

health club management

JULY 2011

the export market

The lure of India for
the international
fitness franchise

talking retention

Melvyn Hillsdon on
using fitness staff as
a sales force

INTERVIEW

Paul Lorimer-Wing

easyGym's founder and joint
CEO on bringing 'easy' to fitness

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the contract question



The FIA's LinkedIn group has been alive with debate about the recent High Court judgement, welcomed by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), that contracts which bind customers to a membership period of more than 12 months are unfair to consumers. It's not the first time the fitness industry's had its knuckles rapped by the regulator, and in fact most operators already fall on the right side not only of this latest judgement but also of the OFT's 2002 'Guidance on unfair terms in health and fitness club agreements'.

But rather than simply meeting minimum legal requirements, might the time have come to take a more proactive stance, looking at ways of packaging our agreements to appeal to a broader cross-section of the population – the non-gym goers who are yet to be 'sold' on the value of our product? Even for seasoned gym members, you have to ask what it communicates about our faith in our own product when, from the outset, we rely on the negative tactics of long-term obligation for member retention.

If we don't believe we can bring about retention without contracts, we need to be asking some fundamental questions about the quality of our product – or at least our delivery of that product

It's not necessarily a case of getting rid of contracts altogether. Yes, the low-cost gyms have done away with them – their sheer affordability doing much to dissuade people from lapsing – and a large chunk of public sector revenue comes from 'pay as you go' custom. But for operators who use the guaranteed income of fixed-term memberships to plan annual investment, abandoning contracts altogether would be a very bold move. In any case, part four of the FIA's *Winning the Retention Battle* series found that, while prospects saw joining fees as unjustified, sectors such as mobile telephony are turning

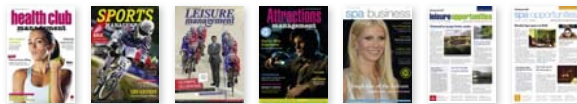
annual contracts into an accepted norm. Signing such a contract also motivated initial visit frequency – vital to creating an exercise habit. Arguably then, more operators might actually benefit from introducing contracts – but it must be done cleverly, with more creativity, flexibility and empathy for the consumer.

Contracts shouldn't be seen as a one-way agreement, for example, but as something in which the operator also has an obligation. When people join a club, they're buying a desired outcome. If a member fulfils their side of the deal – in terms of attendance and effort, perhaps – why shouldn't the club be held to fulfilling theirs, with the contract torn up if results aren't delivered? The fitness industry's answer to the tried and tested notion of 'results or your money back', this would surely be a compelling sales pitch.

Operators might also look at how they talk about contracts. Successful weight loss programmes such as WeightWatchers explain from the outset that results will be slow but steady and sustainable. Could health clubs overcome any contract objections by taking a similarly customer-centric approach, explaining that it will take 12 months for them to really help a new member achieve their goals?

Of course, it's then up to operators to deliver: in the battle to retain members, contracts mustn't be allowed to replace good service, an excellent product and the achievement of results. The onus should be on us to prove the value of our offering, not relying on contracts as our only retention tool. If we don't believe we can bring about retention without contracts, we need to be asking some fundamental questions about the quality of our product – or at least our delivery of that product.

Kate Cracknell, editor
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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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The FIBO innovation awards recognise first-class health and fitness technology. We showcase this year's three winners: Technogym, Cube Sports and Lamiflex

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Get fit with new extreme sport BrushBoarding, and lose weight in a virtual world

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



First steps: New entrants to the industry "need advice, not a sales pitch"

advice & support for trainees must start from day one

I was interested to read your 'Reality Check' article (*HCM* March 11, p50). When it comes to career advice, I often wonder if our industry is doing enough. I speak to people every day who are looking to find their niche in this exciting industry, and I'm shocked by the lack of support and genuine advice they've received. It saddens me to hear some of their stories.

I spoke today, for example, to a 30-year-old male with a personal interest in fitness, who was considering a new career path. His concern was the lack of funding and advice available to help him develop a new career. He felt he was being 'sold to' instead of being given proper advice – being offered packaged deals but no actual advice about the industry.

In addition, many people complete their qualifications with little idea of what to do next, resulting in them dropping out of the industry early.

I believe mentoring and support should start at the point of the initial enquiry with the fitness industry educator. Let's give people a head-start, ensuring they have the confidence to gain employment and build a successful career from day one.

We must cut the focus on sales and increase industry advice, with better links to available funding. The wave of unemployment and redundancies in the UK has created a large pool of fresh, intelligent people who we should be welcoming into our industry – but many are currently falling at the first hurdle.

adam simpson
career advisor, soho gyms academy

contribution of older people should not be underestimated

Colin Milner makes a number of excellent points in his article on Positive Ageing (*HCM* April 11, p48), particularly in relation to age apathy and the negative perceptions of the ageing process.

But what should also be recognised is the enormous contribution that older people themselves can bring to positive activities given the right infrastructure, availability and encouragement.

At SLM, through our brand Everyone Active, we've established a number of enormously successful exercise and ageing initiatives, ranging from outreach classes in venues such as sheltered housing and community halls to GP referral schemes.

Activities have included group exercise, badminton, tai chi, swimming and ballroom dancing. All have been embraced enthusiastically by our older customers, and their obvious enjoyment has in turn enthused and motivated the staff providing the resource.

This, I think, is the key to successful provision of facilities for older people – not to underestimate their own resourcefulness, their healthy sense of humour and their trust and respect both for their instructors and for their contemporaries in the classes.

While they are receiving instruction in these classes, it's worth remembering that they also have a lot to give.

anselm gurney
gm, slm (mid-suffolk leisure centre)



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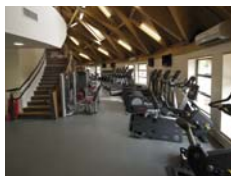


right directions to deliver new fia code

TOM WALKER

Right Directions, the health and safety management company, has been awarded a two-year contract to deliver the Fitness Industry Association's (FIA) new Code of Practice. The new code will assess health club and leisure centre operators on a series of criteria and covers statutory health and safety requirements relating to quality, standards and welfare.

Each venue that is assessed will receive a full written report under the new Code of Practice, with non-compliant sites provided with a comprehensive action plan to help address the issues.



One of the 'pods' will house the health club

nlc receives keys to the pods complex

TOM WALKER

The Pods – a multi-million pound leisure and sports facility being developed in Scunthorpe – has been handed over to North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) ahead of its July opening.

