

health club

management

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER



INTERVIEW

ERIC DUNMORE

The CEO of The Third Space on expansion across London

GREG SEARLE

The former Olympic gold medallist on returning to elite sport

hidden money

Tips for maximising the potential of your business

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT...

SPORTS SCIENCE GRADUATES

SHOULD WE BE EMPLOYING MORE HIGHLY QUALIFIED STAFF?



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a mature mindset

I interviewed one of my sporting heroes for this issue (see p36): Greg Searle, gold medal winner in the coxed pair at the 1992 Olympics – a thrilling final that had the whole nation on the edge of its seat. Now aged 38 and back in the British Rowing team after a 10-year retirement, Searle has his sights set on a second Olympic gold medal a full 20 years after his first.

While 38 may be mature in elite athlete terms, it is of course still young when it comes to health and fitness consumers. Nevertheless, Searle's observations about the maturity that comes with being an older athlete, and his willingness nowadays to listen to and accept the instructions of his coach, got me thinking about the mindset of our older members.

Open to guidance – albeit, in contrast to Searle, generally due to a lack of confidence after many years away from exercise – older people represent a population group among whom there's a real need for our expertise. It may be true that, as with kids' fitness, it requires a little more imagination than catering for the 20- and 30-somethings, but the rewards are there, both financial – this is a less transient market, and with disposable income – and in terms of

emotional reward for your staff, as the impact of their efforts can be truly life-changing.

Older people are also more broad-minded about the benefits of exercise: less about looking good, more about feeling good and maintaining quality of life. As fitness gets closer to healthcare, it's a perspective that fits perfectly with the way our sector wants to position itself going forward.

So why don't we focus on this market more than we currently do? We have clubs for kids only. For women only. Why not clubs for older members only? They're a huge success

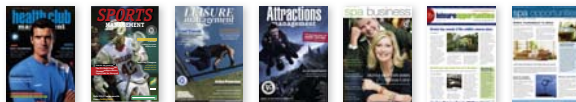
Isn't there a risk that older people will always view entering a 'normal' gym as trespassing on another generation's territory? Why not create specialist facilities for this population group?

story in countries such as Australia, the US and the Netherlands: Plusfit in Holland, for example, and the Nifty After Fifty chain in the US. Then there's The Summit in the US, a spectacular US\$23m, 5,574sq m (60,000sq ft) facility located in Grand Prairie's Central Park that opened in May. Catering exclusively for those aged 50 and over, it sold over 5,000 memberships in its first four months.

So why not in the UK? 1 October was Older People's Day in the UK, which took as its theme 'Getting and Staying Active in Later Life': more than 2,500 events took place around the country, including activities at health and fitness facilities designed to encourage older people through the doors. But why stop there? Isn't there a risk that the older generation will always view entering a 'normal' gym as trespassing on another generation's territory? With almost a quarter of the UK population predicted to be aged 65 or over in 20 years' time, perhaps it's time we went one step further into specialist facilities, not waiting until people are in care and retirement homes to do so, but creating high street offerings for those aged 50 and over who'd rather exercise in their own space.

Of course, 50 is far from old these days, so perhaps we'll need to change the vernacular and, crucially, ask what they want rather than assuming we know all the answers. However, as the population continues to age – but with expectations of ageing well – it's an obvious opportunity, and one we're not yet seizing.

Kate Cracknell, managing editor
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Fit pensioners, fat Chinese rappers
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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



PICTURE: WWW.ISTOCK.COM

"No objective data to substantiate claims about service levels and attrition"

industry must move beyond anecdote to be taken seriously

I read with interest your editorial on low cost clubs (*HCM* Sept 10, p3). I was particularly interested in two claims: the first regarding increased level of interaction between fitness staff and members due to lack of reception duties, and the second regarding attrition rates.

I've spent many years reporting on membership retention and its determinants, and it's not uncommon for clubs to make claims about service levels and attrition. However, in over 20 years of looking at such claims, I've never seen any objective data that substantiates them. Using the very latest data I have access to, it still seems that only one in 10 members who make a club visit will be spoken to by the fitness staff. Are there independent, objective measures of the level of service received by members in low

cost clubs? If not, is the industry happy to just accept such claims at face value?

We also have to question the validity of claims about membership attrition, as in general the industry continues to use the wrong metric for this – one that prevents comparisons between clubs and fails to give any indication of the rate at which members leave, or how long they stay.

If the industry wants the health sector to take it seriously, it has to move beyond anecdote. When I show commissioners and policy-makers how clubs calculate attrition in an attempt to show the rate of leaving, they don't believe me – it's so obvious to them that it provides a false indication of how long members stay that they don't understand why it's being used.

melvyn hillson
associate professor of exercise & health behaviour, university of exeter

mobile marketing: the power of instant connection

I was interested to read the experts' suggestions in your recent marketing feature (*HCM* Oct 10, p51). For all of their wealth, even the biggest sports clubs have so far failed to wake up to the unique opportunity presented by mobile marketing to nurture their fan bases and drive new revenue.

As Generation Y has grown up, the role of websites and social networking has developed naturally, allowing fans to swap notes about games, players and what they'd like to do to the referee! This brings together fans dispersed across the country, drawing them closer into the game and making them feel part of the wider membership.

Text messages are typically opened immediately. This presents an incredible opportunity to get up close and personal to fans at very short notice. It offers a cheap and highly effective way to sell leftover tickets or promote a replay event, directly targeting those most likely to be interested. And the more clubs interact with their fans, the more data they can gather – data that can be used to hone future communications.

As your feature suggests, this is also a lesson health clubs can learn when it comes to interacting with their members.

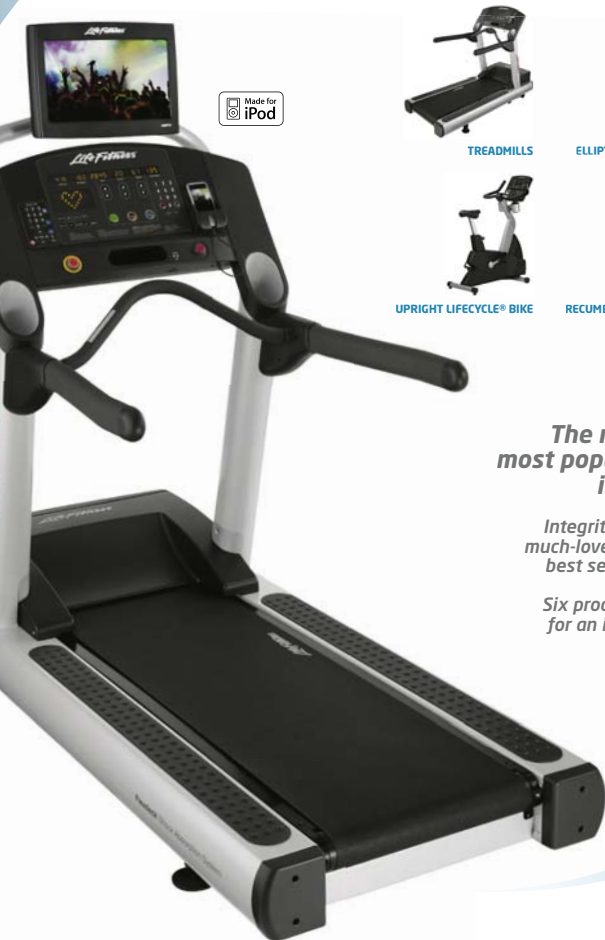
gary corbett
chair, oxygen8 communications



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Texting members could be a great way to build interaction with clubs

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write to reply

shock tactics are needed to change country's habits

I'm firmly behind new shock tactics designed to encourage parents in Birmingham to look after the health of their kids – specifically, the hard-hitting posters created by celebrity photographer Rankin to show the possible future consequences of parents not controlling their children's eating habits. One of the images, for example, shows a fair-haired boy grimacing in pain with the caption: "Ollie Webb. Heart attack. Age 35".

Commissioned by NHS Birmingham East and North, and government information provider Dr Foster Intelligence, the campaign is targeting local areas with high rates of childhood obesity.

Why is it that parents sign their kids up for swimming lessons because they worry they may drown if they fall into a river or pond, but don't worry that they'll die of heart disease if they eat badly and don't exercise regularly?

Added to this, many parents sign their kids up for exercise classes to create some free time for themselves – not because it's the right thing to do for their children's health. Our industry needs more support to change people's mindsets.

The success that children and youth fitness suppliers have enjoyed with schools in recent years, coupled with results from the latest PE and Sport Survey 2009-10 – which shows that schools are now offering 'less traditional' sports – proves that the interest is there if we can offer kids activities that they find fun. But we can't change the country's habits by ourselves, and I believe that warning campaigns like this should be rolled out nationally.

marina saunders
director, zigzag interactive
fitness solutions



PICTURE: WWW.ISTOCK.COM

We need to differentiate between energy and protein drinks, says Kayes

protein drinks a 'vital part of an athlete's armoury'

There's been some publicity recently about the use of energy drinks by gym-goers, suggesting that these could be a waste of money. However, it's important not to confuse energy drinks with other sports supplements, such as protein drinks, which are a valuable part of an athlete's nutritional armoury.

Indeed, rather than concentrating on energy drinks, I believe gym-goers should be thinking about protein drinks for muscle power, so they can enjoy their workout without injury. Too often people set off to the gym without thinking about the pounding they will be giving their muscles. It's easy to do lasting damage to ill-prepared muscles with a couple of heavy workouts at the gym.

As fitness professionals will be aware, when people exercise they break down muscle tissue. The muscles then use protein to repair themselves, recover and strengthen. Protein is the building block of the human body and gym-goers, whether professional or amateur athletes, need to protect their muscles by boosting their protein intake on a regular basis.

The ultimate outcome will be improved performance, better recovery times and an increased enjoyment in your members' chosen form of exercise.

kerry kayes
chair, cnp



Posters show possible future consequences of not controlling kids' eating

create the club of the future

SHAPE

"Looking good is what makes me feel good. I exercise to burn calories, manage my weight, and tone my body."



BALANCE

"I am looking for relaxation from a tense and stressful life. I exercise to achieve a mind, body balance"



MOVE

"I want to be active and healthy. I exercise to improve my everyday wellbeing."



FUN

"I enjoy meeting people and trying something new. Having fun makes me feel alive."



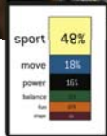
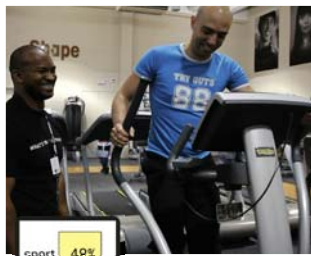
POWER

"Physical presence is a key ingredient of success. I exercise to look strong and powerful".



SPORT

"Sport is not my only passion, it's my second life. I exercise indoor and outdoor to improve my sport performance."



Club 2.0 creates Aspiration Maps to show you which of the six core aspirations motivates each member

Wouldn't it be great if you could understand why your customers use your club's facilities and how they can get the most out of their experience?

If you could ensure their experience matched their aspirations you would reap the benefits. Technogym's Club 2.0 does just that. The focus of Club 2.0 is to establish people's aspirations and understand the way in which this determines how they live and move. This brings the focus back to your customers enabling you to create the perfect environment for them.

how can i find out what aspirations move my clients?

The 'Technogym Aspiration Finder' is the first-ever scientifically validated on-line questionnaire that tells you what aspirations move your clients. The web-based questionnaire takes only a few minutes to complete, with the results communicated via the Technogym Aspiration Map. Each result is unique for each client revealing a relative percentage mix of the six core aspirations.

Technogym appointed The University of Milan to carry out extensive testing in Europe, the results of which validate Technogym's customer segmentation

Club 2.0 at GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited)

GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited) manage over seventy public leisure centres within London and the M25 area on behalf of it's council partners.

Club 2.0 is now operating at five GLL sites across London and they have had nothing but positive feedback from both the staff and the members. So far, 4500 existing centre members have completed the 'aspiration finder' and the team have used this tool to enhance the induction process and provide a structure for re-focus sessions.

A dedicated webpage has been set up at www.gll.org/aspirations providing the ideal

platform for prospecting. So far they have had over 4000 visits to the website with 3000 completing an aspiration map.

"Club 2.0 Aspirational Mapping brings a tremendous opportunity to approach our customers in a new and innovative way that can have wide reaching benefits for users, GLL and our partnership with Technogym UK." Andy McCabe, Operations Director.

visit www.technogym.com/club2.0 to watch a video of how GLL have implemented and benefited from Club 2.0.

model based on six motivations: Shape, Power, Fun, Move, Balance and Sport.

how can this help me drive my business strategy?

products, services and activities Awareness of your customer aspirations can help develop your business strategy in many ways. By applying Technogym's Aspiration Finder to a test group of customers, you will be able to visualise the aspiration map of your entire club. This will help you to understand what products, services and activities you should offer and also provide a way of directly targeting these customers.

personal training

The Technogym Aspiration Map

provides Personal Trainers with the information needed to develop a profitable personal training relationship and increase secondary spend.

layout

Club 2.0 offers a new way to layout your facility by creating six aspiration zones. These zones would help to create the ideal environment in which to train.

Wellness System compatible

- Drive programmes linked to aspirations through Wellness System connectivity platform
- Drive interactions that are based on customers' aspiration types
- Communicate with members based on their aspiration type

in brief...

new outdoor gym planned for tonbridge

A new outdoor gym is to be installed at Tonbridge Sportsground after more than £12,000 of funding was contributed by the Local Strategic Partnership.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) is to create the new facility as part of a wider bid to improve local recreation and youth provision at the venue. Martin Coffin, TMBC cabinet member for leisure, youth and the arts, says: "People of all ages can stop as they walk past and give the gym a go."

Particularly aimed at people aged at least 60 years old, the new outdoor gym is expected to be ready to open by spring 2011.

dulwich pool re-opens

Dulwich Leisure Centre's restored Victorian swimming pool has re-opened, marking the completion of phase one of a £6.1m facelift to the centre, located in East Dulwich.

The transformation will involve an upgrade to the building and facilities while preserving and enhancing its historical Victorian features.

The pool area has been completely refitted with the new pool hall roof, insulated and re-glazed, now fills the space with natural light.

la fitness targets corporate market

LA Fitness is to target the corporate sector as part of its efforts to attract more members.

The multi-site operator has launched a new Online Health Manager, which offers a personal online programme to members joining through the corporate wellness scheme. The programme includes a comprehensive health and lifestyle assessment and a personalised wellbeing report with a tailored action plan. The Health Manager also includes online exercise, nutrition and mental wellbeing programmes, plus access to a secure online 'wellness' account designed to provide continuous engagement and support.

total fitness managers in mbo

The management team of health club chain Total Fitness has acquired the group's UK and Irish businesses via a pre-pack administration from Ernst & Young on 8 October.

The deal, for an undisclosed sum, was backed by private equity from Barclays Ventures. Cash provided by the bank will also be made available to upgrade the chain's existing 24 sites as well as to expand the portfolio.

Founded in 1996, with its first club in Castleknock, Dublin, the group currently operates three purpose-built clubs in Dublin and 21 across the north of England and Wales.

Situated in out-of-town locations, a typical Total Fitness club occupies up to 7,400sq m (80,000sq ft) of floor space, with facilities including swimming pools, saunas, steam rooms, gyms, studios, cafés and retail outlets.

The group's membership base is close to 182,000 and it currently employs 870 staff. Graham Hallworth, who led the buyout, has become executive chair of the group. He previously steered Darwen-based Crown Paints through its 2008 management buyout.

Hallworth says: "This deal will enable us to focus on growing, developing and improving Total Fitness as a group."

"The past two years have been challenging for the leisure industry,

but Total Fitness has continued to attract new members thanks to our strong brand, full service offering and competitive pricing structure."

"This new investment will now enable us to build on those strengths and grow our market share by implementing a long-term programme of strategic investment. Total Fitness has an extremely bright future ahead. We look forward to working with Barclays Ventures, and to enhancing facilities for the benefit of our loyal members."



Total Fitness: 24 existing sites will be upgraded, and the portfolio expanded

anytime opens first uk club

UK clubs will be around 370sq m

US-based health club operator Anytime Fitness opened its first UK club, in Bristol, last month.

The opening marks the first of 50 Anytime-branded sites planned for the UK and Ireland by the end of 2012, after the parent company secured a master franchise agreement. The chain, which is looking to expand its international operations, currently operates 1,250 clubs in the US and has also opened nearly 100 facilities in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and India.

Other potential sites in the UK are being considered in the Greater London area and across southern England.

Anytime Fitness' UK clubs will be around 370sq m (4,000sq ft) in size, fitted with a range of CV and strength machines from Precor, and open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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

caan sells nuyuu to énergie group

Health club operator the énergie Group has acquired budget gym operator nuyuu for an undisclosed sum from *Dragons'* Den star James Caan.

The deal includes four of the five nuyuu clubs – at East Grinstead, Stevenage, Newbury and Slough. Énergie plans to rebrand the clubs over the next three months. The fifth nuyuu club in Scotland is not part of the deal.

The takeover marks the end of the road for the nuyuu brand, which was jointly founded just 12 months ago by *Dragons'* Den serial entrepreneur Caan and Ben Silcox, a former LA Fitness national sales manager. Caan's investment vehicle Hamilton Bradshaw was one of the primary investors in the nuyuu venture, with Silcox taking up the role of managing director.

As part of the takeover deal with énergie, Silcox will join the new business as a partner and will retain responsibility for both day-to-day operations and growth of the four clubs under the énergie brand.

The deal is part of énergie's expansion strategy, which has seen the group add



James Caan (left) launched the nuyuu fitness chain with Ben Silcox (right) in 2009

more than 20 clubs to its portfolio this year. This recent acquisition of nuyuu follows the takeover in May 2010 of Ireland's market-leading Jackie Skelly Fitness brand, which included nine 2,323sq m (25,000sq ft) 'wet' clubs.

fitness4less to open nottingham club

Bristol-based budget gym operator Fitness4Less has acquired a new site for a club in Nottingham.

The 1,440sq m (15,500sq ft) unit is situated in 'The Pod' – Bildurn Properties' mixed-use scheme in Fletchergate. Fit-out will commence immediately for the new-build, open-plan property, with the opening scheduled for January 2011.

The acquisition is part of the chain's ambitious expansion plans. In January 2010, the company appointed

leisure property specialists Christie + Co to oversee its acquisition and development programme across the UK. According to Jon Patrick, head of leisure at Christie, the property's location on the doorstep of the mixed-use development will help ensure significant footfall.

Fitness4Less launched its first site in September 2007. Its clubs offer monthly memberships at £14.99, while annual memberships are also available at prices ranging from £99 to £150.

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West Ham United Football Club

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in brief...

new-look gym for woolwich leisure centre

A new-look fitness suite has been unveiled at Waterfront Leisure Centre in Woolwich, South London, following the completion of a £125,000 refurbishment.

The centre, which is run by Greenwich Leisure (GLL) on behalf of Greenwich Council, has benefited from the installation of new flooring and carpeting, as well as the installation of 56 pieces of Technogym equipment, including treadmills, Vario cross-trainers and upgraded aerobikes. The cardio theatre entertainment system was also updated.

GLL partnership manager for Greenwich, Leigh Allaker, says: "The improvements to the gym at the Waterfront provide members with an extremely high standard of equipment for their workouts."

anglesey launches green gym initiative

Isle of Anglesey County Council has launched a new initiative to allow residents to improve their fitness levels and help the environment.

Community groups have already been established as part of the Anglesey Green Gym Scheme, offering activities such as tree planting, healthy walks and building gardens. Residents are also being invited to set up green gyms of their own, following the success of schemes in Amlwch, Llangefni, Gaerwen and Benllech.

uk fitness network awards announced

The UK Fitness Network has announced the winners of its annual awards. This year's winners were Danielle Davies (Barnet Copthall Leisure Centre – Greenwich Leisure) who received the sales person of the year award; Linda Boulton (Thame Leisure Centre – Nexus Community Leisure), who was named receptionist of the year; and Westway Development Trust (Portobello Green Fitness Centre), named trust of the year.



The new openings will include the budget chain's first London club

four new clubs for pure gym

Budget health club operator Pure Gym will open four new sites: in south London (Kennington), Belfast, Birmingham (Edgbaston) and Southampton.

The development of the four new gyms follows a £10m investment led by Magenta Partners, whose principal investor is New Look entrepreneur Tom Singh.

The Belfast and Southampton sites are due to open in November, while the Edgbaston gym will open by Christmas 2010. The Kennington club – the group's first in London – will open for business in April next year.

The expansion of the chain is set to continue, with a further six sites scheduled to open in 2011. The new openings are part of Pure Gym's plans to open 24 new clubs in the UK over the next two years.

Pure Gym's chief executive officer Peter Roberts says: "Our success has demonstrated the strong demand for low-cost operators in the market."

first london club for fit4less

Budget health club chain Fit4less has launched its first London site, with the opening of a new 604sq m (6,500sq ft) property in Tower Hill last month.

Located on Mansell Street, the facility will become the eighth UK Fit4less club to open in the past 12 months and is to be operated by franchisee Andrew Newall. The 'no contract' club will offer a monthly membership for £19.99 and will feature a range of Precor equipment in its 'cardio theatre' – such as treadmills, cross-trainers and rowing machines.

Resistance and free weight areas will also be on offer at the Tower Hill club, which is the first of four Fit4less venues planned by Newall in the capital over the next two years.

