or more.

¹The Effectiveness of Shiatsu: Findings from a Cross-European, Prospective Observational Study, AF Long et al. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, vol14, no8, 2008, pp921–930

REACHING OUT



Vicky Kiernander takes a look at how operators can extend their reach beyond the four walls of the club to capture new markets

There's a huge opportunity for operators bold and brave enough to venture beyond the confines of the club and deliver their health and fitness services to the wider community – and, dare we say it, to non-members. But how? That's a question that Mark Talley, head of fitness at LA Fitness, has been mulling over. "We're all fishing in the same pond, going after the same members and only reaching a small segment of the population. There's scope to do much more," he explains.

Talley says that LA Fitness is committed to delivering a service for non-members in the near future but has, as yet, not settled on what form this service will take. One suggestion is to provide an LA Fitness-branded advice and support service to people not interested in joining the gym, probably via the internet, for a nominal fee.

"There's a huge opportunity going forward and it's definitely on our radar – we're just working out how to get there. We need to make sure we have the skills and structure in place before we can cut go out in a targeted way," he adds.

Talley spent three years working in the local authority sector, where

community engagement is key. "They tend to do it better, but there's a huge amount that the private sector can do in the area of general health promotion. It's just a question of how."

extended outreach

Leisure Connection's sport and health development team, working on behalf of the St Albans City and District Council, is a prime example of how a health and fitness provider can engage in the local community outside of the health club or leisure centre. Dedicated to delivering community development projects in the district, the team develops health and wellbeing schemes to increase activity levels and promote the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. Much of this is non-traditional activity, such as skateboarding and free-running, to engage with those who wouldn't usually visit a leisure centre.

The team works with local partners to support the delivery of physical activities initiatives. Last October it launched its 'Get Back Into...' programme, which is designed to encourage adults to take up an activity they may have enjoyed in the past, or even try a new one. The initiative

LA Fitness plans to launch a service for non-members who don't want to work out in a gym

currently includes 16 activities ranging from badminton, bowls and cricket to triathlon, street dance and Nordic Walking. The team works with local clubs to deliver the sessions and the first class is free, with fees thereafter costing no more than £5 an hour. Netball, squash and ballroom dancing have been among the most popular activities, with the second course of these sessions already underway.

"If people won't come to the leisure centre, we need to find other ways to get them active," says sport and health development manager Chris Gregory.

It's in this spirit that the firm's sport and health development team is now exploring a new project with the Woodland Trust, which is in the process of creating England's largest new native woodland at Heartwood Forest, St Albans. The trust aims to create an 850-acre wood from open fields in just 12 years. The area is already home to 45 acres of ancient woodland and tens of thousands more trees have been planted since the project got underway last November. Although the project is still in its early stages, Gregory and his team ▶

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► are considering how they can utilise this resource. "We're looking at creating walking routes and cycling trails and are hoping to hold Nordic Walking classes there this year too," he says.

Gill Stewart, director of Nordic Walking UK, explains: "Many health clubs still aren't seeing beyond their four walls, but management contractors such as Leisure Connection and SLM are starting to see the opportunities presented by Nordic Walking. We effectively provide a hub for them to take their skills out into the community as we're contacted on a daily basis by PCTs, GP surgeries, charities, local authorities and so on – organisations that want to run Nordic Walking sessions for their members and staff. These contracts are all out there for clubs willing to embrace the opportunity.

"Health clubs wouldn't need to run every walk: the scheme has to be set up properly, with initial interventions conducted by a qualified fitness professional, but after that walks can be run by 'community instructors' – practice nurses, for example, or even participants themselves. The investment by health clubs in terms of staff time is therefore minimal, but with a huge potential return: high levels of loyalty thanks to the social aspect; the chance to build a level of trust to then introduce other fitness messages; and of course the revenue from Nordic Walking memberships."

recovery plus

Also extending its reach in the local community is Nuffield Health, albeit by bringing the broader community into its clubs. Drawing on the expertise of the



Leisure Connection and SLM have joined forces with Nordic Walking UK

Nuffield group, the registered charity has developed a number of services that target members and non-members. These include the 25 physiotherapy centres, located in half of the chain's clubs, to which anyone can refer themselves.

It also includes the Recovery Plus programme. Launched last autumn, Recovery Plus brings together Nuffield Health's hospitals, clinics and fitness and wellbeing centres. The programme offers patients a period of extended rehabilitation following joint replacement, hip and knee surgery and simple back surgery at one of its fitness and wellbeing centres, under

the guidance of a senior wellbeing advisor. Following surgery, the client is booked in for physiotherapy either at the hospital or the gym, depending on their level of function. The outpatient physiotherapist will lead the client's rehabilitation during the first two to six weeks after the operation, after which the patient is referred to Recovery Plus if the physiotherapist believes it's right to do so and the patient agrees.