The new centre was designed by Andrew Wright, with S&P Architects acting as the project's delivery architects. Facilities will boast a large split-level, 85-station Life Fitness gym occupying one pod, with two of the largest domes housing the double pool, spectator area and six-court sports hall.

fitness first opens in highbury

TOM WALKER

Arsenal Football Club's former Highbury stadium in north London has become the home of operator Fitness First's latest club.

The £2.2m facility opened on 23 June and forms part of the Highbury Square Development.

The club offers 1,900sq m (20,000sq ft) of workout space and the glass roof covering the club's pool and spa area has been integrated into the estate's landscaped gardens.

Life Fitness and Technogym have supplied the club's equipment, while the group exercise studio and separate group cycling studios will offer a wide range of classes – including Zumba and Fitness First's own Get Fit with Mel B programme.

The new club also houses a freestyle area, where members can use the latest developments



The Fitness First club forms part of the Highbury Square project

in functional training fitness equipment and techniques, based around free movement as well as bodyweight exercises. Members can use the designated space and its kit – which includes ViPRs, TRX bands, kettlebells and Power Plates – either on their own or with the assistance of a personal trainer.

nuffield opens integrated wellbeing centre

TOM WALKER

Nuffield Health Fitness & Wellbeing has unveiled its new Health Clinic in Paddington, London. The 2,300sq m (25,000sq ft) integrated centre will give members and non-members access to both fitness and medical health facilities under one roof.

It will become Nuffield's 14th integrated facility and offers one of the largest medical clinics at 186sq m (2,000sq ft). Services at the £500,000 centre will offer full GP consultation, physiotherapy, health assessments, nutritional guidance and sports massage.

The fitness element includes a health club featuring a 49-station CV area (21 treadmills, 14 bikes, 14 cross-trainers), a free weights zone,



The centre was opened by Sally Gunnell (right)

resistance kit and TRX suspension training, as well as a vibration exercise unit.

The centre was officially opened by former Olympian Sally Gunnell.

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work starts on wakefield one

PETE HAYMAN

Work has commenced on the construction of Wakefield ONE – a new £10m swimming pool and fitness complex in Wakefield, West Yorkshire.

Willmott Dixon has been chosen to build the NPS North East-designed venue, which is due for completion next summer. Drivers Jonas Deloitte is project managing the development, which will include the creation of a six-lane, 25m pool, a 13m x 7m learner pool, a 100-station gym and a multi-use studio.

A spectator viewing area, an executive meeting room and a café will also form part of the complex, which will offer disabled access throughout. Work to prepare the site commenced on 6 June.

Wakefield Council leader Peter Box says: "The new sports facilities will be a great



The new £10m swimming and fitness complex will be built on Sun Lane

asset for the city, particularly coming so soon after the opening of the Hepworth Wakefield and Trinity Walk."

Drivers Jonas Deloitte assistant director Paul Denson adds: "Wakefield ONE will be open at just the right time to coincide with the London 2012 Olympics."

dll unveils plans for £12m facility

PETE HAYMAN

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has announced plans for a new 6,000sq m (64,583sq ft) facility in Farnham, Surrey, which is to feature the group's largest Amida Spa.

The £12m development will be located next to Farnham Rugby Club and will include a 1,013sq m (10,904sq ft) spa area with six treatment rooms offering therapies and massages. Other Amida Spa facilities will include four sauna rooms, a relaxation area, a nail studio, a spray tanning salon and experience rooms, as well as outdoor sauna cabins and a spa pool.

Elsewhere, the new DLL club in Farnham will offer eight outdoor tennis courts and an on-site physiotherapy and osteopathy clinic,



The new £12m complex will incorporate the group's largest Amida Spa

as well as a multi-purpose sports hall. A 25m swimming pool and separate children's pool, a 470sq m (5,059sq ft) DL Kids area and a 1,337sq m (14,391sq ft) gym with CV and resistance machines are also planned.

council reveals vision of new-look facility

TOM WALKER

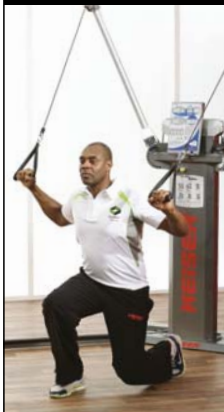
Sutton Council has unveiled the first vision of how Carshalton's Westcroft Leisure Centre will look once an extensive £11.3m revamp is completed. Work on the Hoca Practice-designed refurbishment will begin later this

year, and the complex will close in October to allow the project to be undertaken.

It will include an eight-lane swimming pool, a large multi-sports hall and a health club. A dance studio, café, IT facilities and a library will also be provided at the new-look venue.

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Hywel Griffiths
Physiotherapist and Director,
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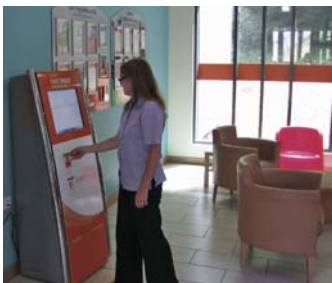
TOM WALKER

Leisure trust Edinburgh Leisure has signed a new five-year agreement with Gladstone Health and Leisure that will see Gladstone deliver its membership, ePOS and bookings software solutions.

The trust manages 32 venues across the Scottish capital and the partnership will see the companies working together until at least 2016.

The contract follows the implementation of Gladstone's new Software for Life programme, which aims to reduce leisure operators' capital spending by providing an annual maintenance programme that eliminates the need to pay for upgrading software in the future.

Scott Mackenzie, head of information and communications technology for Edinburgh



The new agreement will extend the partnership until at least 2016

Leisure, says: "The Software for Life model is very valuable to us and Gladstone's commitment to investing in the market, in technology and in its customers are key indicators of a successful future partnership."

cyq and edexcel sign partnership deal

TOM WALKER

Awarding body CYQ has teamed up with training and qualifications company Edexcel as part of plans to offer a programme of apprenticeships in the Active Leisure and Learning Sector. The two aim to provide the industry with a 'one-stop shop', offering employers and training providers who deliver apprenticeships access to a range of qualifications under one roof.

Lori Randall, director of business development for CYQ, says: "With Edexcel's experience of apprenticeships and CYQ's brand recognition within the sector for technical qualifications, we will hopefully make life easier for employers and training providers."



The programme will target apprentices in the sector

CYQ has also launched a new quality mark for continuous professional development (CPD) programmes. Training courses and workshops that meet CYQ's criteria will gain official endorsement from CYQ.

therapyworks and keiser agree partnership

MARTIN NASH

Therapyworks, a franchise company set up by physiotherapist Hywel Griffiths in July 2006, has appointed Keiser as its preferred fitness equipment supplier.