Jan Spaticchia, chief executive of the energie Group – creator of the Fit4less concept in 2009 – says: "We are looking to introduce Fit4less in multiple towns and cities in Britain through our successful franchise support scheme."



An artist's impression of the new club

disabled scheme for london

Leisure trust Greenwich Leisure (GLL) has launched a new pilot programme designed to encourage more disabled Londoners to participate in sport and physical activity.

Mill End Leisure Centre in Tower Hamlets will be the first facility to operate the Inclusive London scheme, which offers discounted access to a range of sport and leisure facilities.

The initiative will be rolled out across five boroughs by GLL. Eventually, disabled residents will have the chance to use more than 30 different leisure centres and swimming pools in Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower

Hamlets and Waltham Forest for less than £20 a month. The scheme includes access to swimming, gym and group exercise classes, and there's also a 30 per cent discount on other sporting activities. Carers will not be charged when accompanying Inclusive London members, while a free weekly two-hour crèche session is also included.

The findings of the most recent Sport England Active People 3 Report showed that more than 1.5 million Londoners are currently defined as disabled people, yet only 9 per cent of this group currently participate in any sport or physical activity.

WRITE
IN TO WIN!

training and supplier news



Orban: Apprenticeships will help ensure we have the right skills in the sector

funding boost for apprentices

Chancellor George Osborne has announced that the government will increase the investment in apprenticeships by more than 50 per cent, which is expected to lead to an extra 75,000 people a year finding employment through the apprenticeship scheme by 2014.

Revealing the government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in parliament, Osborne highlighted skills and education as a priority area for increased investment. He added that the Department for Work and Pensions would be tasked with finding savings of £7bn from the annual welfare budget of £200bn to fund the investment in skills.

Commenting on the announcement, Florence Orban, CEO of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure, said: "We're delighted that there will be increased investment for apprenticeship schemes. The aim to create at least 75,000 new apprenticeships each year is exactly the backing we have been waiting for."

"Our industry has proven it has the ability to create jobs, and with the emphasis on supporting and improving the health of the nation, the government will undoubtedly be looking to us. We need to ensure we have the right people in place, with the right skills, to deliver this."

keiser secures ncfc deal

Notts County Football Club (NCFC) has re-opened its players' gym after a £30,000 refurbishment which included re-equipping the fitness club with Keiser equipment.

The 64sq m gym, housed at the club's Meadow Lane Stadium, underwent a complete facelift. New equipment installed includes two Keiser M3 indoor bikes, two M5 ellipticals, a functional trainer, performance trainer and a full power rack from the Keiser Air range. NCFC currently plays in Football League 1.

lifetime buys rapido training

Lifetime has expanded its training portfolio following the acquisition of Rapido Training, the Gloucester-based provider of vocational training for care and childcare workers.

It is anticipated that the deal will enable Lifetime to offer a wider range of apprenticeship schemes. The acquisition of Rapido comes two months after it successfully completed the purchase of Norwich-based Rising Stars.



If I was to summarise 99% of the conversations that took place within a Health and Fitness environment, I don't think many would argue that 'calorie(s)' would inherently be central. Despite the fact that most people appreciate the importance of calories to sustain life, more often than not the tone of conversation or debate around calories is somewhat negative!

It is actually intriguing that something so simple can be quite so polarising. In the context of food nutrition, a calorie is the term given to express the amount of energy available in a food, typically measured as Kilocalories (kcal) or Kilojoules (KJ). As a scientist, I'm not so sure a calorie should ever be seen as 'good' or 'bad', it's more a statement of fact.

While I can appreciate where different attitudes stem from, they can cloud the real question about calorie intake - how much energy do I need, in what form, for what reason and when? I do fear calories are in danger of being stereotyped as either good or bad, or in another scenario, vital to run a marathon, but not so relevant in the gym.

My advice would be to think first before you adopt a 'one size fits all' approach. Not many of us live a 'normal' life, and in my experience not many people perfectly manage their food and energy intake throughout the day. Consequently, in some instances, for some people, calories are exactly what you need, whilst in others they are not. So, are calories important to consume or avoid for normal exercisers? The answer is simple; it totally depends on personal goals and requirements!

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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independent

reynolds fitness rebrands

Independently-owned Reynolds Health & Fitness has rebranded its three clubs as Reynolds Fitness Spas.

As part of the company's strategy to increase its spa offering, a Treat & Tone membership has been launched, combining new spa treatments with gym membership.

The new membership will be offered at all three Reynolds clubs at Bexley, Rainham and Sittingbourne.

The family-owned company has signed a deal with Decléor which will see the product house offer its treatments at all three sites.

The company is also embarking on a comprehensive redevelopment programme of its properties. The Bexley club is being totally renovated, with completion due by the end of the year. The gym and changing rooms are being extended, a soundproofed Keiser



All three Reynolds Fitness clubs will be rebranded as part of the strategy

studio will be added and a swimming pool is being installed. New spa facilities will include an area consisting of salt inhalation steam room, aroma steam room, herbal sauna room, ice station, foot spa and revamped beauty rooms.

Owners Emma and Jason Reynolds are currently looking for a site to open their fourth club.

personal training studio opens in crouch end

A new personal training studio has been opened by personal trainers and entrepreneurs Eleanor Dick and Scott Timms.

The 103sq m (1,111sq ft) club in Crouch End, north London, offers two separate workout areas: one for small group classes and the other for one-to-one sessions.

Equipment includes a Concept2 Rower, Cybex treadmills and indoor fitness bikes by Schwinn Fitness.



The London club was opened by two personal trainers

barnstaple club changes hands



The new owner plans to upgrade and refurbish the 232sq m club

The Floor One Fitness Club in Barnstaple, Devon, has been taken over by a former powerlifting champion.

Surrey-born Steve Middleton – a former world and British champion – has taken over the 232sq m (2,500sq ft) club, which is located in Barnstaple's Gammon Walk retail development.

Current facilities include a gym with 18 cardio stations and 10 strength stations, a free weights area, a fitness studio with 10 Pulse group cycling bikes, changing rooms (with a sauna in the male changing room) and a reception with a bar area. However, Middleton plans to refurbish and upgrade the club.



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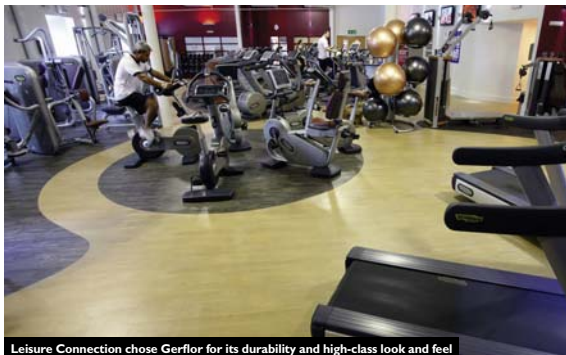
Careful consideration should be given to choosing the right floor surfaces for your health and fitness facility. There is a process to specifying a floor, and the finish can vastly affect brand perception among your customers

We have witnessed a dynamic change in the consumer profile of health and fitness members over the last 25 years or so. Now encompassing an ageing population, and with over 52 per cent of UK members now female, we have seen fitness machines and exercise classes evolve to satisfy the needs of these customers by offering 'softer' activities. But what other considerations can be given to our customers?

Where do your customers shop? What cars do they drive? What are their aspirations? Which other brands do they engage with? This information will give us the opportunity to ensure better brand communications and brand retention within our designs.

The Gym Group offers budget fitness with a minimalist design, yet a lot of thought is put in to the floor finishes: the floor has to be able to deal with traffic from a potential 8,000 members, and has to be cleaned quickly and easily. The company wanted a design element that was modern and contemporary. Not only that but, with many of the clubs located above other businesses or near residential developments, there was also an acoustic requirement.

John Trehan, CEO of The Gym Group, opted for a 2mm-thick commercial vinyl. He says: "The Taralay Premium range from Gerflor has the design options that reflect The Gym Group brand. Having an acoustic choice and a PUR surface treatment that reduces maintenance and ensures that



Leisure Connection chose Gerflor for its durability and high-class look and feel

'just installed' look, the floor choice ticked all the boxes for us and our members are delighted."

Meanwhile, Leisure Connection began updating its fitness offer in early 2009. Kevin Yates, head of commercial development, was committed to offering his customers a five-star public sector offering. The flooring was given a lot of thought: Yates didn't want carpet tiles and the budget would not extend to oak floors. 'Creation Luxury Vinyl Tile' (LVT) was the perfect option. "The floor offered the look and feel of expensive timber and assured Leisure Connection of the durability expected for our busy and vibrant clubs up and down the country," explains Yates. "Muir Oak and a darker wood were installed in a two-tone design to great effect, helping to communicate a high-end offer to our members."

Gerflor is positioned to deliver a complete flooring solution to the modern health and fitness facility, ensuring consistency and brand retention as well as fulfilling the creativity of designers and operators. Offering flooring ranges that both look



Contemporary designs and colourways can enhance a club's image

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in brief...

crunch expands in miami

US-based operator Crunch unveiled its third club in southern Florida in September, with the opening of a 2,323sq m facility in Miami.

The fourth new club since New Evolution Ventures (NEV) took over the company last year – following bankruptcy proceedings at New York-based Crunch – the club is located at a site formerly occupied by Miami Beach Fitness.

Mark Mastrov, NEV co-founder, says there are plans to double the number of Crunch facilities in Miami over the next 12 months, as well as opening new-build sites in the New York, northern California and Los Angeles areas.

There are also plans to expand the franchise offering, with eight to 10 sites over the coming months.

vivafit expands in spain

Vivafit, the largest chain of gyms in Portugal, has signed a contract to open a club in Lepe, near the city of Huelva, southern Spain. This is Vivafit's first franchise in Spain and marks the chain's third opening in the country, after Madrid and Badajoz – both independent units. It plans to open one further outlet in Spain by the end of 2010.

Vivafit is also pursuing a programme of international expansion, with an eye on markets including India and Brazil.

The chain, which caters exclusively for women, now has a total of 114 fitness centres. In the first half of 2010, the company reported a growth in turnover of 14.7 per cent on the previous year.

spinning record at fitlane

The newly opened FITlane health club in Nice (see HCM Sept 10, p14) was the scene of a new world record in September – the longest distance covered on an indoor bike in the space of 24 hours.

In an attempt ratified by Guinness World Records, professional fireman Philippe Vaz cycled 1,422.2km, breaking the previous record (1,377km) by almost 50km.

milon equips tunisian royals

Opened this summer, Club Elyspa in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia, is regarded as the most exclusive wellness spa in North Africa.

Owned by Tunisia's royal family, the clientele at the 1,395sq m club reads like a who's who of Tunisian high society, including politicians and music stars.



New facility includes two milon strength circuits and milon CV kit

No official figures are available but industry insiders estimate that the building, constructed using only high quality marble, cost around €12m.

The club offers a complete wellness solution comprising spa, fitness and a medical offering, including physiotherapy. Facilities include a gym equipped with two milon circuits – a strength circuit and a strength endurance circuit – as well as milon's cardio range. There's also a hammam, relaxation areas and a health food restaurant, plus a hydrotherapy pool with massage jets, contra-current walks, hydro-bikes and a sauna area.

"The North African fitness industry is experiencing an unprecedented boom, and this project is an important entry into the African market for us," says Fued Demni, milon sales manager North Africa.

one fitness goes green

Dutch health club operator One Fitness has announced that it has created the first climate-neutral fitness clubs in Holland.

The two 1,000sq m budget sites in Amsterdam and Hilversum use self-powered equipment, while other energy needs are met exclusively by green energy providers. The clubs also use only eco-friendly supplies – paper, cleaning products and so on – and sell only fair trade coffee. This model will now be rolled out across any future club openings.

One Fitness was created earlier this year following the split of six-site budget operation Your Health. Owner Jelte de Kiewit also operates a medical and sports rehab-focused site in Almere.



Clubs use self-powered kit, with other energy needs met by 'green' suppliers

energy exhibition for revolutionary products

Revolutionary Products is part of a showcase exhibition at the Berghotel Malta in Austria, set up in September by Austrian energy provider Verbund AG.

The full-time exhibition on energy generation and consumption has been created at the eco-hotel with a view to educating consumers about the various eco-issues facing the world.

One floor of the multi-level exhibition is dedicated to human power generation. Featuring various pieces of fitness equipment,

including the Freedom Climber from Revolutionary Products, the idea is to demonstrate how much energy is generated by each piece of equipment when it's used for training, and how this compares to the energy used by normal household appliances.

In the exhibition, the Freedom Climber – a non-powered rotating climbing wall – features a digital display showing how many calories and watts are generated by human power when someone is training on the device.



The ONE in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong, has 3,716sq m of fitness space

california fitness opens 'the one'

California Fitness – a wholly owned subsidiary of 24 Hour Fitness Worldwide – has opened its latest club, at shopping and leisure complex The ONE in downtown Tsim Sha Tsui in Hong Kong.

The new site, a Jackie Chan Sport Club-branded location, opened in the summer. With views overlooking Kowloon Park and the world famous Victoria Harbour, the club is surrounded by top international brands, plus lifestyle and entertainment facilities such as restaurants and a cinema.

Offering 3,716sq m of fitness space over three floors, facilities include a gym offering more than 200 machines – CV and resistance – as well as free

weights and a Kick-fit Ring. There's also a group exercise studio, indoor cycling studio and a 30-minute workout 'Xpress zone'. These facilities are complemented by a spacious members' lounge, steam and sauna, and a juice bar.

California Fitness operates 22 clubs in Asia: 10 in Hong Kong, six in Taiwan, four in Singapore and two in mainland China. This is its first new club opening in Hong Kong in two years.

"As the leading fitness club in Asia, we attract a wide variety of members to work out in our facilities, but they all have a common goal – to live better lives through fitness," says Ken To, regional manager for corporate affairs.

claridges spa opens in india

The Claridges Spa – at Claridges in Surajkund, India – opened last month.

Initially scheduled to open in May 2009, the opening was pushed back due to the economic downturn. "Originally planned as a complete one-phase project, the spa and some of the room inventory were instead slotted into a second phase," explains Peter Davis of Spatality.

Spatality has been involved from the outset, providing design consultation, pre-opening and technical services, as well as marketing assistance. It now provides ongoing spa management services.

Designed by Thailand-based interior designers PIA, the 1,440sq m spa spans two floors and houses 10 treatment rooms, a luxury spa suite, beauty stations, wet facilities and a 155sq m fitness area equipped by Technogym and comprising a gym and yoga studio.

The spa menu offers more than 30 treatments, including Ayurvedic experiences and bespoke body rituals.

Open to hotel guests, members and external guests for day spa, annual and 'visitor' membership packages are available, the latter allowing for 10 visits.

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STAY CONNECTED



Dave Monkhouse is joining Quest

new team starts at quest

Five new people have joined the Quest and National Benchmarking Service (NBS) in senior positions following Sport England's recent appointment of consultants Right Directions and Leisure-net Solutions as scheme managers.

Dave Monkhouse and David Constantine have been appointed by the Quest team as new regional managers, while in the Quest office, Jenny Hawtin has been appointed as the new Quest Manager.

Carrie Stroud, previously with training provider Rising Stars, becomes the Quest co-ordinator.

Alison Dack, who has been with Leisure-net for more than 10 years, will assume the role of NBS co-ordinator.

in brief...

lapetra joins schwinn

Elena Lapetra has been appointed as the new business development manager at Inspirit, with responsibility for the Schwinn brand.

Inspirit was appointed exclusive UK distributor for the Schwinn indoor cycle series and Stairmaster Stepmill in June of this year. Lapetra has been tasked with steering the sales and marketing of the Stairmaster products, with a key focus on Schwinn products and its education programme.

"I'm a huge indoor cycle fan, so I'm delighted to have the opportunity to lead Schwinn in the UK," says Lapetra.

nick burrows to leave nuffield

Health club operator Nuffield Health has announced that Nick Burrows, managing director of the commercial fitness and wellbeing division, will leave the company in January 2011.

Burrows, who oversaw the launch of the operator's Health MOT and Health Score, physiotherapy services and 'Meet the Experts' events is departing to establish a new brand creation group.

Nuffield Health has confirmed that Laura Kerby – currently managing director of clinical products and services – will take on Burrows' remit to further the operator's commitment to integrating clinical services.

David Mobbs, chief executive of Nuffield Health, says: "Since joining Nuffield Health in 2008, Nick has led the commercial fitness and wellbeing division with considerable energy and drive through a very challenging period.



Burrows will leave in January

"He has laid strong commercial foundations for the division and leaves us with a business that is in strong growth on many fronts – most particularly in new joiners, direct membership and personal training."

promotions at gladstone

Fitness software provider Gladstone has announced the promotions of two of its management staff.

Current enterprise account relationship manager Claire Pampe, who has been with Gladstone for just over a year, has been promoted to the role of customer services manager.

In this new role – while still looking after her existing customers – Pampe will oversee the Gladstone support services department, which will involve developing new initiatives to

enable the company to offer more to its customers. Meanwhile, operations manager Richard Clancy will take up a new role as professional services manager, encompassing project management, implementation services, training and data services.

Gladstone's managing director Scott Saklad comments: "It's great for the company to be able to promote from within, especially into key roles that will directly benefit both our existing and our future customers."

precors appoints dearling

Precor has announced that Andrew Dearling has joined the sales team as regional sales consultant for the southern region.

Prior to joining Precor, Dearling was a shareholder and sales manager of a sports nutrition manufacturer in South Africa, and before this ran his own finance and insurance business.

A new recruit to the equipment supply sector of the health and fitness industry, nevertheless Dearling brings more than 15 years of sales management and account management experience to his new role.

award for siv boss brailey

Steve Brailey, chief executive of Sheffield International Venues (SIV), has been named Business Person of the Year at the Star Business Awards.

The awards recognise corporate leaders, individual entrepreneurs, new businesses, innovation and international success.

Brailey was judged to have set an example of dedicated leadership and achievement within his own business and also to have made a significant contribution to the business community and the wider community through his efforts.

PEOPLE PROFILE



mike buss

Medically discharged from the army, Buss found adjusting to civilian life hard. He then qualified as a personal trainer and turned his attention to breaking a number of world records for running

100 marathons in 100 days – why?!

I found out that there was a world record for the most back-to-back marathons, and at the time it was 50 – so I decided to do 55. Then along came Eddie Izzard in the spring of this year and did 47 marathons in 53 days. Suddenly my 55 sounded quite tame, as I'm a professional athlete whereas he's a comedian. That's when the HERO 100 was born: 100 marathons in 100 consecutive days, for Help for Heroes.

What was the hardest part of the challenge?

When I got to the 30–35 marathon mark, and I knew I still had about 70 marathons left, I knew I could complete them physically but mentally I was starting to struggle – being on the road for so long, on my own, going back to empty hotel rooms and being trapped in a bubble for three months.

Are there any moments during the challenge that you particularly remember?

The day I broke the world record (marathon number 51) was special, but the last four marathons were excellent. I was at Leisure Industry Week, running in front of 80,000 people. Many of the exhibitors knew me already and many of my fitness industry sponsors, such as Star Trac and Gatorade, were there to cheer me on.



Buss after the last marathon at LIV

What's behind these feats?

When I left the army I found it extremely difficult to adjust, even becoming homeless, but I've found salvation in fitness, training myself for this – and other similar challenges – as well as training others. Running in particular has become my salvation and really has saved me from going back to the streets.

How long have you been a PT?

I've been training people on and off for more than 10 years. I now have trainers working for me, so I can step back and focus on developing advanced skills in those trainers, as well as running my Bulldog Bootcamp residential military fitness camps for civilians.

What classes do you teach?

I mainly do Bootcamp fitness classes and coach people getting into Ultra racing.

What's your typical day like?

I run approximately 100 miles a week, as well as four weights sessions in the gym and a group cycling class. I will then often do motivational after-dinner and conference talks and speeches to corporates. Youth organisations and schools have also been booking me. My life has become one big 24-hours-a-day motivational workshop!

What drives you?

A passion for pushing myself beyond the limits that most people believe are possible, hence my tag line 'Beyond Impossible'.

What's the number one weakness in the fitness industry?

Retention. I see it far too many times with many of the big names in the industry: too many of them focus on sales. In my view you don't need a sales team – you need a retention team.

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Three conferences, three leaders' speeches – but what did it deliver for our industry? Stephanie Creighton, the FIA's public affairs and policy officer, reports



PARTY POLITICS

This year, party conference season was quite unique: the first conference season since the coalition government was formed and with a leadership election for the Labour party. The FIA was in attendance at all three conferences, representing the UK fitness industry and finding out about the policies being developed which may affect it.

fringe meetings

In the spirit of coalition, this year the FIA was part of the Health Hotel, an alliance of health organisations that came together to conduct health fringes and co-ordinate events with health ministers and shadow health ministers.

The FIA worked with MEND, the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiation Committee (PSNC) on a fringe entitled 'Solving the Public Health Crisis – We've Found the Miracle Cure!'

With Britain's poor health costing us millions, the debate looked at the need

for the health agenda to shift toward public health and prevention. The fringe looked at the role of physical activity in providing a solution, and at how we can effectively commission physical activity and lifestyle improvement to achieve sustainable behaviour change.

The Health Hotel was joined at each conference by a representative from each party with responsibility for health.