At the gym, the patient undergoes a 12-week programme, which includes a full health MOT to assess the client's current health. This allows a personalised plan to be created, to assist with recovery and to help improve the client's general health through exercise and diet. The senior wellbeing advisor monitors the client's progress and appointments can be booked with qualified physiotherapists on-site if required. At the end of 12 weeks, the client will have a programme discharge meeting with a physiotherapist.

Nuffield also runs free events at its health clubs that allow members, who can bring along a guest, to meet with professionals and learn more about their health and wellbeing. Recent topics include general health care, back care



Fitness First's NewU game for the Wii was created in partnership with Nintendo and Black Bean Games



Leisure Connection works with local partners in St Albans to deliver physical activity initiatives

and anti-ageing, as well as care for bones, muscles and joints, cosmetic surgery and weight loss surgery.

By combining medical health with fitness, Nuffield aims to change the public perception of gyms. Nick Burrows, MD of commercial fitness & wellbeing at Nuffield, says: "We want to move away from old-fashioned fitness centres to create a place that has more relevance in people's lives."

home from home

Fitness First is also doing its bit to change people's view of health clubs and increase activity levels. The company has teamed up with Tesco to launch a range of fitness products designed to help people ease their way into exercise. The products range from pilates, running and yoga equipment through to dumbbells, a boxing set and an exercise bike. Prices range from £12.99 for a gym ball to £300 for a rowing machine. As the firm's national fitness training manager, Keith Selwood, says: "Not everyone is going to use the gym, but we can still play a part in getting people healthy."

The fitness products sold at Tesco also come with a free day pass to a Fitness First gym. The theory is that, once people have familiarised themselves with their new equipment and embarked on a fitness programme, they'll be more inclined to use the pass and try out the gym – and from there it's only a small step to becoming a regular member.

In another move designed to gain access to a wider audience, Fitness First has joined forces with Black Bean Games and Nintendo Wii to launch a new product for the games console. Suitable for all levels of ability, the *NewU Fitness First Personal Trainer* offers goals-based exercises and workouts taught by real Fitness First personal trainers.

Users determine the workout by setting goals and nutritional preferences during the profile set-up. There's a choice of 50 goals and more than 80 exercises available, creating up to 900 different workouts. Goals are different for men and women and range from dropping a dress size to toning up for the ski season. The exercise plan is complemented by a selection of healthy recipes and the product comes with a free five-day pass to Fitness First.

NewU and the Tesco fitness product range are examples of Fitness First thinking outside of the box, says Selwood. He adds: "Not many people in the UK engage in regular activity, so there's a huge opportunity for the health and fitness sector. But we have to think smarter."

"Our mission is to make the UK and the world a fitter place, but we're not going to do that just by working with people inside our clubs. There's a bigger world out there."



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forward momentum

This year's IHRSA International Convention & Trade Show took place in San Diego, US, on 10–13 March. The event, which occupied 28,240sq m (304,000sq ft) of floor space, attracted 315 exhibiting companies and more than 10,000 attendees from 82 countries. Kate Cracknell asks a selection of delegates for their thoughts on the show

SHOW FLOOR

kevin yates, head of commercial development, leisure connection

This year's IHRSA provided practical solutions for today's industry. The suppliers had responded to clubs' purchasing and space constraints and, as a result, offered smaller, more practical and flexible pieces of equipment that lent themselves to group training, individual training and PT tuition. There was equipment flexible enough to be used by disabled and able-bodied people alike, which was impressive and something I'm considering for our business.

The suppliers had also reacted to recent market changes and the increasing number of budget gyms with less personal trainers and gym staff on the gym floor. As a result, the equipment on show was far more interactive, allowing members to track their progress online at a time

to suit them – as well as enabling club owners and managers to track usage and member habits, allowing them to maximise marketing and customer engagement efforts.

But for me the highlight of the week had to be the new **LIVESTRONG® Indoor Cycling** bikes by Matrix in association with Lance Armstrong and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. This isn't just a new studio bike:

it's a marketing and PR campaign and an opportunity that can be implemented at club level to interact with, and appeal to, members and would-be members. It's emotive, it's inspirational – it's fantastic.

On the whole, IHRSA 2010 was sensible and level-headed, demonstrating that our suppliers understand the issues we face and want to work with us to ensure we deliver the very best service to members and customers alike. It's good to see UK delegates still attending this great event.



The new **LIVESTRONG® Indoor Cycling** bike (above), and (right) Augie Nieto and his wife pay a visit to the Matrix stand





Zumba, the new dance-based group exercise concept (above), proved very popular at the show, and (below) the “small, stackable, versatile” Peak Pilates MVE chairs. Both will be introduced at Time Fitness, says director Paul Bodger

PRODUCT INNOVATIONS

paul bodger, owner, time fitness

Although not unveiling much in the way of dramatically new concepts, there was plenty of energy on the show floor, with lots of small improvements and new angles being exhibited.

Highlights for me included the Zumba stand, which was busy all the time even without classes going on. This dance-based group exercise concept has proved to be massively popular, with great energy, and we’ve now introduced some sessions at our Glasgow club.