The business was established with the aim of allowing qualified physiotherapists to manage their own practice with the support of business and clinical experts.

Therapyworks unveiled its first franchise site in Pontypridd four years ago – a venue that includes a gym now equipped with Keiser's Functional Trainer.



Fitbug has signed a new deal with Anxa

fitbug signs four new agreements

TOM WALKER

Online personal health and wellbeing services company Fitbug Holdings has signed four new agreements which will see its customer base extended in the US, the Middle East and Europe.

A new partnership agreement has been made with Anxa, a provider of wellness and nutrition services in Europe and Asia.

Under the terms of the agreement, Fitbug's proprietary health and wellbeing technology will be marketed by Anxa's subsidiary, Ajourdhui.com – France's leading diet club.

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online service for club classes

TOM WALKER

A new service, Find My Workout, has been launched in London to help operators increase footfall and fill places in exercise classes.

The service allows users to sign up to classes online on a 'pay as you go' basis. Each gym or studio taking part has its own profile page, searchable by location and by types of class it offers. Clubs can include class descriptions, images, videos and user-submitted reviews on their personalised page to entice people to sign up.

Sean Parry, Find My Workout's co-founder and business development director, says the company is looking to expand and has so far partnered with 55 health clubs, most of which are independently-owned single site operators.

"We don't currently partner with the high-street chains, but may consider this in the



The service currently targets mainly independently owned facilities

future. Our focus has been on getting users in touch with specialist clubs.

"We're targeting 100 gyms and 2,000 classes for the London area in the near term. At the same time we will be expanding into other major UK cities, with an initial target of 50 gyms per non-London city."

rural space installs total gym machines

MARTIN NASH

Shrewsbury-based, independent holistic wellbeing studio Rural Space has installed Total Gym GTS machines, offering functional training programmes from the GRAVITY Training System.

The studio is the first of its kind in Shropshire, offering fitness, hypnotherapy and beauty treatments.

Owner/manager Vikki Heath says: "We run a full timetable of yoga, pilates, bootcamp circuits, group cycling and other studio-based classes.

"Members get access to everything on offer, while non-members can buy classes in packages. There's also the option of personal GRAVITY Training sessions."



GTS machines can be used to deliver more than 200 exercises

GRAVITY classes work numerous muscle groups, with the GTS able to be used for more than 200 individual exercises. The incline of the glideboard can be adjusted incrementally to match any fitness level.

healthworks invests in new star trac equipment

TOM WALKER

Healthworks Fitness Studio in Stratford-Upon-Avon, owned and operated by personal trainer Jason Ziel, has invested £12,000 to refurbish the gym floor with the Star Trac HumanSport range of cable equipment.

Originally opened in 1994 by Jason and his late father Ray, the 230sq m (2,500 sq ft) independent club currently has more than 300 active members. Ziel hopes the refurbishment will not only expand training options for existing members, but also attract new members.



Exercise is Medicine

The growing trend within the Health and Fitness Industry is health outcomes and driving behaviour change to increase physical activity. Over the next few years we will continue to see a changing landscape, with a strong focus on increasing physical activity levels both inside and outside of the gym facility.

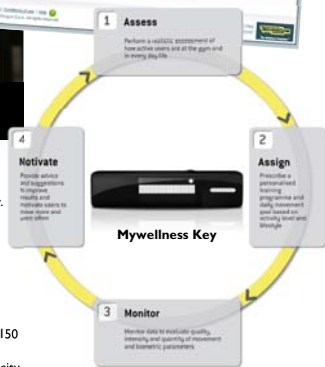
Rising obesity, an increase in sedentary lifestyles and living in a convenient society have engineered 'movement' out of our lifestyles. As a result, this has had an impact on the increased risk of cardiovascular disease and other illnesses, having a huge economic impact on the NHS. According to Professor Stephen Blair, "Physical inactivity is arguably one of the leading public health problems in the world".

The Department of Health's Let's Get Moving paper highlights that the

NHS spends £3,000 every minute on combating illness which could be prevented by increased physical activity.

There has never been a more important time to engage communities in physical activity. As an industry, we are in the perfect position to provide evidence based intervention by embracing 'Exercise is Medicine'.

Recent physical activity guidelines suggest we each need to participate in 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic activity. Two important points to note are that we are talking about physical activity, not exercise! Secondly, the importance of the intensity of the activity is paramount in driving metabolic rates. The **Mywellness Key** has been positioned to measure this and provide the evidence required to show improvement.



The **mywellness key** measures the intensity and duration of physical activity over the course of a normal day, wherever you are: at home, in the gym, at work, and in your free time. It provides immediate visual feedback, constantly motivating you and showing you your daily goals - simply 'fill your key with movement'.

The **mywellness key** uses 'moves' as the measure of physical activity. You can collect 'moves' by training on Technogym equipment indoors and when performing physical activity outdoors, via the built in accelerometer. This technology allows you to understand just how much you are moving and the level of intensity.

As a Global Partner of Exercise is Medicine, Technogym are ideally positioned and have a vast array of technology to help you measure, monitor and manage structured exercise, physical activity and health data.



INNOVATIVE PARTNER – WEST LOTHIAN LEISURE

West Lothian Leisure launches mywellness key for community wellness programmes

Xcite West Lothian Leisure has launched a trial of the mywellness key across their **GP referral programme, Ageing Well, Child Health and Personal Training Programme**.

"We issue the mywellness key on day 1 of activity to create baseline data and track through their programme. With our **GP referral programme** lasting 12 weeks the mywellness key provides a great opportunity to measure and monitor participants through the programme". Comments Chris Dickson, Health & Fitness

Manager for Xcite West Lothian Leisure.

"The key benefit of the mywellness key is to monitor all activity rather than simply activity at the facility. Over traditional forms of tracking such as questionnaire and biometrics at start and finish of the programmes – it gives the whole picture as well as bringing about behaviour change – rewarding progress or highlighting areas for improvement".

"Most importantly it provides medical professionals the evidence based data to show how physical activity levels have improved to increase community wellness, encourage on-going physical activity and access funding streams".

To find out more information and understand how the mywellness key could help you to monitor and motivate your users, please call: 01344 300236, email: uk_info@technogym.com or visit: www.technogym.com/mywellnesskey

in brief...

fitness hut for portugal

Nick Courtts, the former CEO of Holmes Place Iberia, is to launch a new budget health club venture called Fitness Hut.

The concept will be marketed as a chain of 'premium low-cost' clubs, with the first sites scheduled to open in Lisbon, Portugal, during the last quarter of 2011.