At the Liberal Democrat conference we were joined by Department of Health minister Paul Burstow MP, who was supportive of our messages. He emphasised that the public health White Paper, due to be published in December, would outline how the government intends to tackle public health issues such as the prevalence of obesity, Type 2 diabetes and various other lifestyle-related conditions, the risks of which could be lowered through increased rates of physical activity. He also highlighted plans to work in partnership with the private sector to combat these issues with a shared responsibility between commercial brands, government and the Third Sector.

At the Labour conference the then shadow public health minister, Mary Creagh, joined the panel. Creagh affirmed her belief that a nanny state was the most effective way to deliver results in tackling the UK's public health problems. She stressed that targeted community health campaigns would be vital in raising public awareness of obesity, highlighting the good work started by the Labour government with the Change4Life programme.

Health select committee member Chris Skidmore MP joined us at the Conservative Party conference. Skidmore talked of the government's key role in dealing with public health, an election manifesto pledge. Referring to

the Health White Paper, 'Liberating the NHS', which indicates that responsibility for public health will be handed to local authorities, he affirmed that this was the right thing to do – local authorities, he explained, are best placed to address the public health needs of their communities. Furthermore, Skidmore was supportive of the decision taken to ring-fence the budget for public health, saying that it was a crucial area.

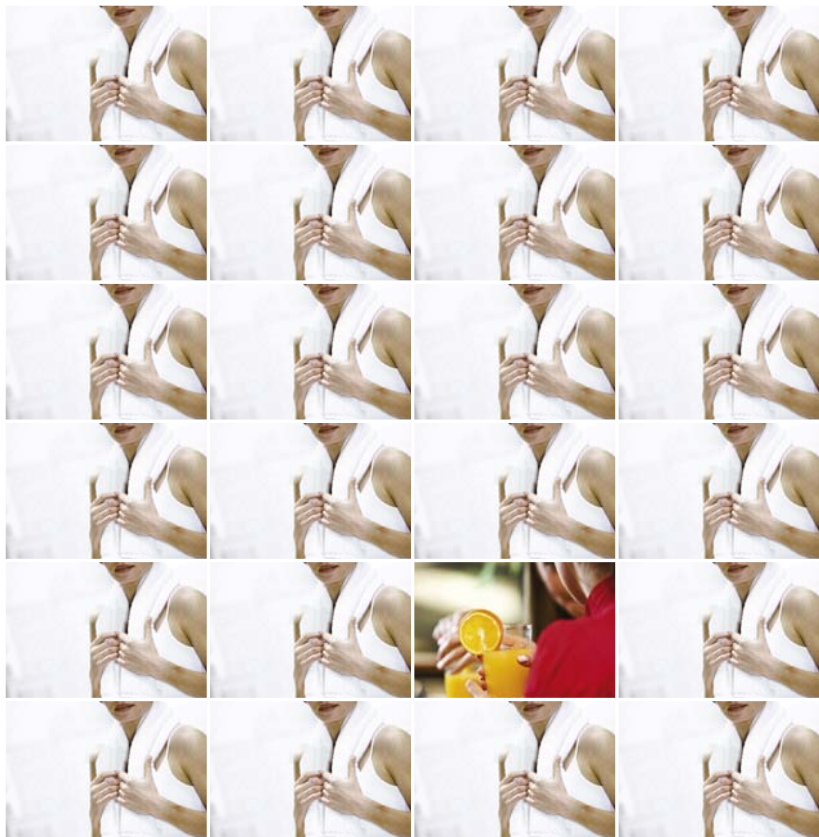
Other interesting fringes included the London 2012 fringe, at which the FIA questioned the panel on how to ensure a health legacy emerged from the Olympic Games. The response at all three conferences varied, with Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State with responsibility for the Olympics, agreeing that the health and sporting legacy was crucial for the success of the Games. He referred to projects that are currently being developed by many government departments, including the Department of Health, and referred to the excellent work being done by the Youth Sports Trust to provide greater sporting opportunities for young people both inside and outside of the school setting.

a blank piece of paper

The coalition government is still in its infancy and we eagerly await details on how it will address public health and what its plans are to deliver a lasting health legacy from the Olympic Games. Meanwhile, as Labour begins to find its feet again after election defeat and subsequent leadership election, it has an opportunity to develop its policy position on improving the health of the nation. With the government publishing a White Paper addressing public health in the winter, it's clear that interesting times lie ahead for our industry.



Health Minister Andrew Lansley, and (above) at the Health Hotel meeting



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* MusicWorks survey of 2000 people, conducted March 2009

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



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NOVEMBER

10 | Business In Sport & Leisure Conference 2010

Venue Lords Cricket Ground,
St Johns Wood, London, UK
Summary

The BISL conference is hailed as the premier event for the commercial sports and leisure sector. Speakers at this year's event will include Vince Cable.

Tel +44 (0)20 8255 3782

Web www.bisl.org

10 | LPF Seminar – children's entertainment sector

Venue Gambado Chelsea,
Townmead Road, London, UK
Summary

This seminar will aim to give an overview of the children's entertainment centres industry, the progress it has made and the latest developments.

Tel +44 (0)1462 471932

Web www.leisurepropertyforum.org

10 | UK Spa & Wellness Conference

Venue Center Parcs, Rufford,
Nottinghamshire, UK
Summary

This inaugural event promises presentations from top spa industry figures, who will share their experience and visions for the future of spa business in the UK. It's targeting professionals from all business sectors who are involved in spa operations, including spas/salons, hospitality, local authority leisure clubs and health and fitness club owners/operators.

Tel +44 (0)1268 745892

Web www.spaconference.co.uk

14-17 | IHRSA Asia-Pacific Forum

Venue Hyatt Regency Mumbai, India
Summary

Speakers at this event – now in its ninth year – will provide commentary on trends shaping the health club industry

Spatex: The 15th annual event for the pool, spa and lifestyle sector

in the Pacific Rim, as well as offering practical advice on how to grow your business. It also offers operators a chance to meet with industry suppliers.

Tel +1 617 951 0055

Web www.ihrsa.org

30 | Sports Provision for Children and Young People

Venue Wembley Stadium, London, UK
Summary

What will the new government mean for local authorities and partners delivering sports provision for children and young people? This conference will bring together local authority heads of service with key delivery partners and national development agencies to discuss this issue.

Tel +44 (0)20 7960 6840

Web www.neilstewartassociates.com

DECEMBER

9-10 | International Luxury Spa Summit

Venue Cannes, France
Summary

An event for hospitality professionals seeking solutions for their existing or future spa activities. Short one-to-one sessions with investors will also be available to delegates.

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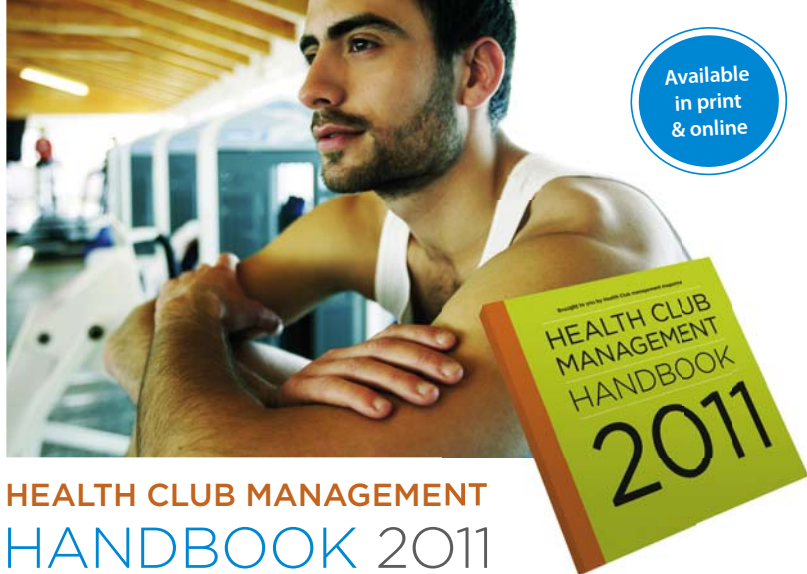
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HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK 2011

The 7th edition of the Health Club Management Handbook is being distributed in January 2011. The handbook is a comprehensive guide and reference tool distributed to industry suppliers and operators, FIA members and industry buyers at events such as LIW, SIBEC and IHRSA.

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The Health Club Management Handbook will be available to purchase at £25 per copy and all content will be available online at www.healthclubhandbook.com

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white peaks ski marathon

Can you ski or board 24 peaks in 48 hours? If so, this weekend of pure adrenaline, which covers 130km – the equivalent of skiing down Everest twice – of top-class piste on the Milky Way in Italy (the home to the 2006 Winter Olympics) could be for you.

This is the 13th year that cerebral palsy charity Scope has held the White Peaks challenge. To date, more than 1,000 people have raised £1.75m. Registration for 2011 costs £100 and minimum sponsorship is set at £1,700. Details: www.scope.org.uk



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Drive your own team of spirited huskies across frozen wastelands in this open charity challenge. This six-day event will see you sledding through rolling highlands and deep forest, into the heart of Lapland, sleeping in Sami tents and journeying through wild and untouched nature before arriving at the Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden. Registration costs £399 and there is a minimum sponsorship of £2,995. Details: www.globaladventurechallenges.com



Entrants will end up at the Ice Hotel

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7 MAY 2011

just walk

Grab your boots and head for the South Downs Way for this countryside hike.

The National Trust route, set on a flint path, undulates through shady woodlands and vast open landscapes.

Individuals or groups can choose a 20km walk or a whopping 60km, while under-16s can opt for a 10km version.

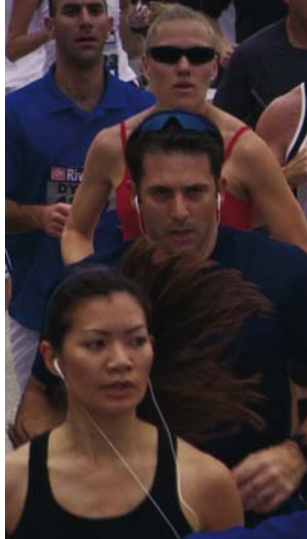
Now in its fourth year, this event – organised by Across The Divide – allows walkers to raise money for the charity of their choice. The entry fee ranges from £5 for children aged under 12 years to £70 per person. So far more than 300,000 walkers have taken on the challenge. Details: www.acrossthedivide.com/just-walk



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hiring graduates

It's now the law in Portugal that fitness instructors must have a sports science degree. Would following this example in the UK mean better service and retention or simply higher costs?

Portugal has introduced a new law requiring health clubs to employ only sports science graduates. The same is true in Catalonia, Spain. With the UK health and fitness industry eyeing up integration with the wider healthcare sector and the NHS, is now the time for operators here to be asking the same of their recruits?

Budget chain The Gym Group already asks for REPs Level 3 as standard and many recruits have a degree, while David Lloyd Leisure also routinely employs graduates, believing they are well motivated and stay for longer in the job, thereby boosting

retention. Meanwhile all PTs at The Third Space in London are sports science graduates (see p28).

There are many tasks required of fitness instructors that don't require a degree, but could having this level of education be an advantage? Would graduates, with their in-depth knowledge, provide even better support and motivation to members?

If the industry does go down the healthcare route, the responsibilities will get more complicated; a high level of technical knowledge will be required to work with members with chronic conditions, to deliver post-op rehab and to deal with clinicians.

But do graduates provide better service? Are the skills needed for the job – people skills, for example – always taught at university?

And how would employing graduates affect the bottom line? Would clubs be forced to hike membership fees or charge for advice that might otherwise have been offered as part of the membership?

It's currently standard for the industry to pay graduates the same as non-graduates, but does this encourage the best candidates to choose other sectors, or at least focus exclusively on PT where they have the potential to earn decent money? We ask the experts.

SHOULD WE BE EMPLOYING MORE SPORTS SCIENCE GRADUATES? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

hans muench

hrsa • director of europe



"This wasn't regarded as a friendly law for Portuguese health clubs. The industry originally fell foul of the Portuguese government when the VAT was reduced but club prices didn't drop accordingly; since then, there have been a number of unfriendly laws and practices, including fiscal and doping controls.

The industry fought this legislation as it goes against current practice and trends, restricting the operating practices of club operators as well as non-university education providers. It doesn't reflect learning other than university learning and, unless university courses are linked to commercial clubs' operational realities, recruits may come up short on the practical side. Personnel costs will also increase.

Clubs will have to put their prices up, which could result in some going out of business. In theory, this could mean service and retention will improve, but that's working on the assumption that graduates always provide better service, which isn't necessarily the case. Indeed, it could mean that basic training and supervision on the gym floor becomes more expensive, with members required to pay for the expertise of the instructors through personal training."

nick burrows

nuffield health fitness and wellbeing • managing director



"This debate is right at the heart of Nuffield's strategy. Our brand is all about delivering health improvements and we have to make sure our credentials match that, so we actively solicit applicants from universities and run ground-breaking internal training. Because of our credentials in medicine and physiology, through our association

with Nuffield Hospitals, what we demand is a few notches higher than what is typical in the industry. For example, our wellbeing advisors need to be able to take blood and interpret clinical data. We also employ physiologists, physiotherapists and have visits from doctors and other health specialists. Being a registered charity allows us to offer this level of service.

Whether or not the industry should be employing more sports science graduates depends on the key customer group that clubs are trying to attract. For Nuffield it's extremely important, because our members – the 'consciously well' – want to actively manage their health and find out if it is improving. This isn't the case for all operators. For those who are appealing to a younger demographic, primarily concerned with appearance, it may not be such a priority."



Will hiring graduates mean members receive the benefits of more expertise? Or will it lead to a hike in fees?

stephen studd
skillsactive • ceo



“Currently, there’s more supply than demand for sports science graduates. However, as the industry moves towards a partnership with the health sector, which will necessitate a higher level of services, it should lead to further graduate recruitment – but first we need to refocus some courses.

At the moment, pure sports science courses don’t necessarily give the knowledge or skills to cater for job requirements, but a vocational component could be introduced to open up employment opportunities. SkillsActive has therefore been working with employers to identify the requirements for the industry and are working with universities to help them provide this on their courses.

This endorsement process for universities launched last month. It aims to shape education with a view to turning out graduates with both the technical and vocational knowledge needed for fitness and other related careers such as coaching and sports development. We want students to be able to easily identify which courses will lead to the best chances of employment.

As employers develop higher-level services, they will also need to look at how to attract and retain these individuals.”

armando moreira
agap • board secretary



“The Portuguese law making it compulsory to employ physical education and sports graduates, from government-approved universities, came into force at the end of 2009. Although the industry wants to improve quality and safety, we don’t agree with the method our government has chosen.

More than half of the people already working in the industry were not graduates and would have lost their jobs. However, after much lobbying, instructors were given a three-month window to register their expertise, whether a foreign degree, vocational training or proof of work experience. Those who didn’t do this had to leave the industry.

This law assumes that, if you come from university, you have more knowledge, but we’re sceptical about this; most university courses are not even fitness-orientated at the moment. We asked for an eight-year timeline, which would have allowed the transition to occur more naturally, but this didn’t happen.

In coming years, recruitment will be the major issue: when even aerobic teachers need a specific degree from a specific university, they will be hard to find. Meanwhile many clubs may close or fail as they can’t meet these new obligations.”

The CEO of independent club
The Third Space talks to
Kate Cracknell about achieving
success by ignoring industry norms



ERIC DUNMORE

I left university with a history degree," says Eric Dunmore, CEO of The Third Space. "What was I going to do with that?"

I decided to train in something more vocational and qualified as an accountant. It sounded desperately dull, but my careers advisor suggested it would at least open doors, not close them."

Having worked his way up to managing partner in an accountancy firm by his early 30s, Dunmore then left to pursue other interests, joining leisure business Longshot. The owner of a number of restaurants, Longshot also acquired the famous Groucho Club in June 2001 and, at the same time, opened The Third Space, a 3,716sq m (40,000sq ft) independent health club in Piccadilly Circus, central London.

"Longshot carried on trading successfully until 2006 when, in order to provide a return to our shareholders, we embarked on a series of disposals, selling the Groucho Club and the restaurants. But we held on to The Third Space and I woke up one day in December 2006 thinking: 'It's simply the best business I've ever been involved in. It's fun, it's exciting, it's energetic.' So I put together a plan for a management buyout, backed by the private equity company Graphite Capital, and on 1 August 2007 we completed the deal."

a niche offering

Dunmore readily admits to having "no fitness expertise at all, only business

expertise", but he surrounded himself with experts from the fitness and medical sectors to develop a strong concept for The Third Space.

"We saw the fitness industry as being quite like the pub sector in the '80s, with big chains operating what we felt were tired concepts. They weren't focusing on being fun, interesting or value for money. There were a lot of facilities, but not many clubs. Many were chains with what I would call 'names' rather than real brands.

"We felt there was a real opening for a niche player and decided to introduce a high quality product, with high quality employees, pricing it to achieve a return but also offering value for money.

"We wanted to make it full of fun, energy, enthusiasm, excitement, colour, vibrancy, variety. To have different things going on, different classes at different times every single day and in every single space throughout the club. To constantly push the boundaries and build a club atmosphere rather than just being a facility.

"The concept of The Third Space is first space home, second space work, third space 'your space' – doing what you want to do, how you want to do it, when you want to do it, with whom you want to do it. Everyone's an individual and the key is to treat them as such."

He continues: "We charge £1,240 a year and don't discount, and roughly 60 per cent of our customers choose to pay annually in advance. That means we



have a very solid business, allowing us to invest in our product and our employees."

investing in people

People are clearly a key focus for Dunmore. "We work as hard as possible to get and retain the best employees. People want to work for us because we pay well and we look after them. We have training programmes for everybody – if the fitness team hits its targets, everyone gets £150 a month to do whatever training they want – and we do what we say we're going to do. It's as simple as that. If you behave like that with people, you get more out of them. They look upwards rather than downwards and go the extra mile for the members.

"And the reason we're successful is because we have great employees who are proud of working for The Third Space. Libardo, for example, has been with us since we opened. He lives in the



We retained 85 per cent of annual members last year, all paying upfront, which allows us to re-invest



The Third Space has developed a compelling concept and brand, creating a true club experience rather than simply being a facility

male changing room to make sure it's spotless at all times. All the members know him, he chats to them, maybe gets them a towel if they've forgotten one. He enjoys his work and his job fits into his life – he got an MA in political science last year. Our business depends on people like Libardo.

"As a result of our employees, we have what I believe are the best retention rates in the industry. Our year ended on 30 September and we retained 85 per cent of our annual members. If you include everyone on monthly direct debits, our retention is just over 70 per cent. That's ignoring all new sales – simply looking at the people we had at the beginning of the year and seeing how many of them we still have as members."

It's clearly a strong business model that's bolstered further by revenue streams such as pilates and personal training. "Our pilates studio – which is

also open to non-members – offers one-to-one classes and we've found it to be a big driver of growth," says Dunmore. "A couple of years ago we took about £68,000 on pilates and last year we took in excess of £256,000.

"Personal training accounts for about 25 per cent of our turnover at the moment, but that's already grown hugely in the last few years and I think we can take it much further; Equinox in New York is quite similar to our club and it's believed that its PT revenues are almost as high as its membership revenues.

"I think the growth opportunity is in showcasing what personal training can achieve for people. However, ours is a retail business – you can't force people to buy something by making it the only option, so everyone has programme design included in their membership, plus all our PTs are on the gym floor to answer members' questions. We only

employ PTs, who also act as gym floor instructors, and they all have a sport science degree or equivalent, and at least three years' experience."

medical offering

The club also has a medical centre as part of its offering, covering a wide range of services including acupuncture, reiki, shiatsu, podiatry, chiropody, physiotherapy, osteopathy, colonics, nutrition, counselling and massage.

"Running a medical centre is the most difficult thing we do," says Dunmore. "It has to be a separate legal entity as it's regulated by the Care Quality Commission. We employ our own full-time GP and he's the gatekeeper for the whole practice. He carries out internal audits of the medical outcomes of patients to ensure that, clinically, we're producing good results. He's then audited externally by another GP, and we have a panel of self-employed senior practitioners who vet any new practitioner we put forward. The integrity of the centre is very strong.

"We market it as a separate entity – approximately 40 per cent of custom comes from the club and around 60 per ▶



► cent from outside, mostly through word of mouth. And it's very successful. It turned over about £1.6m last year.

"That means there's enough business coming through the doors that practitioners are happy to cross-refer to each other, plus we have referrals both ways between personal trainers and the medical centre. And that's quite a big step for our industry, because people normally tend to claim they can do everything. But being willing to pass a client on to someone who's a real expert in their field is in the best interests of the customer and is a philosophy we certainly encourage.

"We're also signing an agreement with the Royal British Legion, our nominated charity, to provide rehab services for injured servicemen, as well as fundraising for them and even providing work placements at the club for those leaving the forces.

"The concept of integrating health and fitness is in the name of most clubs, but it's actually a reality with us."

new ventures

Dunmore now plans to roll out more Third Space clubs across London.

"I'd like to be in Chelsea and maybe somewhere in the City, although that's a hard environment. Clapham would be great, and perhaps London Bridge. Even Richmond or Greenwich is due course. When we launched the management buyout, the backing was for a 'five clubs in five years' plan. The recession affected

everybody, ourselves included, so in my mind that five-year plan starts now.