There were lots of pilates companies, mainly doing the same sort of thing. The Peak Pilates MVE chairs were interesting though – small, stackable and versatile. It was the first time I’d tried pilates equipment and they definitely got the thumbs-up: we’re going to put some in our clubs as a result.

X Force, an innovative range of strength training equipment, was also on show. Previously exhibited at FIBO, it’s



a great concept but has a very large footprint and a high price tag, which will sadly put it out of the reach of many.

Suspension training also had a visible presence on the show floor, with around four different companies selling their versions of the strap-based system. All concepts seemed fairly similar but all proved popular, particularly with the personal trainers attending the show (see feature, p50).

I was also interested in the advances in embedded screen technology. The Star Trac Coach feature offers an in-built personalised video coach on the treadmills – a very nice product innovation. Meanwhile Technogym VISIO, originally launched at LIW 2009, incorporates features like entertainment, member communication and equipment usage instruction videos. ▶



TIPS FROM THE MARKETING SEMINARS

Chris Gallow – Breaking barriers and overcoming objections

- Trust is vital: professional staff and knowledgeable trainers are the most important factor when making a decision to join a club, even above the facilities on offer.
- When it comes to the tour, 46 per cent of potential customers prefer fitness trainers to do the club tour – just 17 per cent prefer sales staff – and 88 per cent prefer athletic attire.
- To overcome lack of confidence, introduce prospects to staff and members, make them realise they're not alone or unique in their concerns – show them testimonials and explain how achievable it all is with guidance.

Bill McBride – Mastering sales

- To gain testimonials, consider a simple tactic adopted recently by McBride:

asking members to submit their answers to the question 'how has fitness changed your life?' Entry into a prize draw was offered as an incentive and it gave the club more than 500 testimonials to use in its marketing campaigns.

- Consider putting a telephone enquiries pad next to the phone to act as a script to follow for each call that comes in – including points such as how they found out about the club, what their fitness goal is and making an appointment.

Brent Darden & Cecil Hightower – Maximising revenue from memberships through strategy

- For tips on how to drive secondary spend, look to other sectors. In hotels, for example, the 'revenue per available room' model means you don't just pay the room rate: added extras such as

report by creative fitness marketing

internet access, mini bar, laundry, room service and movies are charged for, but are presented as value-added services being provided rather than the hotel trying to sell you something.

Meanwhile, in the cinema industry, 30 per cent of sales (and 43 per cent of profits) come from the concessions. Major companies train their staff in how to sell extras, including the use of 'suggestive selling' – combo meals, for example, or the fact that a large drink doesn't cost much more than a small drink, encouraging customers to trade up.

Marketing panel session

- Unmanned stands in supermarkets and shopping centres actually work well – people will wander over and take information where they might avoid a person handing out leaflets.

Demonstrations included sessions from RealRyder and KRANKcycle, the upper-body ergometer from Matrix



KEYNOTES

david minton, director, the leisure database company

Mark Twain once said that "a lie can travel halfway round the world while the truth is putting on its boots". All delegates at the 29th Annual IHRSA International Convention, held in San Diego in March, received some home truths plus a little white lie.

Malcolm 'The Tipping Point' Gladwell and Chip Heath from Stanford University – both passionate about exercise although not engaged in our sector – highlighted how, as an industry, we speak to the converted and how we fail to communicate with the majority.

The majority do not relate to words like 'fitness' and 'exercise', so we need to change both vocabulary and graphics. When the majority of the population find five minutes of exercise difficult, let alone the 30 recommended, we need to reframe the activity. Once we can engage with the silent majority, they have tremendous individual

and collective social power and can transform lives very quickly. Think of the Berlin Wall, removed by social power in one month where politics and economics failed for years. This indefinable third power could reduce the rate of obesity in just one year if we can connect emotionally. Currently the tipping point remains some way off, but that could change in the future.

But is our industry ready for the full force of social power? We would need to be more transparent, the offering will have to be simplified and we need to remove barriers to entry.

As an industry we need to work with, and hear more from, keynote speakers with timely messages for our industry. Perhaps next year IHRSA could avoid the little white lie of billing the keynote address for 90 minutes when we only get 25 minutes. It is discourteous to the speaker, an insult to the sponsor, and abuses the audience's patience.



The majority of the population do not relate to words like 'fitness' and 'exercise', so we need to change both the vocabulary and the graphics



The trade show at this year's IHRSA occupied a total floor space of 280,240sq m (304,000sq ft), with 315 exhibiting companies showcasing new launches and bringing their products to life via eye-catching demonstrations

MEETING OF THE MINDS CONFERENCE

vicky mahony, product development manager, fitpro

As the industry charged with getting nations fitter and more active, we're the originators and disseminators of a huge volume of information. We're the experts. We have the insight and the experience. But, with obesity rates still rising, we have to question the focus of our message.

Our industry promises just one thing: results. Yet we present clients with an array of confusing messages about how best to achieve those results. Meeting of the Minds, a bi-annual forum hosted by PTontheNet, aimed to bring some cohesion to those messages.