Courtts has secured private equity backing for the venture and says that "multiple sites" are being targeted for a roll-out in 2012.

crunch corporate site

Crunch opened its latest company-owned facility in April, in the San Francisco Bay area.

Crunch Daly City is the 23rd club owned by Crunch itself; other sites are operated on a franchise basis.

Facilities at the 2,500sq m (27,000sq ft) club include a gym equipped by Star Trac, Precor, Freemotion, Hoist and Hammer Strength, a separate PT area, a large group exercise studio, an indoor cycling studio, and a Kids' Crunch childcare area.

lifeguard course for saudi

The first lifeguards in the city of Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia, have been awarded the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ) from the Royal Life Saving Society.

The city is home to the world's biggest oil company. Saudi Aramco Oil Company offers a range of leisure facilities in the area – including three swimming pools, 32 tennis courts, an indoor sports complex and a beach facility. The pools and beach alone attract 2,500 customers every week.

move it programme

The first Move IT small group training programme has launched in the Netherlands, at Health Club Veenendaal. It includes education, programming, marketing and equipment for a Move IT zone.

"The small group training model is a great way to get maximum returns from your functional training zone," says MOVE IT's Tommy Matthews.

gym101 opens in new zealand

Gym 101 The Garrison opened in Mount Maunganui, New Zealand, in May.

Created by owner and personal trainer Robert Binns, the 'no frills' gym measures 125sq m (1,345sq ft). Offering small group and one-to-one personal training, it specialises in kettlebells, TRX



No nonsense: Delivering results via full-body strength and conditioning

suspension training. Airfit suspension training and Total Gym GRAVITY Training Systems. It also offers a full range of free weights and power lifting, suspension yoga, Olympic rings, heavy ropes, MMA conditioning and sports-specific training for a range of sports.

Said to be a 'no nonsense' functional training offering with no TVs, treadmills or cross-trainers, the club has been set up to deliver results via full-body strength and conditioning, body weight and core training. It already caters for a wide range of clientele, from a local physiotherapy group to national and international rugby players.

There are no joining fees and no contracts. Personal training sessions cost NZ\$60 an hour for between one and six people.

just fit: diabetes accreditation

A club owned by German operator JUST FIT is the first in the country to be awarded a Quality Seal for Diabetics, developed by the German Diabetics Society and independent technical testing agency TÜV Rheinland.

The remainder of JUST FIT's 14-strong chain is now set to be certified.

Frank Böhme, founder of JUST FIT, says: "We will train our personal coaches to assist diabetics, helping them to exercise efficiently and according to their individual needs in order to improve the quality of their lives."

JUST FIT is the leading chain in the metropolitan Rhine area, with more than 27,000 members.



Frank Böhme of JUST FIT (centre) receives the new Quality Seal

healthcity to take over more fitness first clubs

HealthCity and Fitness First have announced a proposed takeover by HealthCity of all 45 Fitness First clubs in France, Spain and Italy.

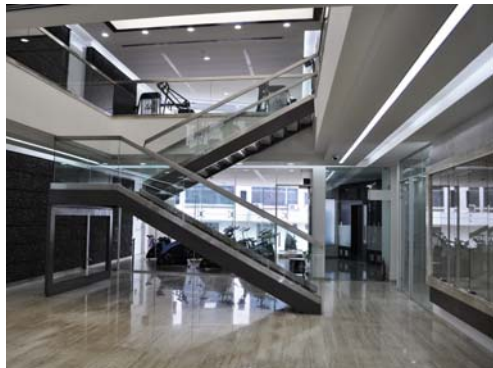
The addition of these clubs to its portfolio – 12 in France, 16 in Spain and 17 in Italy – will take HealthCity over the 250 club mark, making it European fitness industry leader.

Rene Moos, HealthCity CEO, says: "With the addition of these Fitness First clubs, we are now present in seven countries. We perceive

opportunities to build up a leadership position in the new countries as well."

Fitness First is shifting its focus to developing markets, particularly in Asia; the sale of its clubs in France, Spain and Italy is seen as a logical continuation of the sale of its Benelux clubs to HealthCity in November of last year.

All 23 former Fitness First clubs in the Netherlands have been rebranded HealthCity; rebranding of the 29 Fitness First clubs in Belgium and Luxembourg was due for completion last month.



The existing Zela Luxury Health Club will be rebranded as Holmes Place

holmes place enters india

Holmes Place has announced plans to launch in India on a franchise basis, with the signing of a master franchise agreement in April 2011 and the first club set to open next month.

Located in Bangalore, the site is an existing club currently operating under the Zela Luxury Health Club brand and owned by Holmes Place's new Indian partner, Health and Wellness India.

When it re-opens as Holmes Place, the club will offer a gym – equipped by Life Fitness, Precor and Cybex – a group exercise studio, group cycling studio, indoor swimming pool and a spa. Services will include personal training, nutritional counselling, physiotherapy and sports

medicine. Membership will cost around €600 a year, or €940 for a couple.

In terms of expansion plans, Holmes Place Group CEO Jonathan Fisher says: "We're not in a 'rush' mentality for India. We prefer to focus on quality not quantity when it comes to our club portfolio.

Having said that, the Indian market is of unprecedented size for Holmes Place and, if you bear in mind that the franchise in Israel opened 18 clubs in a 10-year period, you begin to see the potential."

Holmes Place is already planning the opening of a second club in India at the end of 2011 and also aims to expand into Brazil, Russia and China through franchise arrangements.

'out of club' initiatives for diR

Barcelona market leader DiR is rolling out a range of new initiatives designed to extend its reach beyond the four walls of its clubs, and to build the social aspect of being a DiR member.

The first is the new DiR social network. An update of its existing dating site for members – DiR Singles – DiR Singles & Friends launched at the end of last month. Designed with all members in mind, the new network encourages socialising as well as dating – and also helps DiR understand its members better. It includes groups – such as Parties,

Cycling, Trekking, Gourmet, Running, Urban Sports, Adventure – so members can meet others with similar interests. The site also has discussion forums, a marketplace and an events calendar.

DiR is also preparing to launch its new DiR Virtual offering, with new videos, content and enhanced website usability. Members can access information and advice away from the gym – for free.

Finally, the third annual Sant Cugat DiR road race took place last month, with around 2,000 participants taking part in the 5km and 10km races.

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gll appoints new marketing head

TOM WALKER

Leisure trust GLL has named Iain Morrison as its new head of marketing and communications.

Morrison joins the trust from VisitBritain, where he held the role of head of global campaign marketing.