"There's plenty of opportunity in London and that will be my focus – I don't know cities like Manchester or Birmingham well enough to expand there. However, if we can make the concept work across a number of locations in the capital, it may be that we consider rolling out elsewhere through partnership deals in the longer term."

For now, the second Third Space site is under construction in the Marylebone area of London. Due to open in spring 2011, it's a 1,350sq m (14,500sq ft) location in the Marylebone Hotel.

"The owners had recently spent £37m refitting the hotel and wanted to upgrade the gym, which was run by Virgin Active – a former Holmes Place club. We were approached by the owners and, based on our designs, they awarded us a 15-year lease.

"We're retaining the pool but everything else is being gutted. Marylebone has more of a village feel to it than Soho, so the finish at the new club might be softer, but design-wise it will have some similar features to the Soho club: open plan, with no corridors and an open stairwell so you can see everything that's going on around the club – I think that encourages people to try new things.

"We're also putting in a Retro Gym. I don't want to give too much away at this stage, but it fits in with fitness' current trend towards using body

The club offers clear lines of sight throughout, meaning members can see everything that's going on and encouraging them to try new things

weight as much as possible and is designed to be a bit of fun. It'll be almost like an old-style school gym, where the circuit training approach actually included some pretty effective exercises.

"We aren't having a medical centre in Marylebone but, to add to our product range, we're going to put in a spa, which we're calling The Third Spa: three treatment rooms, two of which will be wet rooms, plus a separate manicure area and possibly also a spray tan area. We'll also offer our own Third Spa signature treatments, which we're currently working on. This spa offering was key to the hotel.

"Ultimately we're there because the hotel has invited us, and it's fundamental to the relationship that we treat their guests absolutely as our own members. But we'll also be selling memberships and our Soho members will be able to use the new club too.

"I know spa is quite a crowded sector, but I've been to a lot of spas in the last nine months and the customer experience really could be better. I think all too often it's focused on how soft the towel is, or how many candles there are, rather than on how good the treatment is.



Linking fitness with the healthcare sector will never happen. People are living in a dream world

"I realise going into spa is quite ambitious but – and I may have to eat my words – I believe it will be less hard than running a medical centre."

sector analysis

And yet, in spite of The Third Space's success in running a medical offering, Dunmore dismisses the fitness industry's potential to link in more closely with the healthcare sector. "It's never going to happen," he says. "People are living in a dream world. Getting practitioners to get to the point where they're confident enough to refer to another practitioner requires them to know each other quite well. They just won't do it."

"In any case, I don't think there's anything wrong with just saying we're the health and fitness sector. What's wrong with being really good at helping people get fitter? It's already a great industry and it has to be the way of the future, because more people are seeing the benefits of exercise across all ages. Why do we have to start using long words to describe what we offer?"

Saying all that, does Dunmore even see The Third Space as part of the

health and fitness industry? "Well, of course we're part of that sector – the leisure industry – but do I think we're part of the health and fitness industry as provided by clubs across the UK?

No. Other operators would look at us and tell us we run a very bad business: far too many employees, towels twice as large as they need to be and so on. They'd probably take all that out with a view to making more cash. I believe churn would go up as a result.

"Now they might be right, but all I would say is that I have a solid business that's grown even in the tough conditions of the last financial year. We were recently voted 'London's Best Health & Fitness Facility 2010' at the London Lifestyle Awards and we have very, very high levels of retention, even in the transient marketplace of Soho. If we can now replicate that in two or three other places, then I think it proves the strength of our brand and our business model.

"Most clubs are run as cash cows. Repairs and maintenance expenditure is minimal and there's a low-level approach to customer service. But we're a retail business, and as they say 'retail is detail'. If you focus on the minutiae and get

those right every single day, and if you invest, you'll have a fantastic product. But the industry doesn't always do that.

"One of the other things that surprises me about the industry is that it's unbelievably arrogant about members. The prevalent attitude seems to be that, once someone signs up, that's it – they're in and you can move onto the next kill. But you just can't build a business on that.

"The professionalisation of the industry is also aeons away, with no really good training programmes. The handling of employees and the rates of appreciation or pay that they receive are also astonishingly low given the skills of some of those in the industry – the personal trainers out there with sports science degrees and a wealth of knowledge, for example.

"On the plus side, I think the industry as a whole is getting better at communicating the value of regular exercise, and it's trying to become a customer service industry, but that's still a long way away."



kate cracknell
healthclub@leisuremedia.com



GOING UNDERGROUND

The University of Edinburgh's Pleasance Sports Complex is based on the site of an old brewery that was built in the late 1700s and features a series of sub-basement vaults that originally held kegs of beer. Julie Fisher explores how this ancient building was transformed into a state of the art sport and exercise facility for students and public alike

Home to more than 23,000 students, the University of Edinburgh is ranked among the top 20 universities in the world (*The Times* Higher Education World Rankings 2009). Its Centre for Sport and Exercise (CSE) has one of the largest, most respected multi-sport and fitness programmes in the country and it prides itself on offering a high quality of service and support.

On 9 August 2010, following a 52-week build and 10-week equipment installation, the chancellor of the university, HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, officially opened a £4.8m, three-storey extension, providing around 1,900sq m of additional sports conditioning and physical activity space.

The Pleasance Sports Complex can now claim to be the largest gym complex in Scotland, with more than 6,000sq m of activity space and offering a multitude of facilities and equipment to its 15,400 members.

a fusion of old and new

The original 100-station Precor CV gym was opened in 2005, along with a remodelling of the 40-station body conditioning gym. "These state of the art spaces proved hugely popular with customers," says Jim Aitken MBE, director of the CSE. "This impressive growth in demand presented some logistical challenges for the CSE management team and was exacerbated by the Pleasance's quirky layout, multiple levels and timber flooring – all leading to the conclusion that a weights room with a concrete floor was required as a matter of urgency."

The building work, which started in May 2009, followed detailed planning in partnership with Inspirit, the exclusive distributor for Precor in Scotland, building contractor Graham Construction, Edinburgh-based architects Oberlanders and the university's Estates Office. The existing facilities remained operational

throughout the work and quiet times were even incorporated into the plan to accommodate exams that were taking place, as well as the university's major involvement in the Edinburgh International Festival/Fringe during the summer months.

The internal environment of both new and older areas was integral to the build and required a distinctive and consistent approach. A design team led by Inspirit liaised with CSE's management team, Oberlanders, and the CSE's preferred designed agency Shaw Marketing and Design to produce a walk-through programme that sympathetically incorporated the old with the new and that provided cohesive colour and style.

The team looked at every aspect – from corridor graphics and banners to glazing and branding – to ensure the right mood was created. Fresh, vibrant colours including purple and orange have been used throughout the

The bench weights area is located in a series of vaults 6m underground; and (right) the My Gym area offers 25 Precor AMTs

ENHANCED OFFERING

New facilities at the University of Edinburgh include:

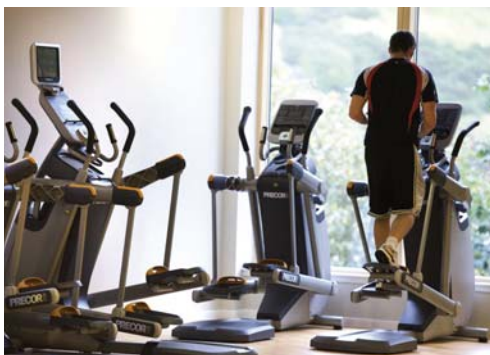
- 100-station Precor CV gym with personal viewing screens
- Body circuit gym
- 40-station Precor resistance gym
- Performance gym with Power-Lift platforms and Eleiko discs and bars
- Historic vaults with 42-station Power-Lift bench weight area, Ivanko dumbbells and bars, and two cable machines
- 50-station My Gym space, featuring 25 Precor AMTs
- Two sports halls
- Five dance studios, including the new Pleasance Studio
- Four glass-backed squash courts
- Healthy snack bar
- Saunas/changing rooms with access to social spaces and communal Wifi
- Dedicated facilities for boxing, archery, rifle, grappling and studio cycling
- Katherine Grainger Rowing Gym, with 15 Concept2 rowing machines
- 26-route climbing wall and separate 60sq m bouldering room
- Six lane, 26m swimming pool

new extension as well as in the main building to create a contemporary and motivational environment. There are also motivational slogans, such as 'Train-Compete-Achieve' and 'No Limits', in strategic positions on the walls.

vaulting its way to success

The new extension makes creative use of two 35m-long vaulted spaces as dedicated archery and rifle ranges. Directly underneath, 6m below ground, are two further sub-terrain arched vaults, which were originally the brewery's keg cellars and were last used during World War II as air raid shelters. Now these 507sq m rooms provide a five-fold increase in the centre's capacity for bench weights, forming an integral part of the new facilities.

The transformation of the vaults and the route for the fire escape were probably the most challenging aspects of the build according to Keith McCahon, project manager at Graham



Construction. "All the walls we were attaching the new build to, as well as those in the vaults, were listed. But we obtained a relaxation of Building Regulations requirements in order to do the work. One of the most difficult tasks was cutting through the 600mm-to 800mm-wide listed walls – propping was put up and beams had to be installed to support them.

"Access to the vaults before the build took place was through an external lock-up area, which was used for storage. A trip down a winding staircase led to dark, damp and dingy areas, which seems a far cry from the now stunning arched, whitewashed walls of the transformed space."

The vaulted ceilings are not the only unique feature of the sub basement gym. The floor is covered with the latest high impact Infinity-Max tile, designed to maximise foot grip and shock absorbency – the university is the first gym in the UK to use it.

multi-level offering

Meanwhile, the basement level houses the new 287sq m Performance Gym, an area specifically designed as a high performance training area and only accessible for accredited members, such as the university's elite sportspeople who are at international standard in sports like swimming, archery, rowing and hockey. The room features free weights, a plyometric exercise lane and a rebound wall.

The ground level encompasses a new 330sq m body conditioning gym showcasing the largest collection of Precor's Adaptive Motion Trainers® (AMT) in Europe. The perimeter of the room is circled by 25 Precor AMTs and 10 upright bikes, all with views of Scotland's Royal Holyrood Park. In the centre are 15 matted 'CSE my-pod' stations – each area is equipped with light studio weights, fit balls and medicine balls, allowing members to remain within their own area while exercising. ▶

HALL OF FAME

Just before the start of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the University of Edinburgh unveiled its Sports Hall of Fame, situated on the main route to the gym areas, which seeks to acknowledge the continuing success of university athletes after they have graduated.

The first inductees were Eric Liddell and Katherine Grainger, who have gyms named after them, but the roll call has now expanded to encompass other sporting greats: Sir Chris Hoy, the Olympic cycling legend; Gregor Townsend, Scotland and British Lions international rugby player; Graeme Randall, World and Commonwealth Judo Champion; Jon Duncan, world orienteering champion; Bob Braithwaite, Olympic shooting champion; and Julie Fleeting, Scotland's greatest female footballer. "More graduates will be added in years to come, rejoicing in their success and serving as an inspiration to current students," says Jim Aitken MBE, director of the CSE.



► A spacious 367sq m studio with sprung wooden floor and high specification sound system is located on the first floor, to support the CSE's dance and exercise classes and workshop programme, which encompasses 60 different sessions each week. The new Vew-do, Zumba and Body Blitz classes are proving especially popular with the CSE's clientele.

While the main CV and circuit gyms have retained their original usage, they have both been incorporated into the redesign and updated with the new colours and new equipment. The 389sq m CV gym now features Precor branding, as well as Precor treadmills, cross-trainers, AMTs, steppers and bikes, all with personal viewing screens showing CSEtv.

The 368sq m fixed weights gym has been renamed the Eric Liddell Gym, in honour of the 1924 Olympic athletics hero, and has been kitted out with Precor's Experience Strength C-line resistance circuit, creating a flagship facility for the range. There's also a dedicated 440sq m circuit gym on the top floor, targeted more as a group exercise space. Also ideal for warm up/cool down and sprint performance, it offers Precor's Cardio Theater audiovisual entertainment system, a 30m running lane, Concept2 rowers and Precor cross-trainers and bikes.

The main CV gym at the CSE has been incorporated into the redesign and has been updated with new colours and equipment

As part of the overall redevelopment, a number of dedicated niche spaces have also been created, such as the Katherine Grainger Rowing Gym, named after the university's Olympic rowing legend, and a cycling studio known as Velo-city. A boxing gym, a grappling room and further rooms to support the university's personal training service have also been created.

Another beneficiary is the university's Fitness Assessment and Sports Injury Centre (FASIC), Scotland's foremost sports medicine provider, which has gained a further four clinical treatment bays. CSE has also opened a commercial retail outlet operated by its preferred clothing supplier Kukri Sports.

high style, low cost

Students and staff alike now have access to what can only be described as one of the best gyms in the country. Anne Ewing, a fifth year medical student, explains: "The new gym facilities are amazing. The space, light, layout and quality of equipment are fantastic and really inspiring – I love it."

Uptake in the new academic season has been extraordinary. The CSE set

a record for new memberships, taking a staggering 735 registrations in just one day. Around 80 per cent of its 15,400 members are students, with the remaining 20 per cent made up equally of staff and graduates, as well as the local community.

Students have a selection of membership options, including an annual fee of just £98, off-peak memberships, semester-only or even the opportunity to pay just £3 for one-off visits. Staff and graduates are also offered favourable rates.

As a dual-use site, the public can also join this high quality establishment for just £28 a month with no joining fee.

The recent extension has taken the sport and exercise facilities into the 21st century. Sitting alongside the university's existing 27-acre city centre playing field site, an outdoor education centre on the banks of Loch Tay and a dedicated sports-related academic building, it's easy to see why the University of Edinburgh is Scotland's leading sporting university.

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What do your members really think of your club? Are you providing them with the best possible service? How do your members rate the experience and do you offer good value for money? Now a new set of awards offers operators the chance to gain valuable insight into the way their customers perceive them



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consumer champions

The Health Club Awards, officially launched in September, are the first consumer awards for the industry where clubs are voted for by the members themselves. With no judges other than the public, win or lose, all entrants get completely honest customer feedback. The winners, however, also gain a great tool for their local marketing efforts.

more than a facility

Simon Brown, MD of Awards For Business – which owns the awards – explains: “Belonging to a good health club is a rewarding experience. Members probably spend more time there than they realise and it’s become an integral part of their lifestyle. For the club, it’s not easy to get every aspect just right. It requires a lot of hard work and a belief that members should have a rewarding experience every time they visit. “The Health Club Awards aim to find out which clubs are providing the most rewarding experience by asking members to rate their club. There’s no judging panel, no submission to write, no telephone interview – just the thoughts of members across the UK on how good their own club is.

“By ranking clubs this way, we’ll find out who’s giving the best membership value in regions around the country. Clubs can also receive their own feedback report, providing

details of their members’ ratings, along with regional and national comparison data.”

The awards are supported by *Health Club Management*. Editor Liz Terry says: “Creating a successful club isn’t just about great facilities – it’s about the staff, communication, customer service and overall value for money. The Health Club Awards will help businesses focus on these aspects of their operation.”

national & regional awards

The awards are open to all health clubs, gyms and leisure centres across the UK. Initial entry is free. Clubs can register online now, at www.healthclubawards.co.uk, with online voting for members taking place 10 January–6 March 2011.

The winning clubs will be announced in May.

Awards will be given to 13 regional winners (10 in England, as well as Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) in two categories: clubs with up to 2,000 members, and clubs with more than 2,000 members. There are also national categories for chains of clubs, including best small, medium and large chain. In each region, the top 10 clubs will be shortlisted, as well as a Gold, Silver and Bronze winner being named. There will also be a National Grand Prix award for the UK’s highest-scoring club.

To register your club, please visit
www.healthclubawards.co.uk



GREG SEARLE

Greg Searle won Olympic Gold in the 1992 Games in Barcelona, in the coxed pair with his brother Jonny, rowing down the favourites and snatching gold on the line. Now aged 38, he's come out of a 10-year retirement in a bid to win a second gold medal at the 2012 London Olympics, a full 20 years after his first. He talks to Kate Cracknell about the challenges of a sporting comeback

Why did you retire so young – and what made you decide to come back?

Rowing's a wonderful sport that I'd really enjoyed in my teens and my twenties, but by the age of 28 I was married, we were expecting our first child after the Sydney Olympics – we now have two, Josie and Adam – and I wanted to move into having a career and a normal life. I actually became a professional sailor for a couple of years, sailing in the Americas Cup, before starting to work at Lane4 Management Group, a company set up by Adrian Moorhouse [the former Olympic swimming gold medallist] to take concepts from sport – mental toughness, teamwork and so on – into businesses.

But I'd stayed close to rowing. Last year I went to the World Championships as a commentator and I had one of those life-defining moments. My flight home was delayed by 24 hours, so I had a day's enforced rest – time purely to myself, to take stock of my life. I realised I was slightly stuck in the rat race and asked myself if I could be doing something different, something better.

The inspiration of being at the world championships, of seeing the competition up close, made me ask myself if I was still capable of it. And on the aeroplane home, I did the sort of exercise that Lane4 would do with an organisation: what's your vision, where do you want to be three years from now? And I decided where I wanted to be was winning an Olympic gold medal.

I realised I needed to start training immediately and it's been a story of continual challenge, meeting each

hurdle as it comes along, right up to today when I'm sitting at the six seat in the middle of the Great Britain eight, preparing for the World Championships in New Zealand in November.

Is the set-up different in rowing nowadays?

It used to be that you rowed first and foremost for your local club – in my case, Molesey – rather than for the GB squad, which meant there was a constant power struggle going on that I think was destructive to British rowing. What I've come back to is a much more centralised system where we all row as Great Britain all the time, training together at the GB facility in Caversham, and the person I look up to as my main coach is Jurgen Grobler, head coach of British Rowing.

We also train full-time now. Before, the boats I was in tended to peak late in the season, and I think that's because I was trying to do too much else in my life, juggling rowing with work; it was only later in the year that we went on proper training camps and fully focused on rowing. If I had my time again, I'd probably be more professional throughout the year – then I think the World and Olympic silvers and bronzes we won could have been golds.

How do standards now compare to before?

In Lucerne this year, all six of the men's heavyweight boats – pair, four, eight, single, double, quad – got a medal. That's a very high standard of team and the best we've ever performed across the board. So the bar's higher than I thought

it would be. We now want to build on that towards 2012. Why not six golds?

So there's a higher level of challenge and expectation than there was before, but there's also more support. That combination – a strong vision and the support to help you achieve it – leads to peak performance.

Do you feel differently this time around?

I think in 1996, and maybe even in 2000, I could have worked with the system more, rather than against it at times. Nowadays I'm genuinely totally happy to trust Jurgen's judgment, whereas 10 years ago I'd have been trying to force his hand and dictate not just what I wanted to do but also how I wanted to do it. The wiser man in me, at 38 not 28, is prepared to say: I will trust the system





and trust the head coach, and if one day he asks me to be in a different boat, or even to be a coach, that's what I'll do. It's about seeing the bigger picture as opposed to the more egocentric thing it was when I was younger.

At the moment, though, I think my performance warrants a place as a rower and, as long as I can continue to make improvements in the same way as everyone else, I see myself competing in 2012. If the Olympics were tomorrow, I'd probably be in. It's hard to predict the future but I do believe that, over the next two years, I'll get better at a faster rate than I get older.

I also like the influence and perspective I can bring as a senior player. I know how good we could be and I'm prepared to challenge us to improve, both technically and emotionally within

Gym work brings measurability, says Searle (above); and (right) Olympic gold in 1992 with brother Jonny and cox Gary Herbert

a team dynamic. And if, aged 38, I'm able to push myself and get good scores on the ergo [rowing machine] and in the boat, hopefully someone aged 23 will feel some pressure to at least equal if not better it. That should encourage us all to challenge our preconceptions of what we think is possible.

How does the training regime compare to before?

We do more training nowadays, but probably less intensity. It used to be about 'no pain, no gain', whereas now it's a slow building of physiology over time with fewer explosive sessions. And ►



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The GB men's VIII, with Searle at number six (third from front), compete at the World Cup event at Lake Bled, Slovenia, in May

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► that does seem to suit my body better now. Saying that, although there's a lot of banter about me being the old man – my lack of flexibility and so on – actually I don't feel any different from my team-mates once we start training.

We do a rowing session virtually every day, plus a number of sessions on the Concept2 each week. Then there's core strengthening, weight training – mainly Olympic lifting – and cross-training on the Precor AMT, which I use mainly for low-impact work or for recovery.

When you're rowing in an eight, you're never quite sure how hard everyone's working, and what gym work brings is measurability and an ability to control the environment. I also work with a Suunto heart rate monitor now and I'm very specific about working in the right ranges for maximum benefit; in my 20s I might have been more focused on beating a particular individual, or even catching up with a women's boat!

Is it harder to avoid injury these days?

I certainly focus more on stretching and core stability than I used to, and I don't go off and play basketball or football any more, which is what I'd have done before for variety and fun. When I was younger I'd be at training camp and I'd have a finger, broken in a game of basketball, stuck out in front of me while I was rowing! Now I'll use the AMT for general fitness instead.

There's banter about me being the old man, but I feel no different from my team-mates when we train

The new set-up also helps. Before I was trying to work and row, but now that I'm more singly focused on rowing I'm actually recovering better for each session. I use Science in Sport products nowadays too – protein shakes after training to help recovery, and carbohydrate gels and drinks during training – and lo and behold I get more out of my training sessions.

What are the stepping stones towards 2012?