Meeting this ambitious agenda in just 12 hours was unlikely to be easy, but the intense schedule brought a keen focus to the day. Morning sessions were technical in nature, with the presentation of results from a research piece into exercise prescription. The researcher had visited a variety of industry names – including Paul Chek, John Berardi, Mark Verstegen, Lenny Parracino and Greg Roskopf – with each of the trainers putting together an exercise and nutrition programme they felt would improve the researcher's health. Each practitioner inevitably

brought their own experience and perspective to the appraisal, and this exercise brought home the reality of the multiple – and sometimes conflicting – messages we argue between ourselves and unthinkingly pass on to our clients.

So are we over-complicating things? As Ian O'Dwyer powerfully demonstrated in his presentation, the formula for achieving results can come down to something as simple as getting clients to move more and have fun.

The afternoon's focus moved to operator level and the creation of a shared agenda for improving people's health – something that can be executed in any health club by addressing variables such as leadership.

"The education out there [for industry professionals] is comprehensive," said event chair Robert Cappuccio. "But the industry's responsibility lies not in what we know, but in how we use that knowledge to make a tangible difference to our clients' lives. We can't be about grand gestures and conflicting interests. We need a consistent message when educating our clients, and we have a collective responsibility to deliver that as the ultimate output."



PRESIDENTIAL VERDICT

joe moore, president, ihrsa
Judging from the turnout at the 29th annual IHRSA



International Convention & Trade Show in San Diego, it looks as if the industry is rebounding. I'm thrilled that more than 10,000 industry professionals attended the event, which was specifically designed to help club operators and suppliers grow their businesses. More than 80 countries were represented, celebrating the industry's continued success and looking for new ideas to get the world moving.

We've all tightened our belts over the last few years, but while it's important that club operators watch expenses, it's equally important that they spend wisely on new innovations and programmes that will keep their businesses fresh in the eyes of the consumer. From what I saw, clubs are definitely in the market for making wise investments.

I believe that 2010 will be a very good year for the industry and I'm looking forward to celebrating with health and fitness clubs from across the globe next year, at IHRSA's 30th anniversary International Convention & Trade Show.



selby college installation for dalesauna

Dalesauna has completed a two-year, £100k installation of new heat and ice experience facilities in the new wing of the state-of-the-art Jubilee Building at Selby College, North Yorkshire.

The project will allow the college to deliver the NVQ Level 3 Spa Therapy course. Facilities installed include a spa pool, sauna, tiled steamroom, ice feature and monsoon feature shower, as well as a dry float or 'soft pack' system, which is required for NVQ Level 3.

Stewart King, hairdressing and beauty therapy subject area manager at the college, says: "The installation of our own heat and ice experience area means that we can offer our students the highest level of tuition in what resembles a real working environment."

Other recent Dalesauna projects with new-build colleges include Stoke-on-Trent, Gateshead, Crewe and West Herts.



The work will allow the college to deliver the NVQ Level 3 Spa Therapy course

£300k bannatyne spa investment

Bannatyne Fitness has announced an investment package totalling £300,000 in its Inverness and Chafford Hundred spas.

A £230,000 redevelopment of the Chafford Hundred spa will lead to the creation of up to eight jobs. The spa will be completely reconstructed following a redesign of the health club's interior. As part of the refurbishment, the health club and spa will also share a new, larger reception area.

New facilities at the spa will include a specialist relaxation area and a couples' treatment room. When the project is completed at the end of this month, the

extended spa will offer five treatment rooms, four hair styling stations, and additional manicure and pedicure thrones.

Meanwhile, a recent £70,000 redevelopment and expansion of the Bannatyne Spa in Inverness has created six new posts. The larger spa now includes an expanded hair studio, as well as new specialist relaxation and dual treatment rooms.

Both Chafford Hundred and Inverness provide a selection of spa and beauty treatments using products developed by brands including Elemis, Leighton Denny and Bare Essentials, while the hair and nail salons use Sebastian and System Professional products. Bannatyne spas also offer specialist treatments such as Ionthermie detox, which is designed to help battle cellulite and encourage contouring and firming.

Nigel Armstrong, MD of Bannatyne Fitness, says: "This investment is part of a programme of ongoing development within our existing portfolio.

"As a company, we firmly believe in regenerating and investing our profits back into our health clubs, spas and hotels. This enables our members to receive the maximum benefit from their experience at Bannatyne."



The redevelopment work at the Inverness spa cost £70,000

spas get linkedin

An opportunity to connect with fellow UK spa professionals is now available online through social networking site LinkedIn.

The UK Spa Network has been launched by Gerard McCarthy, sales director of Dalesauna, in association with The Spa PR Company. This new group is specifically aimed at UK spa professionals looking to make their businesses more productive and successful using a network of people they can trust. Membership of the group is by request and restricted to UK operators and suppliers.