He will be responsible for GLL's marketing strategy and has also been tasked with improving GLL's presence across social media and digital platforms.



(left to right) Povey, Bagwell and Sutcliffe join Freedom Leisure's sports development team

sports development staff for freedom leisure

TOM WALKER

Freedom Leisure has recruited three new members of staff to help drive its sports development programme.

Richard Bagwell joins as group sports development manager and will be based at the group's head office, working closely with its 29 clubs across Kent and Sussex. Sarah Povey joins from the Youth Sport Trust as community sports development officer. And Holly Sutcliffe joins as community sports development officer for the Mid Sussex area.

ihrsa adds to european board

TOM WALKER

New appointments have been made to the IHRSA's European board. Christian Pierar, chair of the Belgian Fitness Federation and a 31-year industry veteran, became a full IHRSA board member. He was previously the board's special advisor for Europe.

Jasmin Kirstein, owner/founder of My Sportlady Munich and a 27-year industry veteran, was also elected to the board.

Swiss prize-winner Kathi Fleig, the owner of two David Gyms in Zurich, won the European Super Cup prize 2010 for best fitness centre. A triathlete, Fleig recently opened her second club.

new chair for roehampton

TOM WALKER

Roehampton Club has announced the appointment of Chris Blackhurst as chair.

Blackhurst, a Cambridge University law graduate, has spent most of his career in journalism. Since 2002, he has been the *Evening Standard's* City editor and this year was named Business Journalist of the Year in the London Press Club awards.

He's also heavily involved in the arts and charity work, sitting on several boards – currently, he is also a director of Kingston's Rose Theatre.

Located in south London, Roehampton Club is one of London's premier multi-sport members' clubs, and recently completed a £10m refurbishment project.

The club's extensive fitness offering includes a 25m indoor swimming pool, an



Blackhurst: Business Journalist of the Year – now Roehampton chair

outdoor pool, and a large, fully-equipped gym supplied by Technogym.

Marc Newey, CEO at Roehampton Club, says: "The role will see Chris oversee a board of 12 directors and is fundamental to the club's good governance, helping to secure the next generation of members."

leisure people among queen's honours

TOM WALKER

A number of representatives from the active leisure industry are among the 965 that have been recognised for their contribution in the 2011 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

StreetGames chief executive officer Jane Ashworth is one of the figures to receive an OBE, along with John Amaechi, the first UK-born player to play in the US National Basketball Association. Amaechi received his OBE for his work as trustee and patron of UK

Sport's Charity International Development through Sport initiative.

Meanwhile, Sheffield International Venues chief executive Stephen Brailey was awarded an MBE for services to the leisure industry.



Steve Brailey, CEO of Sheffield International Ventures, is now an MBE

Brailey says: "I was knocked off my feet when I found out about the award. It was a huge surprise and I was completely lost for words. It is not just about me though, and credit must go to everyone I work with."

escape appoints gray as new marketing manager

TOM WALKER

Fitness equipment supplier Escape Fitness has appointed Gina Gray as its new marketing manager.

Taking up her new role with immediate effect, she has been tasked with leading the

company's marketing and web team. Gray's background is mainly in consumer electronics, having joined Escape Fitness from Indesit company where she was trade marketing manager. Her previous roles also include a stint at Fujitsu Siemens.

PEOPLE PROFILE

INDEPENDENT OPERATOR FOCUS

jason matthews

Matthews owns the Ultimate Physiques gym in Castleford and recently received a commendation from HRH The Duke of Edinburgh for his work in the leisure sector

How many years have you worked in the health and fitness industry?

I've been running Ultimate Physiques with my wife, Donna, since 2002 – so nine years. Prior to that I was a fitting inspector at a copperworks. But I used to be a competitive bodybuilder, so leaving the factory to start up a gym was a natural progression for me.

Could you describe the club?

The club is divided into two: a mixed martial arts (MMA) centre and a more traditional health club. The MMA side offers an 18ft boxing ring and a large, padded group studio which can host jiu jitsu, judo, karate and aikido. On the gym side, we have 105 pieces of resistance kit, 40 CV stations and all the other stuff you'd find in a typical gym.

What's your typical day-to-day?

I have part-time staff who come in during the morning, as well as later in the day, to cover while I do personal training with members. I also take care of the running of the club – banking, stock checks, ordering stock, making sure the staff know their roles for their shifts and so on. I work around 60 hours a week, but I have a day off every Sunday and I also try and keep Thursday and Friday nights free.

Any plans to open a second site?

Not at this time. I have friends who run second clubs and they don't seem to run as well as the first ones. I think it's

because they physically can't be at both sites at the same time. It would also be tricky for me because any new club would have to be in a different field – I certainly wouldn't want to intrude on the area that I'm already working in, as all I'd be doing would be creating competition for myself.

How do you see the emergence of budget gyms affecting the sector?

I think they will be a flash in the pan. I think these businesses have jumped on the idea that, in the current climate, most people won't be able to pay £40 a month for a gym membership. They used that as a starting point and have gone to the extreme with their £100-a-year memberships. But I think they'll be in trouble once they realise how much it actually costs to operate a gym and really take care of a member.

I had a budget gym open close by and initially lost a few members to it, but they came back very quickly once they realised just how little they got for their money. Machines were down, the place wasn't cleaned on a regular basis, etc.

Do you think there's enough support for independent clubs?

No, not at all – but it is getting better. People like Dave Wright have done great work, and his IOU initiative is a great scheme that should have been done 15 years ago. The way it introduces independent operators to large suppliers is a great help. That alone makes IOU a wonderful initiative. It's a great forum for us all to come together and share ideas and practices.

What drives you?

To be the best I can be, as well as working to create different bodies and shapes – sitting down with someone and being able to advise them on how to improve their fitness.

Favourite life motto or quote?

It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice.

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Matthews receives his award from Prince Phillip



a vision for a healthier world

meredith poppler • vice president of industry growth, ihrsa

In March, all 100 members of the US Senate signed Resolution 97, affirming the importance of exercise and physical activity as a way of combating obesity, reducing chronic disease and lowering healthcare costs.

In May, I and around 60 industry leaders continued this drive and took our sector's message of 'healthy lifestyle and primary prevention' to US lawmakers in Washington, DC. Every single senator, member of congress and congressional staff member I spoke with agreed with our message.

However, we still have a tough battle ahead – and not only in the US. According to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) – an international organisation helping governments tackle the economic, social and governance challenges of a globalised economy – obesity rates in the UK are increasing faster than in most developed countries, and the proportion of people overweight is projected to rise another 10 per cent over the next decade.