It's the small things we're focused on right now, things in the immediate future, rather than looking too far ahead. We want to get a medal at the World Championships, so how do we do that? It'll be about rowing certain times as a crew, although I'm not going to reveal what we're aiming for.

Then, as an individual, I want to continue to make progress on the ergo. I also have goals around my strength – what I need to be able to lift – and ultimately my own body weight and my lean muscle mass.

My physiology had more or less disappeared while I was in retirement, and when I first came back to trial for

the squad, even though I'd been training myself for about four months, I only managed 6 minutes and 6 seconds for a 2km ergo. I've now shaved 11 seconds off that – I'm pulling 5.55 – but I know I still need to do better. If we want to get a gold in the Olympics, it'll need to be in the 40s, and I have another 11 seconds to go until I match my best ever score of 5.44. But I believe I can do that.

The other aspects – the technique, knowing how to apply the force effectively in the boat, and the mental strength to want to push myself – are all definitely still there.

Has coming back been hard?

Actually, no. In fact, I enjoy it more now. This might make me sound old, but I think sometimes the younger generation don't realise how lucky they are to have this opportunity. It's only when it's gone that you appreciate it, and I'm just so fortunate to be able to come back and enjoy it again. It's been an amazing journey of improvement and I've loved every second of it.



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READY TO ROW?

We take a look at a selection of gym-based equipment that's able to cater specifically for those training for rowing

Precor AMT

Olympic rower Greg Searle (see photo, right) uses Precor's Adaptive Motion Trainer (AMT) to top up his training, as it offers an all-over workout and is non-weight bearing, meaning zero impact on his joints. The way the stride works, adapting to the natural movement of the body, also means he can't over-stretch muscles and risk injury. **fitness-kit keyword: precor**



Concept2

The Concept2 Indoor Rower used by the British Rowing team is exactly the same as the ones in your gym. It forms the basis of all the land-based training and testing that the squad does, from short sharp bursts to develop power, through tests over race distances to longer distance work.

Meanwhile, British Rowing were also among the first people to purchase the Concept2 SkiErg, which they use for cross-training. Able to monitor power output in a similar way to the Indoor Rower, the squad has even taken its SkiErgs with them on altitude training camps. **fitness-kit keyword: concept2**

Oartec

Distributed by WaterRower, the Oartec Simulator replicates the range of movement and rotation used when in a boat, reproducing the feeling of rowing on the water and encouraging correct technique. Meanwhile, on the Oartec Slider, the user and seat stay in the same position relative to the ground, while the rolling frame is pushed away during the drive and brought back toward the rower during recovery. **fitness-kit keyword: waterrower**



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Life Fitness

In December 2007, London's Imperial College boathouse gym was refurbished with Life Fitness strength kit. The MTS range offers iso-lateral technology, providing smooth converging and diverging arcs of motion, allowing users to move both limbs at the same time, one at a time, alternating, or with different weights for each – perfect preparation for rowing.

Life Fitness has also announced a deal to distribute the First Degree Fitness Fluid Rower E520 and Fluid Upper Body Ergometer E920. First Degree Fitness' water resistance system offers 20 levels of resistance, from 'feather light' to 'Olympic sprint'. **fitness-kit keywords: life fitness**



Gen3 Kinematics

Distributed in the UK by Gen3 Kinematics, MyoQuip strength training systems are used in Australia by Sydney University Rowing Club and New South Wales Institute of Sport, which together provided 23 athletes to the 2008 Olympic games and 2010 World Championships. Two pieces of kit have now been installed at London Rowing Club. Head coach Phil Bourguignon says: "Athletes can use the MyoQuip systems to increase strength safely, adding far more weight than they can in a squat without the risk of injuring their back." **fitness-kit keyword: myoquip**



Matrix

The gym at the Royal Canoe Club in Teddington includes 14 pieces of equipment donated by Matrix. While upper body training is vital, canoeing and kayaking are total body sports, requiring a combination of strength and flexibility, and the gym offers a combination of selectorised strength machines and free weight products. The kit provides range of motion adjustments, helping to address muscle imbalances – which can be common in paddle sports – and reduce the risk of injury. **fitness-kit keyword: matrix**



Wattbike

Jurgen Grobler, head coach of British Rowing, describes the Wattbike as the new toy in his coaching, as it allows him to monitor and test his athletes even if they're unable to row due to upper body injuries. The team uses the Wattbike for endurance sessions and to prepare for altitude training camps, which involve large amounts of road cycling. **fitness-kit keyword: wattbike**



Keiser

Keith Whelan, a 29-year-old freelance events manager, is set to row solo across the Indian Ocean – a distance of around 6,000km. Unlike most rowers, he's therefore training for endurance rather than explosive power. As part of his gym work, which includes CV and strength training, he's been using the Keiser M3 Indoor Cycle to build up endurance without putting additional strain on his joints.

fitness-kit keyword: keiser



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TAPPING INTO

Gadgets that measure lifestyle activity and iPhone apps that can turn treadmills into exciting training locations: is all this new technology a good thing for the industry and its retention levels? Kath Hudson reports

Although there is an argument to say that gadgets that design workout programmes and give motivation and feedback can make individuals so self-sufficient they no longer need to visit the gym, embracing them does offer up a number of opportunities to clubs.

Holmes Place International was one of the first to run with the ball in its partnership with Fitbug, designed to offer a membership category aimed at the deconditioned market. This uses the online health and wellbeing coach Fitbug – branded as HolmesPlace2Go – to record the users' periods of aerobic activity, steps taken, calories burned

and active hours. Members are offered a monthly face-to-face interview with an instructor to chat about their progress and to be introduced to the facilities. These visits ease them into the gym environment and frequently convert them into full members. Holmes Place is also promoting Fitbug to lapsed members and is experiencing success in winning them back.

ENCOURAGING MORE ACTIVITY

Elsewhere, independent users of Fitbug can wear the device all day and download the data it records to the website, where a weekly personalised training programme and healthy eating plan is designed for them. Ongoing feedback and motivation is provided via SMS and email. In theory, people could do this without having a gym membership, but as they start to understand the need to become more active, it can be a motivating factor to join a gym or keep up an existing membership.

Fitbug managing director



Fitbug's website creates weekly personalised programmes for users

Paul Landau points out that the company has worked with several PCT exercise referral schemes and found that those using Fitbug were more likely to use the gym on their non-referral days, as it made them aware of how little exercise they had previously been doing.

"The other way in which health clubs, and personal trainers, can use Fitbug is to keep track of members' activity beyond their four walls. If members are choosing to jog in the park or take walks in the summer, giving them a Fitbug provides a point of contact and

Apps such as miCoach by Adidas, used here by Jonny Wilkinson, are likely to become more and more popular

TECHNOLOGY



adds value to the membership," says Landau. "The key message is that it's not a replacement but a complement to gym membership, adding a new dimension whereby your entire lifestyle can be managed, as opposed to just the days you make it to the club."

The ActiPed from FitLinxx adopts a similar approach, using a shoe-clip pedometer that tracks steps, calories burned and distance travelled, uploading the data wirelessly to a computer. The supporting website, actihealth.com, displays the information in an engaging way, allowing users to

The Ki Fit System is designed to monitor daily activity



easily track progress, set goals, create challenges and join communities.

Somerset Leisure is currently using ActiPed as part of wellness programmes and outreach initiatives from its 13 sites, targeting a wide range of at-risk populations. Its fitness facilities are mostly located in secondary schools and run commercially out of school hours, and the first phase of ActiPed use targeted pupils struggling to engage during PE. The pupils were offered alternatives to traditional forms of PE, and their activity levels and engagement were tracked via ActiPed. The next phase will be aimed at commercial members, with the in-house weight management course being the first to benefit from the technology.

ACHIEVING GOALS

Moving even closer to the territory of weight loss, the Ki Fit System from Ki Performance is another gadget – a multi-sensor armband – designed to monitor daily activity and calorie consumption. Originally created to ensure intensive care patients consumed



Will innovations such as ActiPed (left) and miCoach (above) make health clubs redundant, or will it open up new opportunities?

the right number of calories, the technology is clinically proven and has only recently been made available to the wider market.

Again, daily activity is recorded and the information downloaded to the Online Activity Manager, where it's translated into data to help change behaviour and achieve personal goals. If worn at night, Ki Fit also measures sleep duration and efficiency, which the manufacturers claim gives insights that no other weight loss tool can.

As it's not a heart rate monitor, GPS or pedometer, Ki Fit provides an accurate insight into how many calories people are burning, even at rest when they're sitting to eat dinner or driving the car.

According to Amie Rutter, business development director, the Ki Fit System is ideally suited to the fitness and wellbeing industry as it's designed for users who have access to the sort of support and advice provided by a club. This sets up a virtuous circle, as the user sees results and consequently wants to keep up their membership. The Ki Fit System has already been

► embraced by many independent studios and personal trainers, as well as by Champneys. Independent London club The Third Space (see p28) also ran a 12-week wellness and weight management package, called The Third Weigh, which involved Ki Fit alongside detailed nutrition consultations and exercise, including 22 PT sessions. The average weight loss was 1.2 stone (7.4kg) with a 7.8 per cent drop in body fat.

ENHANCING PERSONAL TRAINING

Pocket PT acts as a virtual personal trainer, enabling members to view or download their workout programme along with further explanation and videos. Members are then required to feed updates about their workouts and their diet onto the website, which a personal trainer reviews and comments on to help them towards their goals.

This does rely on members being both honest and motivated enough to upload their personal information, but Dan Newman, fitness director of Pocket PT, says knowing they could be checked up on means they're more likely to form good habits. "It keeps them motivated when they're not at the gym, because they still feel aware of their goals," he explains. "Also, if they have any questions regarding their workout, they have a direct line of communication to a personal trainer, which can increase PT session sales."

Ian Charlton, group leisure manager at Barcelo UK, trialled the Pocket PT last year, initially as an extra revenue stream. However, he soon became more interested in what the service could do for sales and retention. As a result, Pocket PT is now being rolled out across all 16 of Barcelo's sites as part of the new member pack, referral and cancellation process.

PHONE APPS

Phone apps, such as miCoach from Adidas and the Nike GPS app, are likely to become increasingly popular. Turning smart phones into coaches with voice



Pocket PT keeps members aware of their goals, even outside the gym environment

OTHER INNOVATIONS

New to the market, **Buddyfit** is the brainchild of personal trainer Jubi Evangelista and his business partner Raman Khosla. It offers a wealth of training information within a touchscreen kiosk, which is located on the gym floor.

By touching an anatomical 3D figure, members highlight the part of the body they want to work on and are given a sequence of exercises according to their needs. Teaching points are displayed, as well as a video, which includes close-ups and a view from two or three different angles to give a thorough understanding of the exercise. Evangelista says the information is based on the questions his clients ask him, and the system – while using cutting-edge technology – has been designed to be very user-friendly.

Evangelista believes Buddyfit will serve as a good retention tool by offering members high quality support. He anticipates that it will be especially useful for those who can't stretch to personal training sessions, and who might therefore lose motivation. A



comprehensive online service is now in development to provide further support for members.

Meanwhile, **Technogym** launched a new tool in August to help clubs gain a deeper understanding of members and their aspirations, in order to motivate them in the correct way. Club 2.0 – which was developed in collaboration with the IULM University in Milan, Italy – involves members completing a five-minute online questionnaire, the results of which place members into particular categories, allowing for training programmes to be created in tune with their needs.

The information also helps identify what might cause them to lose interest in the gym.

Once all members have completed the questionnaire, the club can also use the data to build up a picture of how its members are using the gym. This can then inform strategies relating to programming, equipment choice and club layout. Club 2.0 could also allow clubs to create communities of members with the same aspirations, providing another retention tool.

downloads from famous sports people, GPS for live coaching during runs, a wealth of workout programmes and feedback via websites, easy uploads to virtual communities.... all these things could be seen as a threat to our sector, potentially making the health club redundant. However, the fitness industry has an opportunity to capitalise on this new technology, using it in the same way as the other gadgets to create new types of memberships and work with clients to achieve their goals.

Some apps certainly complement the industry, including the new Fun Run Trainer from Australian company iFit Technologies. This iPhone app uses a real-time video map and precise inclination settings to effectively turn

the treadmill into famous tracks and locations around the world – treadmill users can, for example, run part of the Honolulu marathon course and warm down with a stroll on Venice Beach.

An upside of these gadgets is the option they offer to monitor members beyond the facility, which should improve both motivation and end results and therefore impact positively on retention. The focus on lifestyle activity also means these gadgets could be used to attract new audiences for weight loss programmes and ongoing wellbeing initiatives such as post-natal weight management and pre-wedding diets.

Ultimately, if health and fitness operators embrace these new technologies rather than viewing them as a threat – encouraging instructors and personal trainers to use them as tools to strengthen their relationship with members both inside and outside the gym – our sector will be all the stronger for it.



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research round-up

Recent research has suggested that a simple 'sit and reach' test could be used to measure the risk of heart attacks or strokes

flexible friend

The 'sit and reach' test has been used by health clubs for many years as part of fitness assessments – measuring how far you can reach beyond your toes from a sitting position is normally used to define how flexible a person is, especially in the backs of their legs, hips and lower back.

In general, habitual exercise includes flexibility actions (stretching), so an active person may tend to be more flexible than an inactive one. Now, however, a group of researchers from Japan have found that the sit and reach test could also be used as an indicator to how stiff a person's arteries are*. And because stiff arteries frequently come before cardiovascular disease, the test could become a quick way to determine how at-risk individuals are from heart attacks or strokes.

As lead author Kenta Yamamoto says: "Our findings have potentially important clinical implications because trunk flexibility can be easily evaluated."

the results

In their study, the researchers focused on 526 healthy, non-smoking people,

aged between 20 and 83 years, who had a BMI of less than 30. They wanted to test the hypothesis that a less flexible body would also show arterial stiffening.

The participants were divided into three age groups: young (20–39 years old); middle-aged (40–59 years old); and older (60–83 years old). Every participant's trunk flexibility was measured by a sit and reach test and, depending on how far they could reach, they were either categorised as having poor or high flexibility.

Arterial stiffness was then measured by testing the speed of blood flow through the body, recording how long the pulse took to travel between the arm and the ankle, and the neck and the leg.

the results

Among the middle-aged and older subjects, it was found that arterial stiffness was worse in the poor flexibility groups compared with the high flexibility groups. This suggests that trunk flexibility is indeed a good indicator of artery stiffness for those over the age of

Stretching activities could help slow down age-related stiffening of blood vessels



40. However, there was no such significant relationship among the younger participants.

The researchers also tested systolic blood pressure (the peak pressure of the heart as it contracts), muscular strength and cardiorespiratory fitness in some participants. For those over 40 years of age, it was shown that the arterial stiffness associated with trunk flexibility was separate from cardiorespiratory fitness and muscular strength. In addition, systolic blood pressure was higher in poor flexibility groups in the middle age and older participants.

The reason why arterial flexibility could be related to flexibility in the body is unknown, but the study's findings suggest that stretching exercises could help slow down age-related stiffening of the blood vessels.

Yamamoto concludes: "We believe that flexibility exercise – such as stretching, yoga and pilates – should be integrated as a new recommendation alongside the known cardiovascular benefits of regular exercise."

why should arteries be elastic?

Blood flow from the heart pulsates and causes fluctuations in pressure – high pressure could lead to a burst blood vessel, while low pressure doesn't supply a constant amount of the necessary nutrients to the body.

The elasticity of an artery is important because it helps dampen

these pulses and keep the pressure more constant, therefore creating a healthier blood flow.

Arteries increase in stiffness with age, which means that as people get older they don't have such a healthy blood flow – and as a result they're more at risk from cardiovascular disease, strokes and even death.

* Yamamoto K, et al. Poor trunk flexibility is associated with arterial stiffening. *American Journal of Physiology – Heart and Circulatory Physiology* 297: H1314-H1318, 2009.

Forward Thinking

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finding the hidden money in your business

Tim Fearon looks at what companies need to do to maximise their potential

When I first started working in the fitness industry some 11 or 12 years ago, I was staggered to find that clubs who thought they were pretty good at it all had attrition rates of around 20–25 per cent. I came from a background where, if you managed to get rid of 20 per cent of your customers each year, you'd be out of business.

And why such a high rate of attrition? Well, one major cause was identified as being a lack of contact between members and staff on the gym floor.

Twelve years on, and a few weeks ago I was reading an industry publication that quoted a piece of research showing that one of the key reasons for member dissatisfaction today is that they don't get enough attention on the gym floor. No surprises there then!

So the question is: Has anything really changed? I'm sure there will be some of you reading this who will be up in arms already, wanting to prove me wrong by demonstrating your own impressive levels of retention. If you're one of those, I'm delighted for you. Truly. If you're one of those who recognises that you have much yet to do, I'm delighted for you too: you realise that there's work to be done.

But why do I start here? Why do I start this article about the future – because that's what it is – by digging back into the past? I'll tell you why. It's because I think, I know, that too many businesses and business people are living in the past.

I mean that they are trapped. Trapped in the thinking that created today. Trapped in the thinking of the

industry in which they work. And that means they're trapped in the past.

Remember what Einstein said: "You cannot solve the problems of today with the thinking that created them."

We live in a world that has been irrevocably changed by the events of the past few years. We live in the world of the 'New Economy', and this world is a far less generous and forgiving one. It's a world that needs a new approach. It's a world that needs new thinking.

thinking differently

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got" – this is the context for the strategies that will help you to find the hidden money in your business.

Sometimes these strategies may make you think: "No, that would never work for me. I could never do that. My customers would hate it. My business is different." But here's the thing: if you ever feel like that, you can bet you're probably on the right track. The strategies that are ignored, the thoughts that are abandoned, are often the ones that lead to where the money lies.

So what do I mean by hidden money? I'm talking about the revenue, resources and opportunities that already exist in your business that you're not tapping into – and I'm not talking about spending huge amounts of money to find them. I'm talking about the leverage you can get by thinking and doing things differently in three key areas of your business: you, your clients/customers, and your products/services.

Running idea generation sessions (above) can be a great way to encourage creativity in your business; (right) make sure you know exactly who your members are

let's start with you

The most important ingredient in any business and its success is the person who leads the business. How you think and act makes or breaks you – it is the difference between having a perfectly good business or a highly successful business.

Napoleon Hill, author of the seminal work on the mindset of success, *Think And Grow Rich*, says: "Our brains become magnetised with the dominating thoughts which we hold in our minds and, by means with which no man is familiar, these 'magnets' attract to us the forces, the people, the circumstances of life which harmonised with the nature of our dominating thoughts." In other words, we get what we focus on.

The question I have for you is: what are you focusing on? Are you focusing on the day-to-day? Are you focusing on the small things that might make a difference? Are you spending more time working in your business than you are working on your business?

The business leaders that will win the day are those on the lookout for new ideas to propel their business forward, and who have also set up the structures in the business to promote that kind of positive thinking.

If you want to get ahead of the crowd – if you want to stand out from the noise that surrounds us – you have to take

quantum leaps, not small steps. And you have to put into your business the structures that encourage creativity. It's important to recognise that we need structures in order to be free.

Here's one very practical suggestion: set up a group of no more than eight people to help you generate ideas for your business. This group should consist of you, members of your team (or, if you're a solo professional, people you know and trust), and essentially someone – maybe more than one

– who knows nothing about your business or industry at all.

Then run idea generation sessions – no more than half an hour without a break. Have one person responsible for noting down ideas (not you) and one person responsible for facilitating the session (not you either).

The rules for the sessions are: any ideas are OK – discount nothing; get as many ideas down as you can; and don't allow any evaluation or criticism within the session itself. ▶



► customer focus

When it comes to our clients – our members – there are a whole heap of strategies I would like to share with you for maximising their value, but I only have space for one and so here it is.

Write out the profile of your ideal customer. As you do this, imagine them sitting opposite you; get a really good image of them in your mind; give them a name. If the range of your customers is quite wide, try to identify the average person. If you have more than one ideal customer, do this for each of them.

Answer the following questions:

Logical characteristics

- Are they male or female?
- What's their name?
- How old are they?
- What do they look like?
- What are they wearing?
- What job do they do?
- What do they earn?
- What kind of family do they have?
- Do they have children?
- How old are the children?
- What kind of school do the kids go to?
- What does their spouse/partner do?
- What kind of car do they drive?
- What kind of place do they live in?

Chiropractors willing to think out of the box might offer online back care advice and classes

By understanding your customers, you will be able to talk to them in a way they will instantly recognise

Emotional characteristics

- What are their hot points?
- What causes them pain?
- What are their main fears and frustrations?
- What keeps them awake at night?
- What's the number one problem they want solved?
- What's their desired outcome – what do they really want?
- What's the reason for them wanting that outcome – what's in it for them by achieving that outcome?

What this gives you are the keys to your communication with your customers. This is not about knowing your customer. This is about understanding them, and that's a completely different ball game. By understanding who your customers are, you will be able to talk to them in a way they will instantly recognise – and that's

what builds great relationships. I see so many pieces of customer communication that could, quite frankly, be aimed at anyone. Make yours really hit the mark. By having the answers to the questions above, you will be well on the way.

business-building questions

Finally, there are two key questions that most businesses never ask, but that can transform your profitability.

Question one is: "What's next?" What's the next thing I can offer my customers once they've made their first purchase? Once you've answered that question, ask it again and again and again. The answers will be the keys to your future success and profitability.