The new group joins existing LinkedIn global networks such as Spas of America Network, Spas Worldwide and Spa Professionals Group. McCarthy explains: "LinkedIn is becoming an important business networking tool, but to date there has been no group that addresses UK points of interest or concerns for our industry. The UK Spa Network provides an online meeting place and we expect this to develop into a successful and influential community, as similar groups have done in other territories."



SPA SERVICE

HEALTH
CLUB SPA



When it comes to handling prospect enquiries, health club and leisure centre spas are performing well in the context of the overall spa sector. However, as Mike Hill explains, there's still work to be done

The inaugural spa sector call-Focus and email-Focus surveys reveal that spas operated by health and fitness operators are holding their own against the specialist standalone spas in terms of customer service, and specifically in terms of responding to customer enquiries.

Conducted by Leisure-net Solutions, the research follows the same format as the regular call- and email-Focus surveys among health and fitness clubs, with a wide range of spas – from high street operators and local authority facilities to day and destination spas, all with five or more treatment rooms – being

telephoned and emailed by mystery customers. The total number of spas contacted represented around 10 per cent of UK spa operators, and about half of the spas contacted were based in health and fitness clubs or hotels.

SPA CALL-FOCUS

Among the total sample, Leisure-net researchers called 25 spas that were either run by health club operators or based in hotels next to a health club. About 82 per cent of all calls in the survey were answered within five rings and, in nine out of 10 cases, the person answering the phone had all the

► information required. They generally used a standard greeting and used their own name in 69 per cent of cases.

However, the quality of the call handling deteriorated from there: calls were answered promptly and efficiently, with staff generally friendly, but basic 'engagement and sale protocols'

were not used to create rapport and secure a booking. Indeed, in only 8 per cent of the calls was the potential customer asked if they wanted to make an appointment, even though the callers showed a lot of interest. This conversion rate is significantly lower than we would expect in the health club sector, where the equivalent would be asking the caller if they wanted to book a tour.

Another important missing element was the lack of mention of special offers. Most of the spas had some sort of special offer running, which should act as a key hook to get the booking, but these weren't being used effectively – they were mentioned in less than half (49 per cent) of calls.

Overall the Brand Conformity Score – a measure of how well the spas followed industry best practice – was 65 per cent (see Figure 1, below, for a breakdown). This suggests that, while people answering the phone have both knowledge and enthusiasm, they aren't necessarily focused on actually making a booking.

However, the Subjective Assessment Score – which looks not at what was said, but at how it was said, encompassing points such as professionalism, friendliness and efficiency – was much higher, averaging out at 85 per cent (see Figure 2).

Another interesting point was that four of the eight top-performing spas in the survey were hotel- or health club-based operations, rather than high street salons or destination spas. Although it has been a relatively recent development for many health club operators to move seriously into the spa market, perhaps some of the training and techniques common to health clubs are being used in the spa operations to good effect: the health club spas certainly seemed better at engaging with the potential customer and actually asking for a confirmed booking, suggesting that sales training similar to that delivered to membership sales staff had been employed. The top-scoring spa in the whole survey was Imagine Spa at Knights Hill in Norfolk, run by Fitness Express, with Center Parcs and Spa London also in the top eight.

SPA EMAIL-FOCUS

Email enquiries were sent to 50 spa operators, again with half being hotel- or health club-based. Interestingly, the email enquiries elicited a much poorer quality of response than the calls, with the health club-based operations scoring equally as badly as the standalone spas. Of the 50 emails sent, 18 received no



Many top-performing spas were in hotels or health clubs

FIGURE 1

BRAND CONFORMITY SCORES – CALLS

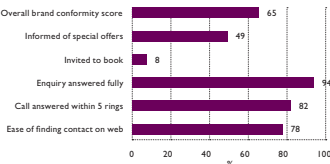


FIGURE 3

BRAND CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT OF EMAIL RESPONSES



FIGURE 2

SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT SCORES – CALLS

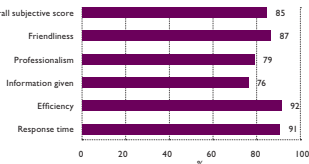


FIGURE 4

SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF EMAIL RESPONSES





HAFOS: Only 20 per cent of those questioned said spas should be visited regularly

response at all – equivalent to 36 per cent – and among those that did reply, many omitted vital information and lacked a clear call to action.

The email process started with a visit to the website, looking for contact details. Overall ease of use scored 78 per cent, with the 'contact us' section easy to find in 76 per cent of cases.

Getting the web experience and the response to email enquiries right is vital for spas, as the buying process is often more web-centric than it is for health clubs. Visits are often one-off treats, with spas frequently not as well-known as local health clubs or leisure centres, and potential spa users are more likely to use the web to research and compare than health club members. They are also much more likely to make an initial enquiry by email and to book without actually coming into the site, while health club users are more likely to telephone and then drop into the club in person. However, the email-Focus study found the overall score for email responses, in terms of following best practice, was just 32 per cent (see Figure 3). How the email was written didn't score much better, as Figure 4 shows.