Thankfully, evidence shows that primary prevention, healthy lifestyles and doctors prescribing exercise can offer a solution: the OECD says that individual prevention programmes could avert up to 40,000

deaths from chronic disease in the UK each year. Deaths averted could increase to 70,000 if interventions were combined in a comprehensive prevention strategy. An organised programme of counselling for obese people by family GPs would also lead to an annual gain of over 100,000 years of life in good health.

In 2007, a report commissioned by Transport for London reviewed 17 studies looking at the relationship between physical activity and employee absenteeism/employee productivity. It found that: workplace health promotion schemes can lead to increases in physical activity and reductions in absenteeism; workplace exercise intervention programmes can lead to long-term increases in levels of physical activity and reductions in absenteeism; counselling sessions to promote physical activity/dietary change can lead to self-reported increases in physical activity and observed increases in fitness; and physical activity levels affect both short-term (up to a year) and long-term (over a year) healthcare costs.



Workplace health interventions benefit businesses

IHRSA is now working with the OECD's Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) in a bid to ensure that government-supported initiatives to increase physical activity include a combination of strong support from organisational leaders, ad campaigns to promote the benefits of exercise, flexible opportunities and financial incentives for regular exercise, and elimination of financial barriers (eg the issue of VAT).

To stimulate greater levels of physical activity, a multi-faceted approach is required: it must be encouraged by every sector of the population, including government, workplace, insurance, medical and domestic.

ask the experts..... recovery from natural disasters

With natural disasters occurring around the world, what steps should a health club that's been affected take to begin the recovery process? Richard Beddie, CEO of Fitness New Zealand, offers his advice on this timely topic:

"Responding to a national disaster is all about prioritisation. The extent of the damage to the club and the region's infrastructure will determine these priorities. You may have to go through a simple clean-up or find new premises.

"One thing that should be at the top of the list in all circumstances is staff. Make sure they feel safe and that their home life is as secure as possible. Not only will every staff member's situation be different (some may be relatively unaffected, others may have lost their



Businesses need a clear strategy to deal with disasters like earthquakes

homes or loved ones), but how they react to this will vary considerably. The workplace may be one of the few places where there's any sense of normality for them for some months. However, until people feel safe in their home life, their

ability to constructively add value to any recovery process of a club is hindered.

"Another important consideration is preparing for an insurance claim. Before starting any remedial work, photos should be taken and evidence recorded. For business more significantly affected, a loss of business or business interruption claim may also need to be prepared.

"Of course this assumes the club has the correct type and level of insurance. It's a timely reminder to ensure that the club is insured for not only the likely but also the unlikely; for not only its physical assets but also for business interruption and depopulation."

Read more answers to this question at ihrsa.org/industryleader



The Ego Wellness Resort: Clients' needs are identified using Club 2.0 software

ego: best practice in italy

Hans Muench, IHRSa's European director, reports on a recent trip to Italy:

"In preparation for IHRSa's European Congress in Milan this October, I visited several clubs in Italy recently, including one remarkable facility, Ego Wellness Resort in the town of Lucca, Tuscany.

"Owner Renato Malfatti has had a club in this medieval town for 28 years and has been in his present location for 14 years; he's now planning to take over a community facility inside the walled part of the city."

An extensive event programme at the club includes parties, sporting events and

a community focus. Outreach activities and promotion are used instead of advertising, particularly in the summer.

Using Technogym's Club 2.0 software, Malfatti's team breaks down clients' interests and motivations into six areas: Balance, Move, Shape, Power, Sport and Fun. Based on the initial analysis, a programme and activities are selected.

A day spa, all-weather pool, group personal training area (featuring TRX), rehab, circuit training and a bar/restaurant all serve to create an atmosphere that encourages members and guests to feel at home.

in brief...

uk industry report

The 2011 FIA State of the UK Fitness Industry Report, published by The Leisure Database Company, reveals that the fitness industry is standing strong despite the downward economic trend (see also p22).

The industry has maintained a total market value (public and private sectors combined) of £3.81bn, comparable to 2010's total market value. However, since the start of the recession in 2008, the industry has grown its total market value by 4 per cent, increased the member base by 2 per cent and increased the number of fitness facilities by 1.7 per cent.

The 2011 report indicates that the industry has experienced a small but not unexpected dip in membership levels of 0.3 per cent, and a small net loss of fitness facilities.

Growth has been driven by a good performance from public fitness operators. The public sector saw growth across three key performance indicators: increasing sites open by 20, a growth in membership numbers of 2 per cent and a growth in market value of 5.8 per cent. Low-cost operators have also contributed to the performance.

healthcity & fitness first

Dutch health club chain Health City announced on May 27 that it has reached an agreement with Fitness First to acquire all of the latter's clubs in France, Spain and Italy. This now gives Health City a presence in seven European countries. Fitness First plans to focus its expansion in the Asia-Pacific region.

events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/meetings

14 July 2011

The Winning Triad: Personal Training, Health Clubs & Medicine – webinar with Phil Kaplan, president/owner, Fitness 21

1-3 September 2011

12th Annual IHRSa / FITNESS BRASIL Latin American Conference & Trade Show – São Paulo, Brazil

27-30 October 2011

11th Annual IHRSa European Congress – Milan, Italy

14-17 March 2012

IHRSa's 31st Annual International Convention & Trade Show – Los Angeles, California

new arthritis research

Obese adults with arthritis are 44 per cent more likely to be physically inactive than obese people who do not suffer from the painful disease that causes inflammation and stiffness of the joints, according to a new report.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* for May 20, arthritis is common in adults who are obese, and arthritis-related joint pain may reduce or discourage physical activity among obese adults. The report says that arthritis affects 35.6 per cent of obese adults in the US and that it may be a "potential barrier" that prevents the exercise that could lead to weight loss and help make people feel better.

ABOUT IHRSa

Founded in 1981, the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association is the only global trade association, representing nearly 10,000 health and fitness facilities and suppliers worldwide.

To learn how IHRSa can help your business thrive, visit ihrsa.org. Locate a quality IHRSa club at www.healthclubs.com

identifying potential

IHRSA's new 2011 International Report offers insight into growth markets around the world

The 2011 IHRSA International Report: *Size & Scope of Key Health Club Markets* focuses on the health club industry in Asia-Pacific, with a snapshot of key markets in Europe.

"This report is ideal for anyone looking for credible data about international markets poised for growth," says Melissa Rodriguez, IHRSA's research manager. "It examines membership penetration rates, market size, market potential, leading club companies and business models, economic outlook and much more."