For example, I go on occasion to a local chiropractor who's something close to a body magician. I only go when things go wrong, but just think what he could do. He could offer a 'back club' – an MOT service for the back, maybe with reduced-price sessions if you book a certain number in advance. He could offer advice, products, online classes for back maintenance, downloadable exercise routines and so on. He does none of these and the thing that stops him – I know, because I've talked to him about it – is his belief that people wouldn't want to commit to paying fees upfront. How does he know that? He doesn't, because he won't ask. He's a very good example of the "that wouldn't work in my business" mentality, and he's losing money because of it.

The second question is: "What else?" This is the question that really savvy business people ask. It doesn't



Martial arts businesses keep people interested by offering 'badges of achievement' in the form of different colour belts, all in the quest for the elusive black belt

refer to their product – it refers to their customer. What else could their customer want that they cannot supply but that they could help them obtain?

Take my friend Gillian as an example. She sells tiaras and wedding jewellery to brides and, more often than not, their mothers. So ask yourself: what else could she offer them that would be of value? What else does anyone planning a wedding want? They will be looking for dresses, flowers, photographers, venues, honeymoon ideas... the list goes on.

So what Gillian can do is set up a joint venture partnership with another business or businesses that fit the profile of the kind of clients that she has, with all the partners promoting each others' services on a profit-share basis. She will thereby have created a back-end to her own business.

fitness applications

Let's take these two questions and apply them to the health and fitness industry – and as we do that, take the chance to look outside and see what ideas we can borrow from other industries.

Firstly, what next? The key here is to think about how we can glue members to us for as long as possible. Now, most operators I'm aware of have

two or three forms of membership including peak and off-peak. But how many clubs have memberships that reflect usage? Could you, for example, offer a membership for more regular users, the fees for which are reflected in the amount of use they make of the club? How about the more you use, the less you pay? The more weight you lose, the less you pay? The fitter you get (by measurable criteria), the less you pay?

If you take a leaf out of the credit card companies' strategy, you could develop different tiers of membership – Gold, Platinum, Diamond – with different rates and with different privileges attached to each level.

Or take a look at martial arts, keeping people tied in for years by offering them badges of achievement, all in search of the black belt. What's your version of the black belt?

And how about the second question: what else? What could members of health and fitness clubs be interested in that the club itself does not supply, but that you could possibly source?

How about offering health insurance, with the premiums based on levels of fitness? What about joining forces with local travel companies to promote, at

special rates, activity holidays? We have a company close to us that delivers fantastic, high quality, low-calorie, ready prepared meals to your home each week. For very time-poor business people, this could be a godsend – but I have yet to see any of the top-end (that's where the audience for this service would be) health clubs in our area take advantage of that idea by linking in with this company.

Now, it may be that many of you are trying out some of these ideas already. What you can be sure of is that there are a whole host of ideas and opportunities out there just waiting to be grabbed. Someone is going to grab them, and that someone will be the person who will triumph. That person will be someone who has innovation built into their business. Have I just described your club, or the club just down the road from you?

It's entirely your choice and that's what makes business such fun. Success all depends on the choices you make.



tim fearon is director of the extraordinary coaching company
healthclub@leisuremedia.com



The new Isis® is revealed

The new Isis® is a customisable fan for fitness spaces with ceilings as low as 3.7m (12.1ft). Spanning up to 3m (9.8m) in diameter, just one of these machines is marketed as covering more of an area than nine small ceiling fans, while using only a third of the energy. The Isis® is available in a wide range of colours and, at less than 40dBA, is said to be quieter than an empty library.

leisure-kit.net KEYWORDS
big ass fans



Creative studio fitness ideas from Mad Dogg

The Pilatesstick® from Mad Dogg is a professional-grade portable body sculpting system that's suitable for small group classes and that's marketed as an affordable option for a health club. Also from the same company is the new cardio-based Bodyblade® workout system, which is said to deliver fast, effective muscle strengthening, power development and overall toning in a group environment.

leisure-kit.net KEYWORD
mad dogg

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New Studio Pro bars unveiled by Fitness-Mad

A new range of Studio Pro weighted bars and racks have been unveiled by Fitness-Mad. Offering weights ranging from 3kg to 7kg in a consistent length of 123cm, the bars have a diameter of 37mm. The colour-coded rubber end caps are said to be non-marking, anti-slip and help to protect floors, while their shape prevents them from rolling away if put down. The Studio Pro bars are also covered with an 'elephant skin' which offers strong padding, durability and a good grip.



leisure-kit.net KEYWORDS
fitness-mad



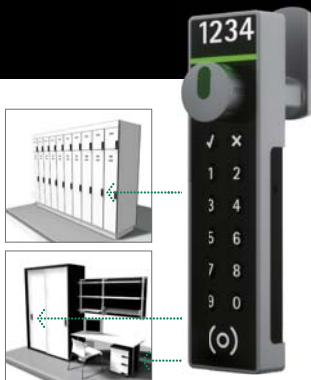
leisure-kit.net KEYWORDS
mirrors for training

Portable mirrors for multi-functional spaces

The robust new portable mirrors from the Mirrors for Training company have been created to enable multi-functional rooms such as halls and studios to be used as motivational training spaces to teach a range of wellness and fitness activities. Framed with powder-coated steel and available in either a black or white finish, the mirrors are easily transportable to spaces where there are no mirrors installed and feature lockable wheels. Requiring no self-assembly and supplied ready to use, an additional ballet barre can also be fitted if required, while the mirrors are also said to be scratch-resistant.

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the changing face of fitness

Colin White, leisure partner at Edward Symmons, reviews the market, ponders how groups with under-performing sites will fare and considers the impact of the low-cost sector on the future of the health and fitness industry

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties with the health and fitness sector is the limited amount of research and statistics available. However, it is my view that the industry recognised it was in for a difficult period in autumn 2007 – confirmed by the recession in 2008/2009.

We are now in a new world order with low interest rates and government stimuli being required just to maintain a slow-growing economy. The spending review on 20 October 2010 (which will have occurred by the time of publication) is also likely to have a significant impact on public sector jobs and employment; given that a higher percentage of public jobs are situated provincially, it is reasonable to anticipate that the greatest impact on the economy will occur in such areas.

Looking back a few years, it's almost as though the health and fitness sector recognised the threat of the low-cost sector establishing itself – which started in 2006 with Finspace in Bournemouth – and reacted accordingly. Numerous transactions and general consolidation of the sector occurred in 2006/2007. Examples include Virgin Active acquiring Holmes Place, Bannatyne acquiring LivingWell, London & Regional Properties acquiring the David Lloyd brand from Whitbread and, more recently, Nuffield Hospitals acquiring 52 Cannons clubs.

Multi-site operators saw that pressure on consumer spending – translating to an increasing number of under-performing sites – would result in a growing number of clubs being offered either for conversion to alternative use, or for assignment to smaller operators or the low-cost sector.

site selection: new or old?

It has, however, proved difficult to acquire under-performing clubs from existing groups, mainly because they continue to make a contribution towards fixed overheads including rent, rates, service charge, insurance, maintenance and so on, and because the risk of assigning a lease to a smaller company risks a liability that may return in the future. The worst case would be the return of a closed club that's been stripped of its equipment and left in a poor condition, requiring investment if it is to be re-opened.

There are some exceptions to this: for example, LA Fitness sold five clubs to nuyuu and Fitness First disposed of clubs to Finspace, which currently operates eight sites. However, it is unclear how successful these ventures have been in comparison with the purpose-built low-cost operators, where new sites have been acquired and developed in

line with corporate strategy; certainly questions have to be asked of the model following the recent sale of nuyuu to The énergie Group. The advantage in acquiring existing clubs is that growth can take place quickly, but the concept that's then created through re-branding the clubs may not ideally suit the concept proposed, especially where swimming pools exist.

Furthermore, halving the membership price of a 2,000-member club will also have the effect of halving the turnover and, if the underlying costs and service levels cannot be reduced drastically at the same time while the membership is being built up to hopefully higher levels, the impact on profit can be dramatic.

The club will also come with 'baggage', in that the existing members will have expectations of service levels and facilities offered which may not be continued, thereby causing significant attrition despite a reduction in rates.

In the UK, low-cost operations such as Pure Gym are expanding rapidly





Figures correct as at September 2010

In my opinion, developing a new concept by acquiring new locations specifically designed for purpose – the model adopted by the likes of The Gym Group – is likely to be the best way forward for the low-cost sector.

location, location, location
So where to locate? To the best of our knowledge, little research is currently being undertaken into the profile of the low-cost sector membership – research that could help identify areas that are most likely to be suitable for such developments. I therefore anticipate that mistakes will be made as existing competition, combined with new competition, may prove to be unsustainable. With clubs typically seeking 5,000–6,000 members and with around 4 to 6 per cent of members leaving every month, it's essential that there is a very dense population in the area from which to draw, with relatively

LOW-COST OPERATORS: DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

Operator	No of sites	New developments	Average monthly fee
The Gym Group	8	Three opening in the next four months	£15.99
Fitspace	8	Two to three new sites opening within the next 12 months	£14 - £17
Pure Gym	7	Opening another three to four sites by end of this year. Hope to have 25 in total by end of 2011 – up to 45 in next three years	£14.99
nuyuu	5	None confirmed	£19.99
énergie Fit4Less	4	No information provided	£16.99
Fitness 4 Less	3	Two opening by Autumn 2010. Looking for many more suitable sites	£14.99
Springslits	3	No information provided	£14.95
Xercise 4 Less	1	One opening in October 2010. Two more opening next year and three planned to open in 2012	£14.99
Gym 4All	1	Three more sites opening by end of this year	£14.99

weak competition, if these low-cost gyms are going to maintain such high levels of gym membership.

David Minton of the Leisure Database Company comments: "During the rapid growth of the health and fitness sector during the mid-1990s to mid-2000, it became fundamental to most companies to undertake membership profiling

and demographic research in order to establish whether or not sites would be suitable. This is going to become important to the low-cost sector if high levels of failing clubs are to be avoided."

Certainly gut instinct is no match for good quality research when such high levels of capital investment are required – up to £1m per club.

impact of the low-cost operators

So just how far and how fast is the low-cost sector likely to grow?

The health and fitness industry has typically seen up to three-quarters of members using clubs infrequently, so, by definition, they receive poor value for money. It's not therefore surprising that a low-cost offering will be very attractive given the current economic climate. It seems to be a widespread view that "the mid-market will come under increasing pressure," as expressed by Peter Roberts of Pure Gym.

Indeed, the mid-market is usually the sector that's most affected when there's a slowdown in the economy and pressure on consumer spending. However, the key issue here is how wide the definition of that sector becomes. One would usually expect the winners to be the high quality and relatively expensive racquets clubs ▶



The sooner existing operators react to the budget sector threat, the sooner the industry will move forward

typified by David Lloyd Leisure, and the traditional mass market sector typified by Fitness First – although given that there is limited trading information, this is difficult to substantiate.

However, what's clear is that this pattern could be dramatically impacted by the low-cost sector that's now emerging. John Treharne, CEO of The Gym Group, certainly believes that the fitness sector will polarise into "two dominant sectors: the high quality racquet clubs and the low-cost gyms".

The table on p55 lists the low-cost operators, the number of sites they currently operate and the new developments in the pipeline as at September 2010, together with the price point currently being charged. Together these companies had 40 sites operating as at September 2010; if forecasts are to be believed, by the end of 2011 we could see well over 100 low-cost gyms in operation.

The best evidence currently available for the impact of the low-cost sector on existing gym offerings is the growth of McFit in Germany since 1997, where they now have 120 clubs with an average membership of 7,083 per club. This is up from 89 clubs at an average of 6,180 members in December 2007. By contrast, Fitness First Germany has seen a reduction in the number of clubs from 107 (December 2007) to 102 (December 2009), with an average of 2,755 members per club, and broadly remained static between 2007 and 2009. Fitness First currently charges €55 (£48) a month while McFit charges just €16.90 (£15).

What's not clear is what impact growth of McFit has had on the Fitness First estate in terms of average yield and profitability. Based on the 2007 accounts published by McFit, the company turned over €86m and produced an EBITDA of €28m (32.5 per cent) with an amazing level of staff costs of just 3 per cent of turnover across the estate (source: Oxygen Consulting's *2010 UK Low-cost Gym Sector Report*). It's not unreasonable to anticipate that the McFit brand has grown turnover and profitability since these accounts were published, and to a degree at the expense of the established health and fitness sector in Germany.

a potential fight-back?

We can reasonably conclude from this case study in Germany that there will be an impact on the traditional mass-market sector as well as on the mid-market sector in the UK. Although the low-cost sector in the UK. Although a large number of new members, estimated at 40 per cent first-time users, there will also be a significant migration from the existing health club offering.

But no doubt existing groups such as Fitness First will adapt to compete with the new-style, low-cost offerings. Indeed, given the strength and size of operations such as Fitness First, the impact on the new entrants to the low-cost sector could be dramatic. One thing is certain: whether the existing fitness players adapt their offering to fight back, or whether low-cost operators tighten their grip on the market as has been witnessed in Germany, the sector will change beyond all recognition.

Fitness First has seen a reduction in number of clubs in Germany, where it is battling with McFit

In conclusion, change is inevitable as evidenced by the McFit case study in Germany, and the sooner existing operators recognise these threats and react, the sooner the industry will move forward and supply the offering that consumers in the current economic climate require. Inevitably further consolidation is likely to occur, particularly among the mid-priced sector, but change may also be required within the existing traditional mass-market sector. Whatever happens, it will be an exciting time in the development of the sector and hopefully we will see the financial institutions providing strong support, given its growth potential.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin White is a fixed equity partner at Edward Symmons and heads up the firm's Hospitality and Leisure Agency team, having worked for the firm for over 16 years. He is an expert in the commercial leisure sector and has advised major lending institutions, leisure operating companies and insolvency practitioners.



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TRACK LIVE
PROJECTS ONLINE

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Times are tough, but large-scale developments are still going on.
We take a closer look at a selection of recent initiatives



PULSE – a Total Leisure Solution

Client: Carshalton College

Supplier: Pulse Fitness

Supplier involvement: 30-year Pulse investment (£1.7m) and operational partnership to design, construct, project manage, equip, staff, market, sell and operate the facility

Pulse took on its biggest project to date at Carshalton College, creating a £4.3m sustainable, energy-efficient, inclusive, state-of-the-art new-build leisure development in just 52 weeks. Delivering swimming, health and fitness, the development represented Pulse's first swimming pool construction project.

The ambitious challenge was to demolish the existing sports hall to make way for the multi-million pound leisure development, including both wet and dry provision, to cater for more than 2,000 members. With more than 30 years' experience in leisure facility refurbishment, Pulse was able to approach the project with a blank canvas, designing and building the concept from the ground up.

The impressive centre officially opened its doors in September 2010, offering a diverse mix of top of the range facilities. These include an air-conditioned 80-station fitness suite offering the latest Pulse Fitness equipment, including 'smart' virtual trainer software; an 18m swimming pool with luxury steam room and high quality changing facilities; a full-size sports hall with four badminton courts, also

catering for sports such as basketball, football and netball; two air-conditioned studios offering a wide range of activities and classes; and a dedicated student studio and activities/common room. There is full and safe accessibility for disabled users throughout the facility.

From the use of bold, energising colours to under-floor heating, the latest Junkers wooden sprung flooring to atmospheric mood lighting in the steam room, the attention to detail on finishes, materials and build is outstanding throughout the entire facility. A mosaic tiled Pulse icon makes for a striking feature in the 18m swimming pool and reinforces the Pulse Health & Fitness branding that features proudly above the impressive glazed main entrance.

As well as providing affordable health and leisure facilities to the community, the facility operates as a dual-use site, providing the primary sport and physical education facilities to Carshalton College. An eight-week pre-opening marketing campaign helped to position the new Pulse Health and Fitness brand in the heart of the local community and generated an impressive 1,000 members prior to the official opening. With ongoing sales and marketing activities,



Carshalton College was Pulse's first swimming pool construction project

membership is approaching the 2,000 target for the new year.

As part of Pulse's environmental commitment, all aspects of the build and fit-out have been planned to ensure maximum environmental efficiency and to achieve Grade A environmental certification. In addition, the fitness suite contains Pulse's low emission, wireless fitness equipment, while the plant room also features the very latest technology – all features that have contributed to Pulse achieving the BREEAM "Very Good" status.

And the icing on the cake is that all rubble and materials from the old sports hall building were recycled to form part of the new ground works at the 2012 Olympic stadium site in London.

As part of Pulse's investment and services partnership, it will now operate the facility for the next 30 years on behalf of the college. Visit www.pulsefitness.com



POWER PLATE – DLL Supplier of the Year

Client: David Lloyd Leisure

Supplier: Power Plate

Supplier involvement: Named as DLL Supplier of the Year thanks to an ongoing partnership to drive business success through the roll-out of Acceleration Training™ machines and programming



David Lloyd Leisure is rolling out Power Plates across the UK

Offering access to Power Plate® machines is proving a successful business strategy for one of Europe's largest racquets, health and fitness operators. This year, David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) committed to offering at least four of the Acceleration Training™ devices in each of its 86 branches across the UK and Ireland.

"Due to popular demand, we're rolling out Power Plate group exercise classes in every single club across the UK. It's an investment that's paying off for us, and our members tell us they're seeing results too," says Rob Beale, group health and fitness manager for DLL.

Power Plate equipment was first trialled in a pilot installation at DLL Aberdeen in 2006. Since then, the popularity of the equipment has grown year on year, and Power Plate International is now DLL's exclusive equipment supplier for this category.

The machines are positioned on the gym floor, and every member can access them after first receiving a 45-minute taster session from a qualified personal

trainer – an opportunity to educate members about how to use the machine, and its benefits, as well as introducing them to the personal training services offered by the club. Clubs also offer their members small group exercise classes on the machines, with up to 10 different timeslots each week, for a full body strength workout.

DLL worked with Power Plate International to develop new programmes as it rolled out the equipment to more branches. Now members can take part in a six-week programme in which a personal trainer leads a small class, thereby combining the motivational benefits of a group workout with a higher level of personal attention thanks to the small class size.

For accelerated results, members can also choose the 'Fight It, Fix It, Lose It, Shape It' package, where a personal trainer works on a one-to-one basis with a client, using Acceleration Training workouts to help them achieve their specific fitness goal. By working together on innovative ways to encourage more

members to try the Power Plate machine, DLL and Power Plate International have both enjoyed business success.

This mutually beneficial relationship was recognised when Power Plate International received DLL's Supplier of the Year award this year, acknowledging the company's contribution to DLL's business success. Managers at each club scored all suppliers on a range of key performance indicators, from product performance to maintenance and customer service, with Power Plate International scoring four out of five on the audit.

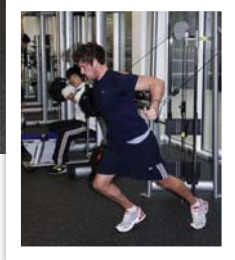
"We were thrilled to receive this commendation from DLL. It reinforces our commitment to providing a quality product and, more importantly, excellent service from installation to training and marketing support," says Jeff Davis, director of commercial sales, Power Plate UK.

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Client: Northumbria University Sport Central
Supplier: gym80
Supplier involvement: Provision of strength equipment and ancillaries (including free weights)



Northumbria University Sport Central – a brand new £30m sports facility in the heart of Newcastle city centre – opened its doors to students, staff and the public in September 2010.

The Sport Central building is striking in design and packed with a wide range of amenities: a 3,000-seat indoor sports arena, 25m swimming pool with variable depth floor, multi-purpose studio, squash facilities, a 12m climbing wall, sprint track, four indoor sports halls, golf simulators, a suite of sports science laboratories and a 150-station fitness suite fitted out with gym80 SYGNUM strength equipment and Precor cardio.

The procurement process was tendered out through the *Official Journal of the European Union* (OJEU) and split into three parts: cardio, strength and ancillaries. All too often tenders cannot be split, so customers have less choice and may not be able to pick their preferred choice of CV and strength separately; this can lead to compromises on choice and quality.

Alistair Lawrence, facilities manager at Sport Central, evaluated the gym80 strength kit during the procurement process. "The gym80 strength equipment

at our neighbouring Newcastle University has stood up so well to vigorous student use that they intend to keep it for another five years. The German-made gym80 equipment demonstrates the quality of engineering that the country is renowned for, and we're confident that it is best in class," he says.

Colin Carter, managing director for gym80 UK, has supplied university fitness facilities for the past 10 years and understands the needs of a busy student facility. "Today's students are highly focused on performance and functional training – the result of improved knowledge on training techniques, physiology and sports nutrition – so the need for a high quality training space is greater than ever before. The standards of university sport across the board have increased dramatically and progressive universities need to provide high quality facilities to encourage this to continue."

The fitness suite at Sport Central is an unusual 739sq m (7,955sq ft), T-shaped room with a feature glazed wall overlooking a roof garden, which can be accessed from the gym. When designing the layout of the suite, the cardio was placed so as to look out over the roof garden, with the

The 150-station gym offers a range of gym80 SYGNUM strength kit

gym80 strength equipment then laid out in zones: weight stack machines, cables, plate-loaded equipment, racks, benches and functional kit.

Says Carter: "We have the largest range of strength products on the market – close to 200 different machines – so designing the gym at Sport Central was like being a child in a sweet shop."