TOP TIPS

To engage with potential customers and create a point of service differentiation, it's essential that the initial point of contact, whether by phone or email, is as good as it can be. However, the call- and email-Focus research shows that, while the initial phone answering and greeting is good, operators are not

following basic sales processes to secure a maximum number of bookings.

Based on the findings of the research, recommendations for spa operators might include the following:

- Ensure all staff who handle enquiries receive training in building rapport. Deciding which gym to join is often based predominantly on price, location and range of facilities; deciding which spa to visit is likely to be influenced more by how the potential customer feels about the place.
- Train staff to use hooks to get firm bookings. Everyone likes to feel they're getting a bargain and a special offer that's "only available for bookings made today", for example, is a great hook if used correctly.
- Find out what sort of a treatment/package the prospect wants and then make the proposition fit that experience. Is it an individual relaxation package or a hen party day out? It's not a massage or facial you're selling but a complete feel-good experience.
- Get the web experience and journey correct, so the important contact details can be found in one or two clicks.
- Respond to email enquiries within 24 hours, and ideally within eight, including at evenings and weekends. Use their name in the response, make it clear you understand what they're after and that you can meet their requirements with an "individual package". Create an urgency in the call to action, such as: "If you can contact me by phone today, I can book this in for you and give you a £10 voucher for your next booking."

HAFOS 10 SPA

For the first time this year, Leisure-net produced a HAFOS Report for Spa, with the key findings released at SPATEC last month. The research was conducted as part of the HAFOS street survey, which questioned 1,600 UK consumers about their attitudes towards health, fitness and wellness.

- 61 per cent said that spa treatments are a special treat that everyone should enjoy now and then; only 20 per cent believed that spas are a lifestyle choice that everyone should use on a regular basis to help manage stress and enhance relaxation.
- When specifically asked whether a spa was somewhere with lots of water features, 85 per cent strongly agreed or agreed.
- Of those who have had treatments in the last six months, 61 per cent have had therapies such as manicures, pedicures and facials; 45 per cent have had complementary therapies including massage and acupuncture; and 11 per cent have had medical therapies.
- Overall, 45 per cent had their treatment on the high street, 25 per cent visited a hotel or health club/leisure centre spa, 11 per cent chose a day spa, and 9 per cent had their treatment in a true destination spa. For complementary therapies, 12 per cent used a high street salon and 18 per cent visited a health club/leisure centre or hotel.
- 16 per cent of respondents said they were likely to have another treatment in the next six months.
- For those who said they were unlikely to have a treatment in the next six months, the main barrier was cost/perceived lack of value for money (58 per cent). Other responses included 26 per cent who said there was no need/no benefit, 17 per cent who didn't feel they would fit in or enjoy the experience, 7 per cent who felt intimidated and 4 per cent who didn't feel they knew enough or knew where to go.



Mike Hill is md of leisure-net solutions
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CHANGING PLACES

Getting your changing room offering right is key to driving participation among market segments such as women and disabled people, as well as enhancing overall user perception of a facility. Kath Hudson reports

A few years ago, while heavily pregnant, I went for a swim at a hotel. Changing in the communal changing room afterwards, with nowhere to hide, I noticed the horrified look of an eight-year-old girl staring at my belly. I've never felt so self-conscious and didn't go back – and it seems I'm not alone. Many women in the UK are blaming poor changing rooms – which offer no privacy, are unclean and which don't provide the facilities they need to make themselves presentable after working out – as a reason to duck out of going to the gym or participating in sport.

FEMALE TOUCH

According to research from the Women in Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF), 80 per cent of women don't do enough physical activity to benefit their health, while only 3 per cent participate in organised team sports. Changing facilities are often to blame: 83 per cent of those questioned said they wanted private changing cubicles, while 56 per cent stressed a need for hairdryers.

"Women are demanding consumers and the retail market is very sophisticated in its approach to targeting

them," says Sue Tibballs, CEO of WSFF. "Women are increasingly used to high quality environments such as shopping malls, and we need to meet similar expectation levels." (see wishlist, right)

She continues: "In the past, the sports sector has taken a 'one size fits all' approach, but now we need to be more differentiated. We have to really think about the design of the physical environment. However, in sport and also in fitness, that often doesn't happen enough – some clubs don't even provide basic amenities like private places to change or toilets for women to use."

A full refurbishment might be beyond the budget of many facilities, but there are some simple things that can be done which make a big difference.

"Cleanliness is really easy to rectify and the lack of it is a big turn-off, especially in swimming pool changing rooms," Tibballs continues. "Guys don't mind as much, but with women cleanliness is important. Implementing this sort of change is simple and relatively cheap, but it can make women feel their needs have been taken into consideration. We've been at the wrong end of this scale for way too long and we need to redress the balance."