The following data on key European markets is taken from the report:

france

With a market value of €2.4bn, France has nearly four million members at 2,940 clubs, paying average monthly fees of €50 – a price that's remained steady since 2006. Leading chains account for 12.4 per cent of facilities, while roughly 75 per cent of clubs are independently owned.

Women-only clubs are popular – Curves and Lady Moving have 143 and 85 clubs respectively – and group fitness is more popular in France than in any other European country. Two-thirds of members participate in classes and over half of clubs offer Les Mills programming.

However, high VAT rates (19.6 per cent) leave clubs with low profit margins, and very little personal training takes place outside the urban markets of Paris/the French Riviera. Nevertheless, 85 per cent of French residents – and rising – live in cities.

Unemployment is still rising, but France's economy, the second largest in Europe, grew by 1.6 per cent in 2010.

germany

The German market reached 7.3 million members in 2010 – up from 6.54 million in 2008 – with €3.9bn revenue from over 6,700 for-profit and non-profit clubs. Total market penetration is 9.6 per cent.

Owner-operated, independent sites account for 74.6 per cent of clubs, while



Group fitness is more popular in France than in any other European country

around 2.8 million consumers train in multi-club facilities.

Leading players account for 19.1 per cent of clubs, and three models prevail: budget clubs (roughly 10 per cent of clubs), led by McFit; women-only (7.7 per cent), led by MrsSporty and CaloryCoach; and full-service clubs (7.5 per cent). The latter often encompass distinct brands and/or programming: market leader Fitness First offers clubs for women only, for the corporate crowd, and a high-end model; Joyco offers franchises such as women-only and medical/wellness; and Kieser Training integrates a medical and wellness component into most of its clubs.

GDP per capita increased from €23,791 in 2009 to €27,100 in 2010.

italy

With 8,300 facilities, Italy leads Europe by number of clubs, with total revenues of (€2.8bn). Its 5.2 million members pay an average of €45 a month, a price that's fallen over the years due to increased competition. The market is also very fragmented: leading companies account for only 1.8 per cent of the total market.

Due to the economy, downward pressure on monthly fees has created opportunities for the budget club model. At the same time, the popularity of programming among Italians may help facilitate growth for full-service clubs.

GDP real growth rate rebounded to 1.1 per cent in 2010, after declining by 5.1 per cent in 2009, but unemployment levels are still rising.

spain

Spain ranks second globally in terms of number of members – nearly eight million across 5,800 clubs. Approximately 19.7 per cent of the population are health club members, with a total market size of €3.8bn.

The top 10 commercial companies draw 22.2 per cent of private sector fees: 30 Minutes, Curves, Fitness First, Grupo Body Factory, Grupo DiR, Holmes Place, Metropolitan, O2 Centro Wellness, Reebok Sports Club, Virgin Active. Express circuits occupy a distinct niche, led by Curves and 30 Minutes.

Spain is expected to be the one of the last developed countries to recover from the global financial crisis.

united kingdom

Nearly 6,000 clubs generate €4.2bn in revenue and serve 7.4 million members. Market penetration is 12.1 per cent, and 6.9 million consumers claim to exercise at least 30 minutes, three times a week.

Leading players – typically full-service, multi-club chains – account for 10.1 per cent of clubs. However, low-cost clubs have experienced notable growth.

The UK has the third largest economy in Europe after Germany and France. Due to the size of its financial sector, the UK was hit hard by the financial crisis. However, GDP per capita was €26,487 in 2010, up from €24,279 in 2009.

The 2011 IHRSA International Report is available for purchase at the IHRSA Store – ihrsa.org/store

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Nuffield Health, Newbury



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STATE OF THE INDUSTRY



The fitness industry stands strong despite the downward economic trend, reports David Stalker, CEO of the FIA



Recent figures from *The 2011 State of the UK Fitness Industry* report show that the industry has maintained a total market value of £3.81bn (see also HCM June 11, p8).

Despite being the first static performance in 10 years, achieving an overall flat performance during this tough period demonstrates how the industry has become an indispensable commodity. While other sectors are declining, we are innovating, influencing and improving our service to respond to a challenging economic environment, where newborn consumer expectations are evident.

It's also been a great year for investment going into the industry. An estimated £250m has been pumped into the public sector through trusts, in-house teams and leisure management companies, and this has increased participation, membership and market value in this sector. A similar level of investment has gone into the high-end and low-cost brands across the private sector.

growth areas

Since the start of the recession in 2008, our industry has grown its total market value by 4 per cent and increased the member base by 2 per cent, while

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

- Total market value (public and private sectors combined): £3.81bn, sustained from 2010 and up 4 per cent since 2008
- 11.9 per cent of the UK population are members of a health club or publicly-owned fitness facility
- Total industry membership base down 0.3 per cent to 7.3 million over the past 12 months – but a 2 per cent increase since 2008
- 149 new public and private fitness facilities opened in the 12 months to 31 March 2011, up from 122 in 2010 and 114 in 2009
- 125 public and private fitness facilities closed in the reported period
- Total number of UK fitness facilities: 5,852 – down from 5,885 in 2010 but up by 1.7 per cent since 2008



Budget chains such as The Gym account for 4 per cent of all members

increasing the number of fitness facilities by 1.7 per cent. A total of 11.9 per cent of the UK population are now registered as members of a health and fitness club or publicly-owned fitness facility.

In the past year, there has been a small but anticipated drop in membership levels (0.3 per cent) and a small net loss of facilities, down from 5,885 to 5,852. However, overall the industry has maintained its strong position, according to the figures produced by The Leisure Database Company (TLDC).

The performance has been largely attributed to the public sector, which saw growth across three key performance indicators: an increase in the number of sites open (up 20), a growth in membership numbers (up 2 per cent) and a growth in market value of 5.8 per cent.

Public sector operators are going well beyond their traditional leisure remit and are embracing public health initiatives that deliver on numerous policy agendas. They have benefited from a period of sustained investment, improved facilities and enhanced service levels. Intelligent marketing is now packaging a wide range of the additional facilities into an exciting consumer proposition and delivering that right into the heart of community health.

Meanwhile, for the first time this year, emerging low-cost gyms were indexed on the report, demonstrating their impact

on the sector. As anticipated, budget gyms have driven an increase in fitness-only and fitness-and-studio club openings. The low-cost model now represents 4 per cent of the total number of fitness members. These clubs' membership gains are welcomed as a way of growing and developing the industry, expanding the reach of the sector. We fully expect well-run, well-financed models to continue to stimulate the low-cost end of the market.

future potential

As our industry evolves away from differentiation based on public versus private sector and towards a market in which the segmentation is more about high-end, low-cost and niche clubs, a clear customer proposition is more important than ever. The ever-more competitive environment brought about by recent acquisitions, both in the UK and in Europe, further drives this need for clear brand propositions.