A combination of 17 gym80 SYGNUM Standard and SYGNUM Dual machines with independent arms were selected for the strength area, to offer variety and progression. Meanwhile, four functional cable stations, two Dual Adjustable Pulleys and an eight-station tower with cable cross-over are laid out on the edge of the performance area.

"We felt 200sq m (2,153sq ft) should be allocated to free weights and performance equipment, as we believed this would be a very popular area. Within this space are Max Racks, Smith Machines, Olympic Benches, Olympic Half Racks, Multi-Position benches and a wide range of dumbbells and discs. It's very impressive," adds Carter.

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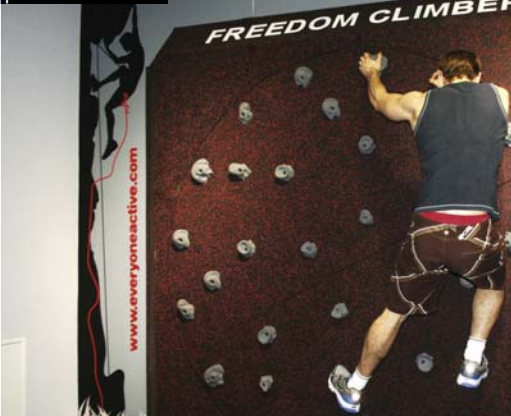
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FREEDOM CLIMBER



FREEDOM CLIMBER – bringing the outdoors... indoors

Client: SLM (Everyone Active)

Supplier: Revolutionary Products (Freedom Climber)

Supplier involvement: Creation of a Freedom Climber Zone at Fareham Leisure Centre, along with the production of marketing materials and the delivery of staff training, as part of a gym refurbishment project



Everyone Active at Fareham Leisure Centre was looking for innovative ideas for a creative new gym refurbishment. The mission: to take the centre's already successful centre to another level and fend off competition, increasing membership by focusing on the non-traditional gym-goer and attracting new members who wanted more than the 'standard gym' format. Also key to the project was the wish to invest in the community, with new activities for kids and families.

Led by Neil King, SLM's commercial director, and supported by area contracts manager Ian Cooke – a keen extreme sportsman – Everyone Active set out to incorporate zones of outdoor-style activities within the gym refurbishment, such as mountain biking, climbing and martial arts.

"We felt our main competition was coming from the growing trend towards people pursuing outdoor activities," says Cooke. "These are people who want more than the traditional exercise equipment. We decided to bring the outdoors indoors, creating zones in the gym where members could combine their regime with the 'activity experience'."

Climbing has always been a fantastic total body and core workout, but

previous systems needed space and supervision. However, Revolutionary Products provided the perfect solution: the Freedom Climber, a rotating disk with climbing handles and footholds, powered by a virtually maintenance-free hydraulic system. Fitting easily onto a relatively small area of wall, it takes up minimal floor space.

It's also simple and safe for members to use unsupervised, with a digital display showing distance, time and calories. This allows for member challenges to be run, and also means it can be incorporated into personal programmes – just four minutes' climbing provides a great functional activity and gets the heart rate up.

The gym at Fareham had a spare wall in the stretching/functional training area so, in conjunction with the graphic designers at Everyone Active, Freedom Climber created a themed 'Climb Zone', with funky graphics using strong mountain imagery around the climber.

"The Freedom Climber creates an impressive focal point when showing prospective members around the club," says Matt Hague, fitness and sales manager. "It's become one of our unique selling points, which has resulted in significant new membership sales. It's also been a popular new addition with

The wall-mounted Freedom Climber offers a space-efficient solution

our existing membership base, giving our members a new way of exercising and creating a sense of fun and enjoyment."

The Freedom Climber has also been a great hit with the centre's personal trainers. It's been incorporated in the functional training element of their training programmes and, thanks to the interest in the new piece of equipment, has increased member-trainer interaction, which is resulting in higher PT revenues.

Freedom Climber worked with Everyone Active to create a pre-installation buzz at the centre, with strong imagery used on promotional brochures, the website and in the pre-sales area. In addition, training on the physiological benefits of climbing, as well as simply climbing technique, was enthusiastically received by the instructors and the sales team.

Membership sales have increased following the refurbishment, proving that a creative and innovative approach to gym design can create something special for existing members and also help win the battle for new members.

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how to look 10 YEARS YOUNGER

Donna Gregory asks industry experts for their views on how to keep gym equipment looking good and performing well after the first flush of youth



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With the economic downturn and the resulting tightening of belts across the country, there has never been a better time to look at ways of prolonging the life of fitness kit. Here, service and maintenance experts share their knowledge on what can be done to keep kit performing well, and suppliers and manufacturers tell us what they do to provide customers with durable equipment that will stand the ravages of time.

all part of the service

"With the right level of service and maintenance, there's no reason why even CV equipment shouldn't last up to 10 years – and beyond," says Rick Fowler, sales manager for service and maintenance company Servicesport.

Good equipment should, Fowler continues, be serviceable – although he acknowledges that equipment sometimes has to be put out to pasture due to manufacturers no longer producing the relevant parts. "We're constantly trying to combat this by having things such as key pads and overlays made, refurbishing drive and lift motors as well as manufacturing decks, run and drive belts," he adds.

Physique, which has been in business since 1982, specialises in remanufacturing Life Fitness equipment, and it gives guidance to clubs on simple day-to-day maintenance. This includes a mapped-out programme for staff within its maintenance contracts. Graham Bertrand, group managing director of Physique's parent company – PTE Group – explains that keeping equipment in tip-

top condition can add years to the life of CV kit, and he emphasises the role that fitness staff have to play in this. "There are very simple things that staff can do to prolong the life of equipment, such as vacuuming out treadmills and wiping down machines to stop sweat eroding the casing," he explains.

Bertrand has seen first-hand what lack of maintenance and care can do to equipment. "In today's culture of recycling – both for economic and

environmental reasons – the fitness industry can play its part by re-using rather than retiring quality equipment. At Physique, we refurbish old equipment back to a new standard, but we have had occasions where it hasn't been economically viable to do it simply because the kit hasn't been looked after. Like a car, if you don't service kit regularly, it will end up on the scrap heap."

And of course, as well as affecting performance and longevity, regular care ▶



Keiser: "It's very clear to us, when we're called to a club for maintenance visits, if the equipment has been well looked after"



Reliable kit: BalanceMaster (right) and Matrix at The Gym Group (above)



- and maintenance of equipment will also keep your kit – and with it your gym floor – looking good.

decreasing downtime

With an engineer at the helm of the company, it's no surprise that creating durable equipment is a priority for Keiser, which has been manufacturing fitness equipment in the US for more than 30 years.

Tim Colston, managing director of Keiser UK, shares his thoughts on how you can keep equipment in good shape: "Good quality raw materials and innovative design to reduce wear and tear on the key elements of the equipment are important. The hallmark of our M3 Indoor Cycle, for example, is its durability. It's made of corrosion-resistant materials, has a two-year warranty as standard and is virtually

maintenance-free thanks to a non-wear magnetic resistance system and anti-slip belt that needs no adjustment.

"However, clubs really need to take ownership of their equipment and follow daily, weekly and monthly checks as advised by the manufacturer. It's very clear to us when we visit clubs for preventative maintenance visits and/or planned call-outs if the equipment has been well looked after. By regularly checking and looking after kit, operators can decrease downtime."

John Treharne, CEO of low-cost operator The Gym Group, knows the importance of keeping equipment fully functional. He explains: "Our gyms typically have around 1,100 users every day and they're open 24/7, which means that the equipment is in use at all times. We need to make sure it's robust and reliable.

"We've recently signed a two-year agreement with Matrix Fitness which includes a service agreement that ensures the kit is regularly serviced and maintained to the highest level. Not only does this extend the life of the equipment, but it also means that our staff don't have to worry about repairing the equipment in the event that something goes wrong, leaving them free to focus on our members."

Our case studies on these two pages look at other examples of equipment that's going from strength to strength, from Precor's original cross-trainer to the low maintenance BalanceMaster, as well as getting the secrets of durability from Technogym, Pulse and Life Fitness.

MILITARY FITNESS

Technogym provides equipment to the armed forces, with some pieces now more than 10 years old. Howard Swinyard, network and services director for Technogym, says: "This equipment is used to its maximum capability in some of the most hostile environments across the globe, and it's serviced regularly by Technogym engineers to maintain the high level of performance that's demanded from it."

According to Swinyard, preventative maintenance is by far the most successful way to keep kit in action: "Our engineers believe that 'a stitch in time saves nine', meaning that a small maintenance issue that could go undetected over a period of time and lead to further problems is addressed early, avoiding a more expensive repair and leaving a satisfied customer."

CLUB VIEW

According to Ian Hobdell, health and fitness manager for sports and leisure trust Active Luton, ensuring the gym is in full working order is key to retaining members: "The first machine people see when they come in to our Profiles health and fitness suites is the BalanceMaster. Thanks to its durability and the fact that it doesn't need traditional servicing, the BalanceMaster is the ideal piece of equipment to be front of house – immediately seeing an

'out of order' sign on a machine can give a bad impression of the whole facility."

Jason McMahon, national sales manager for BalanceMaster, adds: "Because the BalanceMaster needs no adjustment or lubrication due to its sealed drive mechanism, it doesn't require servicing in the way most other pieces of gym equipment do. This unique selling point makes the BalanceMaster an ideal low maintenance, multi-purpose piece of kit for any gym."

Active Luton didn't take out an extended warranty for its BalanceMasters as, says Hobdell, the machines had "proved they could cut the mustard", only needing a call-out twice in six years. However, he believes that taking a service package for CV equipment should be standard procedure. "Regular servicing can add years to the equipment. Let's face it, we all need a bit of TLC now and then."





Tony McParland
at Bodyworks in
Northern Ireland

THE EFX FACTOR

This year, Precor is celebrating the 15th anniversary of the world's first elliptical fitness cross-trainer: the EFX544. Launched back in 1995, Precor's very first cross-trainer is still going strong according to Miles Rimell, head of marketing for the company.

Rimell explains: "We know that there are EFXs in clubs today that are 14 years old and still performing as well as the 'new kids on the block'. The EFX was a world first and, as such, it's fitting that it's still out there proving its worth."

Tony McParland from Bodyworks Gym, Northern Ireland, can testify to the longevity of the EFX. He explains: "I bought two second-hand EFXs when I opened the gym back in 2000, as I couldn't afford to buy new."

"All I've had to do over the last decade is switch the EFXs on in the morning and off again at night. They're going as well now as the day I got them and have played a huge part in making Bodyworks a success."

THE BIG 30

Pulse is well placed to talk about longevity. The company celebrated 30 years in business this year and, at LIW in September, it presented its long-standing customers with a commemorative plaque in recognition of 'their commitment and contribution' to Pulse's business over the years.

Dave Johnson, company co-founder and production director, says: "We still have equipment being used in gyms that's more than 12 years old, including steppers, bikes and even treadmills."

So what's the secret to keeping equipment going for more than a decade? "Our British-based research and development team's work on the design, build, function and aesthetics of our equipment – coupled with our comprehensive service, support and maintenance training packages – ensures longevity of the products," says Johnson.



Remanufacturing
Life Fitness kit, and
(right) the Lifecycle



THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

Life Fitness has been manufacturing equipment since the mid-70s, when it launched its first exercise bike – the Lifecycle.

Life Fitness marketing manager Lawra Angell explains: "Life Fitness has produced 10 different models of the Lifecycle, all of which encompass the original components that make the Lifecycle the legend it is today. It was the very first computerised exercise bike before the word 'cardio' was widely known and, in 2007, Life Fitness produced the 500,000th Lifecycle."

And how does Life Fitness ensure its products stand the test of time? "Before a new product line reaches our customers, it has gone through rigorous reliability testing, using robots to simulate the extreme use our products undergo in high-use environments. In addition to our internal reliability and testing operation, we also test our products in health clubs and multi-use facilities," says Angell.

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The Ultimate Question?

Mike Hill takes a look at the potential of the Net Promoter Score® for the health and fitness industry

The old customer service adage – about a good experience being shared among three friends/colleagues but a bad one being shared with 10 – is now hopelessly out of date. Put a good recommendation on LinkedIn or a bad one on a review site and not only will it reach 100 times more people within days, but it will stay live for months.

So what's the ultimate question to ask your customers if you want to understand their relationship with you, as well as the future growth potential and profitability of your business? And what do Amazon, google, Apple, Travelodge, Virgin and DC Leisure all have in common?

These companies, along with many others across the world, believe the ultimate question is represented by the Net Promoter Score (NPS)®, a customer loyalty metric developed by Fred Reichheld, Bain & Company, and Satmetrix.

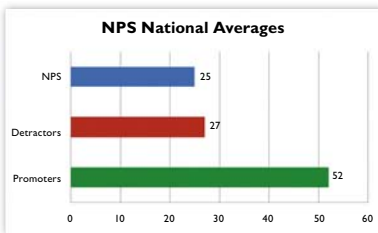
asking the question
Companies obtain their NPS® by asking customers a single question on a 0 to

10 rating scale: "How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?" Based on their responses, customers are categorised into one of three groups: Promoters (9-10 rating: loyal enthusiasts who keep buying from a company and urge their friends to do the same), Passives (7-8 rating: satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who can be easily wooed by the competition) and Detractors (0-6 rating: unhappy customers trapped in a bad relationship). The percentage of detractors is then subtracted from the percentage of promoters to obtain a Net Promoter Score® – a clear measure of an organisation's

performance through the eyes of its customers. A score of 75 per cent or above is considered quite high.

Reichheld argues that the main benefit of the NPS® is that it gives organisations a single customer service objective: creating more 'promoters' and fewer 'detractors' – a simple concept for employees to understand. When properly used, it can also reduce the complexity of implementation and analysis frequently associated with measures of customer satisfaction, providing a stable measure of business performance that can be compared across business units and even across industries.

Created from years of research – hundreds of businesses across many industries – NPS is also proven to be linked to sustainable growth. Indeed, companies that achieve long-term profitable growth have Net Promoter Scores two times higher than the average company, while NPS leaders outgrow



Initial fitness industry results show an average NPS of just 25 per cent

A 12-point increase in NPS has been shown to lead to a doubling in company growth rate

their competitors in most industries by an average of 250 per cent. In addition, a 12-point increase in NPS has been shown to lead to a doubling in company growth rate.

Put simply, promoters stay longer (increasing membership fees and saving on marketing and promotion costs), spend more (increasing secondary spend) as they are interested in your company's services and products, and promote your brand (increasing non-incentive based referral, with referrals from promoters themselves more likely to become promoters).

They are also less price-sensitive than others, believing they are receiving good value for money, and complain less frequently than detractors, tying up less customer service time.

good profits, bad profits

NPS is also based on the concept of 'good profits' and 'bad profits'. Good profits are medium- to long-term and sustainable, delivering long-term growth and profitability. Bad profits are short-term and can only sustain a business for a relatively short period of time. Just measuring customer satisfaction won't distinguish between the two, but NPS will.

Selling the wrong product or service to a customer and then under-delivering on the service promise leads to a high percentage of detractors in your customer base, delivering bad profits. "The problem we have is that almost all health and fitness operators survive off bad profits," says Alister Rollins, CEO of The Retention People (TRP). "With half of all members stopping using a facility after just a few months, yet still paying, almost all profits from these customers is bad and unsustainable. It's no wonder we have a retention problem! NPS gives this sector a method of gaining visibility of the problem and a structure to improve, which in turn will see the growth of the sector again."

first national nps survey

With its emphasis on personal customer service and the importance of word of mouth marketing, referrals and recommendations, NPS has great relevance to the health and fitness sector; indeed, a number of companies

already use it, or something similar, as their key service metric.

Customer insight specialist Leisure-net has therefore teamed up with TRP to formally launch NPS into the sector, running the industry's first national survey and benchmarking service – a survey which, in the long run, will enable operators to benchmark their customers' satisfaction and loyalty not only against other operators, but also against firms outside the leisure sector.

The survey is ongoing but currently involves more than 50 public and private operators, carrying out the simple online survey among more than 50,000 members across 300-plus sites. Initial results outlined last month have revealed an incredible range of NPS scores, with the lowest operator scoring just 4 per cent and the best scoring 76 per cent. The current average is 25 per cent – very low in comparison to other industries – which highlights the need for our sector to improve its focus on service. The average scores for the whole sector are shown in the table on the opposite page.

Key reasons that people gave for being promoters were:

- Helped me to achieve results in terms of my health, fitness or weight
- Friendly, supportive and knowledgeable staff
- Great relationships with other members/customers

Key reasons that people gave for being detractors were:

- Staff not interested in helping me
- Staff not friendly and do not talk to me
- I haven't achieved what I wanted to
- Lack of basic cleanliness and working equipment

fitness & the nps

Steve Philpott, CEO of DC Leisure, certainly thinks NPS has great potential in the health and fitness sector.

"The sector needs powerful customer service matrices that can be benchmarked both internally and externally against other sectors, and we are very happy to be pioneers in embracing this powerful customer measure," he explains. "As an ex-marketeer, I've been fascinated with the NPS ever since I was introduced to the concept two or three years ago, and



Keep your equipment in working order: if it's not, it will lead to higher numbers of detractors

I'm really pleased that we're now using it as the key metric in DC Leisure's customer KPIs."

One of the key problems facing our sector over the last 20 years has been our reliance on bad profits at clubs/centres, with too high a percentage of detractors. If we were to concentrate on turning more of our members into promoters, putting this objective at the centre of everything we do – from marketing and sales, through recruitment and training of staff, to service delivery processes and systems – this could create a tipping point, bringing about a vital change in our businesses from bad to good profits.

Net Promoter, NPS, and Net Promoter Score are trademarks of Satmetrix Systems, Inc., Bain & Company, and Fred Reichheld. Companies must obtain a licence to use NPS, as it is a protected process and registered trademark; LeisureNet and The Retention People can help businesses to obtain this licence.



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COLIN WAGGETT

The CEO of Fitness First speaks to Pete Hayman about the challenges in the global marketplace and the company's flotation plans

How would you describe current global trading conditions?

We have a very substantial range of trading conditions, from pretty favourable to quite challenging. Overall, it's probably more challenging than it was two years ago, but in some parts of the world – such as Asia and Australia – conditions are pretty fair. Some parts of Europe, however, are quite tough.

The main issue is the consumer economy. The recession hit a lot harder in Europe and, as a result, more multi-site operators took a more aggressive stance on pricing and competing in order to acquire members.

Are you expecting conditions to improve during the remainder of this year, and into the next?

Overall I think things will get better, but there are some regions – the UK, for example – where I don't expect things to change very much for some time.

In the UK, is there anything the new government can do to re-invigorate growth?

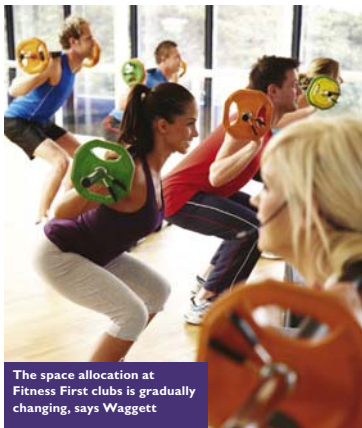
It's a question of seeing what it can do to sort the economy out. The government has a tough challenge, balancing tax rises and spending cuts. There's little point asking it for any particular support for our sector when there are other sectors much worse hit, and when it has no money.

Looking at your annual results ending 31 October 2009, revenues increased but profits were down. What were the reasons for this?

It depends on what you are looking at, as we grew revenue and EBITDA. If you're looking at operating profit, those figures are after a number of non-cash charges, such as impairment charges with certain clubs in Europe and one-off interest charges. At the operating level, our profits grew; at the reported level, impairment and one-off charges meant the profits went down.

General consensus suggests that profits can be better driven by retaining members rather than continually recruiting new ones. To what extent to you agree?

What matters most is net membership growth and net revenue growth. However, there's much more of an upside in our business from improving retention than from recruitment. Our retention rate for customers has improved substantially; our sales disciplines and skills have been established for some time and therefore are into refinement mode.



The space allocation at Fitness First clubs is gradually changing, says Waggett



“I would like to see the government change its mind about the VAT increase – it’s 2.5 per cent off the top line”

In terms of your development pipeline, what are your plans for new clubs?

We will open around 20 new clubs next year and will probably open in the region of 30–35 clubs in 2012. Openings will be weighted towards Asia and Australia – perhaps half of the new clubs. But equally we have openings planned in Germany, Belgium and the UK.

In addition to new openings, are you continuing to invest in existing clubs?

Yes. You have to continually take the old clubs with you. We invest on a reciprocal basis, whether it is refurbishing shower blocks, painting clubs or replacing equipment. We’ve always stuck to our guns in relation to trading up cardio equipment every four to five years, and strength equipment every seven to eight years, and generally moving with the trends.

How do you determine where to target investment in existing clubs?

There’s no hard and fast rule. We have clubs that are 15 years old and some that are five or six years old. People understand the difference between an old club and a tired club – we can’t stop clubs getting old, but we can stop them getting tired. In the UK this year, for example, we’ve replaced 50 shower blocks as part of a proactive programme to work our way through the estate, making sure all shower blocks that are over 10 years old are updated. There’s also a total club refresh programme when a club needs to be totally remodelled.

Does Fitness First have any plans to diversify – the introduction of spa facilities, for example?