WOMEN'S CHANGING ROOM WISHLIST

- 78 per cent** want sport to reflect the customer-friendly experience of shopping
- 83 per cent** want private changing cubicles (91 per cent among schoolgirls)
- 56 per cent** want hairdryers (62 per cent of schoolgirls)
- 28 per cent** want full-length mirrors
- 23 per cent** want free towels
- 20 per cent** want music
- 25 per cent** of schoolgirls want hair straighteners

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ETHAN MITSON

ACCESSIBILITY

If changing rooms can be off-putting to the general female population, it creates a whole new raft of problems for those whose cultures require them to cover up, or for people with disabilities. Claire Robson, project, education and standards co-ordinator for the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI), highlights a wide variation in accessibility levels across the sector.

"Not all facilities provide features such as changing beds and hoists, meaning some disabled people have to change on the floor, while some accessible changing rooms are being used as store rooms," she explains.

Robson says that, although ideally beds and hoists should be available, one of the most important elements in making changing rooms accessible is providing unisex changing and toilet areas, as consideration and provision must be made for disabled people with a carer of the opposite sex.

The IFI offers operators the option of going for a voluntary accreditation, which exceeds the registration requirement levels of the Disability



Everything from locker size to choice of floor tiles and lighting should be considered



Women are demanding consumers who are increasingly used to high quality environments – fitness operators also need to meet these expectations

Discrimination Act. The IFI's work is mainly guided by three documents: Sport England's *Access for Disabled People*; the British Standard 8300: 2009; and Approved Document M of the Building Regulations. Feedback from disabled people is also fundamental to the development of the IFI Mark standards, and the 'Changing Places' campaign for fully-accessible toilets is leading the way in these developments.

BEST PRACTICE

Many local authorities are now taking the matter seriously, including Gateshead Borough Council, which is currently revamping its changing rooms. The area has a large Jewish community, who require more privacy when changing, so the council has briefed designers LSA Projects to create a facility that can be closed off at certain times.

Meanwhile Mark Thomas, associate director of architects S&P, says the company is currently involved in a number of refurbishment projects to upgrade changing rooms. "Operators and local authorities are taking this

seriously, both because of customer expectations and due to legislation relating to inclusive design," he says.

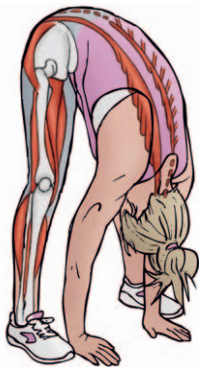
There are, he adds, a number of important criteria when creating a well-designed changing room. "The space must be functional, robust and easy to maintain, because dirty or broken changing rooms may present health and safety issues, or simply give the wrong impression," he says. "They also need to be aesthetically pleasing and easy to use."

Indeed, just as lower quality changing rooms can act as a barrier to participation, so good facilities can increase participation. "If the locker rooms feel luxurious, users are more likely to feel they're getting value for money and want to come back," says Sean Smyth, commercial director for LSA Projects, which aims to create the luxury feel of a private health club in public facilities through the use of high-spec materials and colour palettes.

John Gibbs, managing director of Craftsman Quality Lockers, agrees that many people are looking for a reason not to participate in sport, and

that changing rooms can offer a prime excuse. He also makes the point that, as leisure facilities want to encourage people to stay after their workout or sports game to use the social facilities, there needs to be provision for them to shower, dry their hair and make themselves presentable. He gives his ticklist of changing facility 'must haves': "Showers with the right sized doors, hairdryers that work, mirrors. The storage requirements in the lockers also need to be right, as many people now have huge sports bags that require horizontal lockers. Ideally there needs to be space to store shoes separately. "Colour selection for floors and tiles is also important, so floors don't end up looking dirty after one person has walked on them. And lighting is crucial, because bright lighting can make people feel self-conscious."

There's a clear message to operators: sub-standard changing rooms will no longer be tolerated. Users' perceptions of a facility will often be dictated by the changing rooms, and to skip in this area will prove to be a false economy.



IDASS releases resistance chart series

Drawn by graphic artist Matt Lambert, IDASS charts provide information for both trainers and their clients to better understand exercises being undertaken. Each chart features images illustrating the exercise and then the stretch performed after, plus a few lines of text qualifying the action. Latest to be released is a resistance series, which includes 10 exercises, an anatomy chart and a "personal trainers' tip" advice box.

fitness-kit.net keyword
idass

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Fitness Systems' Free Motion Dual Cable Cross machine

The FreeMotion EXT Dual Cable Cross is intended to add versatility to strength programmes. Helping clients to build their core strength and muscle endurance, the machine can either be used to target specific areas of the body, or used with integrated exercises that simulate real-life movements and sports-specific actions. The multi-functional machine is said to be able to perform virtually any movement pattern due to its articulating and pivoting arms, swivelling pulleys and extensive cable travel.



fitness-kit.net keywords
fitness systems



Multi-gym with natural water resistance

A multi-gym that uses natural water resistance to create a smoother exercise experience has been unveiled by WaterRower. Called WaterWorkx, the machine incorporates WaterRower's Waterflywheel technology to create smooth and natural resistance while giving the client a wide choice of training options.

WaterWorkx promotes uniform movement so that muscles are exercised effectively while reducing the risk of strain or injury.

Exercisers also hear the sound of water moving between the two interlocked cylinders of the patented water tank, intended to create a natural and relaxing rhythm. The resistance level can be adjusted at the turn of a dial, while the bench and accessories are equally simple to fine-tune, allowing for specific muscle groups to be targeted or a whole body workout to be carried out.

A workout guide is also incorporated into the WaterWorkx for quick reference during use.

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"traditionally dumbbells have been used as a resistance for targeting specific muscles in a stationary position but being a free-weight they can be manipulated in a series of functional movements as well"

Dean Kent, Exertrain



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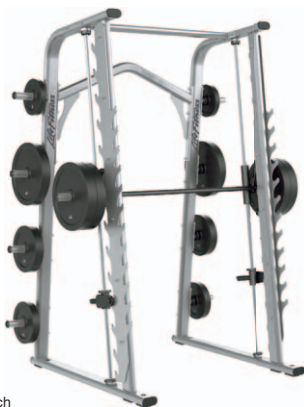
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Space-saving style from the Optima Series

The Optima Series from Life Fitness is intended to provide gym operators with a comprehensive range of high-functioning, space-saving equipment. The low-profile towers with full shrouds create an open environment, while each machine combines two or more movements, resulting in more exercise possibilities in less space.

A range of skill levels are accommodated with each machine featuring graphic placards, identifying adjustment points and set-up, to reduce any intimidation factor. A clear coat and high-gloss paint is used to increase durability and protects the products from scratches and corrosion. Soon to be added to the Optima range



is the free weight Smith/Rack, which combines the beginner-friendly height stabilisation of a Smith machine with options of unsupported Olympic bar training.

» fitness-kit.net keyword
life fitness



Panatta Sport unveils the Air Machine range

The Air Machine range consists of a total of 17 pieces of kit – seven focusing primarily on the upper body; five on the lower body; two on the core; and the final two being multi-functional. With no weight stack, meaning machines are slimmer, the 17 Air Machine stations are easy to use, with internal mechanical transmissions and no inertial loads. The range of motion (ROM) adjustment feature also ensures that users can select a starting position with ease.

» fitness-kit.net keywords
panatta sport

Pilot study completed on rope training machines

A biomechanics laboratory at Oklahoma University in the US has completed a pilot study involving Marpo Kinetics' rope training machines, looking at their effectiveness in terms of burning calories. The study found that an average person running on a treadmill was able to burn about 300 calories in 30 minutes.

However, with Marpo Kinetics' machines, over the same time period an additional 120 calories were burned – a total of 420 calories.

When users were asked about their experience with the rope trainers, the resistance system was found to be key as it constantly adjusts to the user's pulling power. Conducted in December 2009 and February 2010, a total of 12 people (seven males and five females) were used in the pilot study, ranging in age from 21 to 41 years old.



» fitness-kit.net keyword
marpo



Urethane dumbbells from Jordan

Jordan Fitness has added urethane dumbbells to its range of commercial free weight equipment. Urethane dumbbells – also known as polyurethane dumbbells – have a solid steel, compact design to enable accurate weight and precision balance. Said to be one of the safest and most durable options on the market, Jordan's dumbbells are available in a variety of weights, ranging from 2.5kg to 25kg.

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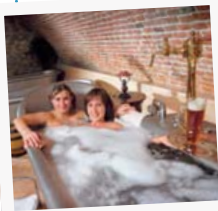
Tourism Victoria, a government state agency in Australia, has gone to great lengths to highlight the area's wellness offering by breaking the world record for the largest simultaneous massage.

The Massage en Masse took place on 30 March at Lavandula Lavender Farm in the town of Daylesford, which has an abundance of natural springs. In total, 263 qualified therapists and 263 volunteer 'massagees' took part in the event, eventually breaking the previous record – of 167 simultaneous massages, set in 2009 in Washington DC, US – by 26.

Chris Sheedy, adjudicator for the Guinness book of records, says: "I've seen a lot of wonderful events, but during the past decade I've never seen such a beautiful record attempt." Tourism Victoria's marketing director Don Richter adds: "Now Daylesford is in the history books, its therapeutic credentials will be showcased around the world."



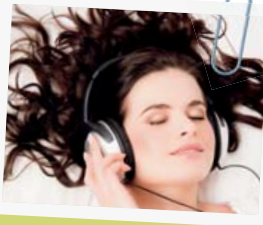
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HEALTHY BEATS FOR A GOOD HEART

We've heard that listening to fast-paced music can improve exercise performance, but it seems that personalised music can also be good for the cardiovascular system, according to findings from the University of Maryland Medical Center in the US.

A 2008 study led by cardiologist Dr Mike Miller found that listening to your favourite music may be good for the heart. When study participants listened to tunes that they knew made them feel good or joyful, the inner lining of their blood vessels expanded to increase blood flow. On the other hand, when they listened to songs they perceived as stressful, their blood vessels narrowed.

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