We won’t be introducing spa facilities. Our main direction relates to the creation of freestyle training zones, whether that be TRX zones or ViPR workout areas. The space allocation of our clubs is gradually changing – it’s about making sure we have enough of that freestyle space, as well as providing the usual traditional equipment.

How will Fitness First respond to budget gyms?

In our existing clubs, we have plenty of experience of operating against budget operators – in Germany, for example, where McFit is a very large operator (see also p54). You have to make sure the feel of your club and your service proposition are distinguished from the budget clubs. You have to offer something that’s different and something that people perceive to be value for money. It keeps you on your toes.

Any new competitor coming in is a threat, and particularly one that’s redefining the market from a price perspective. But I feel that we have the breadth, the experience and the reach to ride out that threat. One other thing I would say about the budget clubs, which we’ve seen in other markets, is that they grow the market substantially. For a lot of people, price is a barrier to entering the sector, so therefore budget clubs actually increase the number of people participating, rather than ‘stealing’ from the same pool of customers.

Does Fitness First still aim to float? Will the annual results impact on these plans?

We intend to float the company – probably in Asia – but the exact timing is yet to be confirmed. In terms of the results, the revenue growth and EBITDA growth is pretty good as far as we’re concerned. The business is probably of a size and scale that’s best suited in a public company capital structure, and that’s the objective of the flotation.

Finally, if you could have one wish granted by the government, what would it be?

I would want them to change their minds on increasing VAT to 20 per cent in January. That’s effectively 2.5 per cent off the top line – either that or we pass it onto the customers and ask them to pay more. We’re looking at how we deal with that very carefully.



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PERSONNEL PERSPECTIVE

Liz Smith reports on the key findings from the Working in Fitness 2010 survey

Those working in the fitness industry are starting to feel the effects of the current economic climate. Levels of pay have not generally increased over the past year, while training and development have also slowed down. However, fitness workers continue to be positive about the organisations they work for, with a stated intention to remain in the industry.

These are the headline indications of the seventh annual Working in Fitness Survey, developed by SkillsActive and the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) and conducted between May and August. We take a look in more detail.

pay & career prospects

As seen in other industries, pay increases are on hold, employer contributions to training has reduced and the amount of training undertaken has shown the first signs of a fall.

However, more fitness workers are recommending the organisation they work for than previously, and continue

to show a desire to remain in the fitness industry in the long term. Sixty-eight per cent report an intention to stay in the sector for at least five years, but there is still a quarter who don't know how long they will stay. Factors that would make them leave include low pay, better career prospects elsewhere and personal reasons (each reported by two in five respondents – see figure 1).

Although these issues are consistent across different types of employment, low pay and improved career prospects are more commonly cited by those working in permanent, full-time roles; they have a lesser impact on the self-employed. Positively, only 8 per cent and 7 per cent of the self-employed report a lack of work and rising costs, respectively, as significant factors in the current economic climate.

Pay, meanwhile, does not show signs of improving: a higher proportion of fitness workers than last year report the level unchanged, while those receiving an increase continues to fall – 24 per cent received a pay rise this year

compared to 34 per cent last year. The increase that was received was most commonly 2.5 per cent or less.

However, in spite of the current pay situation, eight in 10 respondents are still happy to recommend the main organisation they work for to a friend. Although the private sector is slightly less likely to be referred, the figures suggest an improvement on last year. Given that the same issues appear to be present as those found in previous surveys, the improvement in recommendations may be due to workers simply being content to be in work at all at the moment.

Areas that influence a recommendation tend to be connected to working conditions and standards (see figure 2); remuneration and prospects for promotion or career development show the lowest satisfaction, regardless of whether an organisation would be recommended, which confirms earlier findings of factors that would make people consider leaving.

training & development

Levels of training and development is not the most commonly quoted reason to leave the industry, but at the same time there is some evidence to suggest that it can benefit retention. When recommending an organisation to work for, those who have received the least number of training days are less likely to make a referral. Likewise those who intend to remain in the industry for a short time, or who do not recommend their employer, also more commonly report not receiving enough training.

Those who intend to stay five or more years in the sector undertook an average 5.5 days of training in the last year, while those staying only one year received 3.3 days' training.

This may be connected to the fact that training is most commonly paid for by

Figure 1: Factors cited as reasons to leave the industry



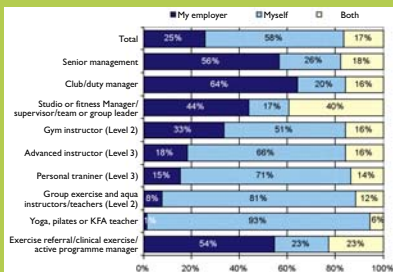
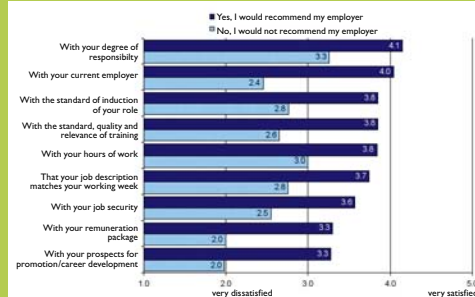


Figure 3: Who pays for the training undertaken



Figure 2: Level of satisfaction and willingness to recommend employer



A consistent 75 per cent of staff feel they receive enough training to do their job properly


cent still report a problem. Only 11 per cent of the workforce did not attend any training, which is lower than the proportion reporting a lack of training. This suggests there may be a problem with the relevance of training.

further information

In summary, the industry continues to see some effects of a slow-down in the industry, but workers generally remain positive. Pay and career progression continue to be key factors for the workforce, and the impact of the economy on training and development needs to be monitored.

The results of the Working in Fitness Survey 2010 can be found at the following site: http://www.skillsactive.com/what_we_do/research

Anyone interested in participating next year, or who has any comments about the findings, please contact research@skillsactive.com

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the individual (58 per cent of trainees), while a quarter of respondents report employers paying for it all (see figure 3).

Training spend per individual is slightly higher this year, at an average of £492 per trainee, but the amount of training is showing the first signs of decline to an average of five days per worker. Employer support appears to have fallen across occupations, with individuals having to make more of a financial contribution (either fully or partially) towards their training.

Generally, management occupations receive a lot more support from

their employer: 64 per cent of club/duty managers, 56 per cent of senior management and 54 per cent of exercise referral/clinical exercise/active programme managers have their training paid for fully by employers. But overall, fewer trainees report employers' contribution to training: 25 per cent received full financial support this year, compared to 27 per cent last year and 40 per cent in 2008. However, the proportion of workers who report receiving enough training to do their job properly has remained consistent: 75 per cent are satisfied, while 19 per

LEISURE INDUSTRY WEEK 2010

ROUND UP

Lisa Warden reports on the highlights from Leisure Industry Week 2010

Leisure Industry Week (LIW) 2010 delivered a variety of dynamic demonstration areas, educational conferences, networking events and even a new world record (see p75).

The show, which took place at the Birmingham NEC from 21–23 September, attracted over 350 exhibitors, all showcasing the latest ideas and innovations to the leisure sector. We explored the trade floor to find out about the new launches. Here's our rundown from LIW's health and fitness zone.

NEW PRODUCT LAUNCHES fitness equipment

- Pulse celebrated 30 years of innovation with the unveiling of its Fusion range of CV equipment. The new range combines the latest in audiovisual technology with unique 'green' features, making it an environmentally responsible range of equipment. Pulse also marked the completion of its first environmentally 'A'-rated swimming and leisure development and its first premier five-a-side soccer complex.
- X-Force launched its resistance equipment to the UK. The unique

range has a patented tilting weight stack that increases resistance as the weights move back towards you, making training more productive by either reducing the time required to achieve results or improving results if exercising for the same amount of time as on conventional machines.

- Star Trac showcased Star Trac Coach, which offers a personalised treadmill workout led by real-life personal trainer and specialist running coach Kimberly Shah. Shah talks users through the programme as she walks or runs with them, motivating the user to get more from their workout experience.
- The MVE Pilates chair, manufactured by Peak Pilates and distributed by Star Trac, offers four separate resistance levels, along with a spring changing system that makes it quick and easy to switch exercises or move to the next level. The MVE chair can be used to work several muscle groups, including the triceps, chest and shoulders.
- Matrix demonstrated its new Virtual Active software, which lets users work out to cinema-quality video of iconic destinations, ranging from the Las Vegas Strip to the Hollywood Walk of Fame, while the cardio equipment being used



Pulse, shown here displaying its dance mats, celebrated 30 years of business this year



This year's LIW, held at the Birmingham NEC, attracted more than 350 exhibitors

automatically adjusts to the elevation changes shown on the screen.

Matrix Fitness Systems also previewed the MyRide v3.0 – a product designed and manufactured by the Indoor Cycling Group and Virtual Active and created for all levels of user. It enables users to build their own personal rides or take advantage of various real-time coaching and multi-media programme options (see also *HCM* Oct 10, p56).

- Power Plate International showcased the Power Plate pro6 with proMOTION technology. The new pro6 unites two proven exercise methods – cable resistance and vibration training – with integrated cable technology to deliver a total-body workout.

SHOW FLOOR ACTIVITY

Marathon Man

Mike Buss, a former soldier in the British army, completed his 100th treadmill marathon in the same number of days on the last day of LIW (see also p19). Sponsored by Star Trac, Jeep, Brooks, Timex, Juice Performance and Gatorade, the challenge raised money for charity Help for Heroes.

EnviroZone

LIW hosted a new EnviroZone in the Leisure Facilities area, with a number of presentations by energy-saving companies. Exhibitors included PowSaVa, Thermo Pool, Calorex, MHA Lighting, Pulse Commercial Utilities and Riva Global. "Good leads were generated and we saw many visitors who had an interest in managing their energy emissions more effectively," says Mike Ford, director of PowSaVa.

PTontheNet Functional Training Zone

A number of products designed to transform small, unused areas of the gym were on display in the PTontheNet Functional Training Zone – a perfect area for personal trainers to experience some of the innovative products and programmes the industry has to offer. Exhibitors

included Leisure Lines, Jordan Fitness, Escape Fitness, Keiser, FitPro, Fight Fit, Thump Boxing, Padbox, Premier Training and Nordic Walking.

Group Fitness Arena

Britain's Got Talent finalists Strike demonstrated their new martial arts programme for children and young adults, created in conjunction with ZigZag. The programme includes martial arts, dance and gymnastics, all choreographed to music.

Interactive Showcase

VEQTOR, CyberCoach, ZigZag, Pulse, Trixter and Fitnessgaming demonstrated their latest innovations in the Interactive Showcase.

Equipment on display included the Dance Machine from Pulse, dance mats and the Expresso bike from ZigZag, and the Xdream and XBike Interactive from Trixter.

Wavesurfer

Exhibiting for the first time in the UK, Wavesurfer encouraged hundreds of visitors to don their wetsuits and have a go at surfing. Several professional demonstrations also took place. The 9m long, portable installation is perfect training for body boarders, surfers, wake boarders, skate and snowboarders alike.



EXF showcased its X-Cube, which combines more than 45 exercise disciplines

- Keeping space-conscious facilities in mind, Life Fitness introduced six new Optima Series Dual-Exercise machines, adding to this range of compact strength equipment. The new machines offer two or more exercises in a single station to deliver more options in less space.

Life Fitness also complemented its premium strength training line, Signature Series, with the addition of new plate-loaded equipment. Six machines are now available, with a further six due for launch later this year.

- Concept2 previewed its dynamic indoor rower, with a prototype of the model that's due to launch in January 2011. Shorter than a standard indoor rower, with the flywheel beneath the seat, the footplate moves under pressure from the feet while the seat moves less – said to replicate more closely the feeling of being in a boat.
- Cybex launched its new Cytrek treadmill, offering a new interface and a range of console and deck combinations.
- Distributed by Fitness Options, the Helix Lateral Trainer – a brand new launch at LIW – is a self-powered piece of CV equipment with separate foot pedals that rotate both outwards and inwards to work hard-to-reach muscles such as the inner thighs and obliques. Also on show was the FitWalker, a small footprint treadmill designed for group classes.
- The Monark 928 E from IDASS is the latest cycle in the Monark range. It can

CONFERENCE ROUND-UP

FIA

The FIA unveiled the conclusions of the TwentyTen Industry Consultation at LIW, with the main findings including a target to expand career development planning to all 200,000-plus people who work in the fitness industry. According to FIA figures, only fitness instructors – who represent around 15 per cent of sector employees – have a career pathway.

Other statements arising from the consultation, which will form the basis of the FIA's five-year strategy for the sector, include the need to develop more profound consumer insights if the sector is to enhance its relevance to existing and potential users and break through the 12 per cent 'glass ceiling'.

IOU

Independent operators at LIW were invited to attend the Independent Operators Unite (IOU) programme of seminars free of charge.

Dave Wright, CEO of Creative Fitness Marketing, says: "A full day was allocated to expert panels designed

to provide a cross-sectional approach to helping independent clubs. It was a brilliant day with information on sales, marketing and retention and a very colourful secondary spend debate.

"Clear feedback was presented on how IOU can be even bigger in 2011 and the 300-plus audience provided a great networking platform to improve the unity of the independent operator, which was the aim of the conference."

REPs

More than 150 REPs members and guests attended the Register's National Convention, with keynote presentations from peak performance coach Jamie Edwards (Trained Brain) and Dr Cath Sanderson from Leeds Met University, who shared her insights on understanding eating behaviour.

The convention also offered a range of practical and interactive workshops, including an aerobics class on logical layering and learning by Cherry Baker from Professional Fitness and Education, and a workshop on Postural Analysis from FitPro.

store and measure heart rate and physiological response information via a USB port to Monark computer software. This is ideal for sports coaches, personal trainers, colleges or weight management programmes to precisely control the workload of the user.

- Gen3 Kinematics showcased the first pieces of MyoQuip equipment available in the UK. Ideal for sports conditioning and elite performance, the equipment allows users to actively train muscles throughout the full range of movement by offering varied levels of resistance throughout the exercise, avoiding strain on areas of relative weakness.
- milon exhibited its new wireless software, as well as previewing its FIBO Innovation Award-winning operating system – a full, highly flexible club management system with a particular focus on commercial aspects such as point of sale and secondary spend.
- EXF demonstrated how its new X-Cube can be adapted to any fitness area to offer a total body training experience. The X-Cube combines over 45 exercise disciplines including squatting,

rope pulling and monkey bars to work every muscle group. Each X-Cube can be made to bespoke measurements with a minimum floor space requirement of just under 7sq m.

- The X-Bike Interactive is the latest bike from Trixter, a collaboration with ►



Jordan displayed its FITKIT Pro suspension training system



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Demonstrations complemented product launches on the show floor

- ▶ gaming giant Sony Computer Entertainment. Users can accurately control their on-screen avatar in whatever racing game they choose. The result is a low-impact, total body workout where the user is totally immersed in the gaming experience.
- The CoreAlign System and The Aerosing were both exclusively demonstrated on the Dynamic Activity

FISH THERAPY

A fish pedicure, your feet dipped in a tank of water for 20 minutes while little fish remove the dead skin cells from your feet. It sounds rather unappealing, and to be honest slightly far-fetched. However, having written about it in the magazine (*HCMA* Aug 10, p82), when I realised it was being exhibited at LIW I was intrigued to give it a go.

The stand, with its three tanks full of little garra rufa fish, was certainly drawing the crowds – although many were simply standing there with noses wrinkled, point blank refusing to take the plunge. But once you get past the slightly odd idea of the treatment, in fact it's a rather enjoyable experience. No sense of nibbling – the fish don't, in any case, have teeth – in fact the sensation is best described as feeling as though your feet are bathing in sparkling water, the bubbles working over your skin and between your toes. Rather enjoyable after three days of

stand. The former, manufactured by Balanced Body, focuses on developing core stability for improved posture, balance and functional movement. The Aerosing represents a new generation of suspension training, with the addition of a pulley to the system.

- Jordan demonstrated how the FITKIT Pro suspension training system can bring together balance, flexibility and whole body stability in a time-, space- and cost-effective way. Jordan also showcased its new Studio Powerbags, with an extra handle for



The garra rufa fish gently remove dead skin cells from the feet

pounding the trade show floor at LIW. But what of the results?

Well, the science behind all this is that, in addition to gently removing dead skin cells, the fish also secrete the enzyme dithranol in their saliva, which has been shown to heal the skin and even help with conditions such as eczema and psoriasis. And I have to admit, my feet felt a lot smoother after my 20 minutes in the tank, with any remaining dead skin much easier to rub off than after a normal bath. An eyebrow-raising concept, perhaps, but not one to dismiss too quickly.

Kate Cracknell, managing editor, *HCMA*

FEEDBACK FROM THE SHOW

"LIW delivered new players with new ideas and sustained the buzz across all three days." *David Stalker, executive director, FIA*

"I think this year has been a really successful show – it's great to see that the industry is still demonstrating new and original ideas in the current climate. I was also more aware of the smaller suppliers due to the dedicated areas."

Kevin Yates, head of commercial development, Leisure Connection

"LIW 2010 was the ideal platform to celebrate our 30 years of business."

Linda Forster, marketing manager, Pulse Fitness

"LIW is the only show in the UK where companies can launch a new product to an informed audience." *Sean Thornton, UK sales director, X-Force*

"The show generated more than 100 qualified leads, new reseller opportunities both in the UK and Europe, and opened communication with many key contacts in the industry." *Jason McMahon, national sales manager, Balance Master*

even more flexibility – ideal for both circuits and group exercise.

software, lockers and nutrition

- Goal Accelerator is a new member growth system that helps members achieve their fitness goals. The system builds the relationship and support between the trainer and gym members by using a simple interface to create and assign programmes that track the members' progress. The system also gives them the support they need in a social and friendly way.
- Management software and services company Clarity launched its brand new fully-integrated Leisure Management System, ClarityLive. The point of sale interface gives leisure staff easy access to a range of resource management capabilities. These tools enable staff to complete tasks more quickly, accurately and cost-effectively.
- Xn Leisure launched its new self-service modules to improve leverage of users' existing resources, increasing profitability and efficiency.
- Garra Leisure launched its new Athena sports lockers. Specifically created for the leisure and sports industry, these lockers combine security with strength and practicality, offering resistance to vandalism and ease of cleaning, as well as high quality, pleasing aesthetics.
- Designed to keep you going after an intense gym workout, to stop you snacking between meals, or to replace an unhealthy meal, new Inch Loss bars from Ultrabody are nutritious, yoghurt-topped protein bars. Low in fat and calorie balanced, the bars help lower your GI intake.



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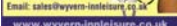
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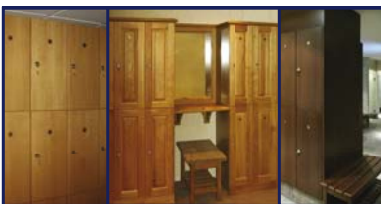
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lightweights

PENSIONERS SETTING WORKOUT EXAMPLES

Want to encourage older members across the threshold? (see also p3). Getting a fitness fanatic veteran to lead an exercise class for you, or simply set a good example, could be a solution.

Recently, the media has highlighted numerous cases where pensioners working out can inspire or encourage others to follow suit. Ida Wasserman, aged 102, from Florida, US, became the celebrity of BBC Three's *Are you Fitter Than a Pensioner?* when she showed off her intense workout to four unhealthy Brits. Elsewhere, Elena Tracevski, who lives in Bucharest, Romania, has – at the age of 105 – become Europe's oldest gym teacher, according to the *The Express*.

Closer to home, Gordon Smith, 88, from Barnsley, became the star of the *Yorkshire Post* when it was revealed that, having learned to swim in the local canal, he still takes the plunge nearly every day and has been a member of the Royton Leisure Centre for almost three decades.



LONDON'S FIRST OUTDOOR MASS YOGA EVENT



More than 100 people gathered in Leicester Square, London, at sunrise on 15 September to take part in the city's first mass outdoor yoga session. The event, organised by Central YMCA, formed part of the Healthy Heart of London day, which targeted local workers.

Wilhemina Crown, one of the participants described it as "great fun – given the right conditions, I'll grab any opportunity to detox my mind before a full day's work".

The initiative was inspired by a New York concept, which sees thousands of participants each summer take part in yoga sessions in Times Square.



FIREFIGHTERS LAUNCH EXERCISE CLASS

Fire stations in Coventry are now putting in place a series of health-focused family activities – from exercise groups to cooking classes – in an attempt to reduce the number of house fires in the city.

The classes may sound like an odd idea at first, but the West Midlands Fire Service has said that some people are so unfit that their reactions aren't quick enough when a fire breaks out.

Simon Shilton, fire service operations commander for Coventry, says: "We've had to rescue people who couldn't respond fast enough to a fire in another room or who got trapped because they couldn't get downstairs quick enough."

The activities will also address issues such as smoking and cooking greasy food in chip pans.

chinese fat rappers to get healthy

Qian Jin Zu He, a group of four heavyweight female rappers from China, became famous for songs such as *So What If I'm Fat?*

However, now the portly quartet have reportedly checked themselves in to a fat reduction hospital near Beijing and could stay there for up to a year to try and lose weight. Their treatment is said to include acupuncture in the morning to help reduce their appetite,

only 1,500 calories-worth of meals, and three hours of exercise a day including weight training and badminton.

The group's leader, Xiao Yang, told CNN: "We are growing older and obesity will definitely have a negative impact on our health."

The four found each other on the internet and formed the band in 2007 after being unable to find decent jobs because of their weight.



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