Our industry has matured. It's been one of the toughest years in our history, but with increased public health awareness of the importance of physical activity and a three-year industry strategy in place, there's real opportunity for sector growth ahead. Industry data such as this State of the Industry report is the sort of evidence we need to benchmark and drive the industry forward.

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Muscle Targeting: The unique movement pattern of the Arc Trainer guarantees that the motion engages with the quads and glutes to enhance effective calorie burn. The feature of the long input arms and forward outboard handles allows the user to push harder with the upper body while also engaging lower body muscles.

Effective Calorie Burn: Scientifically proven to be up to 16% more effective at burning calories than rival cross trainers and ellipticals, the Arc Trainer focuses on working those muscles that demand the highest levels of energy. The Arc Trainer is also load dependent, which means that resistance is scaled to the user's weight, providing the perfect workout.

Three Machines in One: The Arc Trainer offers both broad incline and resistance ranges to provide the user with a complete workout targeting strength, power, endurance, cardio and weight loss. The 'Same Side Forward' movement ensures that users always maintain optimal posture during exercise.

Arc Trainer Audio Coach: Available as a free download through the CYBEX website and iTunes, the Audio Coach provides users of all abilities with a series of informative personal training programs to specifically support users of the Arc Trainer.



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Call us today at 0845 6060 228 to find out how CYBEX can make a difference in your facility, or visit us at www.cybexintl.com. For further information on the Arc Trainer, visit www.arctrainer.com.

JULY

13 | The FIA FLAME Conference

Summary

This conference encompasses motivational discussions and seminars alongside the FLAME Awards.

Web www.fia.org.uk

AUGUST

11-14 | IDEA World Fitness Convention

Venue Los Angeles, California, US

Summary

More than 5,000 fitness professionals from around the world attend this five-day event featuring hundreds of sessions taught by world-renowned fitness presenters and many guest speakers. The IDEA Fitness & Wellness Expo involves more than 200 companies.

Web www.idealift.com/world

SEPTEMBER

1-3 | 12th Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show

Venue São Paulo, Brazil

Summary

Fitness Brasil is the health and wellness industry's premier conference and trade show in Latin America, with sessions on trends shaping the Latin American fitness and wellness industry.

Web ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil

6-8 | BASES Annual Conference

Venue University of Essex, UK

Summary

The title of this year's British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences conference is 'Fatigue: An interdisciplinary approach'. Perspectives, evidence and opinion will be heard from leading fatigue researchers, to stimulate fresh discussion in this important field of sports science.

Web www.bases.org.uk/

BASES-Annual-Conference

7-10 | SPATEC Fall, North America

Venue Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel, Dana Point, California, US

Summary

SPATEC is a three-day forum of one-on-one meetings between corporate spa owners and directors with design/management companies and leading spa suppliers and vendors.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com



Leisure Industry Week caters for all sectors of out-of-home leisure

12-14 | Beyond Beauty Paris

Venue Paris, France

Summary

An international exhibition for all beauty professionals. An opportunity to maximise professional networking at meetings, summits and expert conferences designed to highlight the latest challenges facing the industry.

Web www.beyondbeautyparis.com

14-16 | Health+Fitness Business Expo with Interbike

Venue Sands Expo & Convention Center, Las Vegas, US

Summary

Co-locating the Health+Fitness Business Expo with the Interbike International Bicycle Expo in adjacent expo rooms gives attendees an opportunity to interact with suppliers and manufacturers from both segments of the fitness industry. Health+Fitness Business also features seminars from industry experts.

Web www.healthandfitnessbiz.com

20-22 | Leisure Industry Week

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK

Summary

LIW is the UK's largest and most influential exhibition for the leisure industry, catering for all sectors of out-of-home leisure activity, attracting thousands of leisure professionals. Spanning seven sectors, each area is designed to highlight the latest trends and innovation available to operators, helping them to attract more customers and to keep them coming back more often.

Web www.liw.co.uk

22-25 | SIBEC North America

Venue Marina del Rey, California, US

Summary

SIBEC North America is a one-on-one meeting forum between 70 of America's leading owners, operators, CEOs and COOs of health clubs, recreation, sports and fitness organisations, with around 85 leading executives from key supplier companies nationwide.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

OCTOBER

5-7 | European Fitness Summit

Venue Barcelona, Spain

Summary

The European Fitness Summit offers leaders in the fitness, wellness and health industry a place to meet – an event for high-ranking decision-makers in selected European markets.

Web www.european-fitness-summit.com

6-9 | Inner IDEA Conference

Venue La Jolla, California, US

Summary

Inner IDEA's mission is to "inspire the world to wellness through body, mind and spirit".

Web www.idealift.com/conference

16-17 | Professional Beauty North

Venue Manchester, UK

Summary

The UK's biggest beauty exhibition outside London features more than 300 exhibitors, along with seminars from industry experts.

Web www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

COMPETITIVE EDGE

18 SEPTEMBER 2011

kamikaze adventure run

This event in Dorset is designed to be outrageous and fun and offers copious amounts of mud, hills and challenging obstacles. Spread over eight miles of cross-country running, the steep hills and valleys provide stunning scenery – but looking at the views will be the last thing on your mind as you face a number of obstacles to test your fitness, nerve and determination along the way. Entry costs £66 for a team of three. Junior, senior and veteran categories are available.

Details: www.votwo.co.uk



Glorious mud: The Kamikaze run is meant to be fun but demanding



The iconic BT Tower has 842 steps

24 SEPTEMBER 2011

bt tower climb

Ten million people in the UK are deaf or hard of hearing and, to help raise funds for them, Action on Hearing Loss is challenging you to climb the BT Tower in London. The tower has 842 steps and provides spectacular views across the city once at the top. It is expected to take up to two hours to complete the challenge and get the lift back down. Registration costs £35 and the sponsorship pledge is £165. Details: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Many fail to finish the challenge



PHOTO: JAMES CRACKNELL

30 SEPT–2 OCT 2011

atlantic coast challenge

Three marathons in three days along the wild English coastline. Test your mental and physical prowess against some of the wildest coastline in Britain as you run or walk this 78.6-mile event, with its steep climbs and descents. The route starts near Padstow and follows the South West Coast Path to Land's End. Participants can choose to complete one, two or three days of the event, which is now in its fifth year. The three-day event costs £155 to enter. The one- and two-day events cost £55 and £110 respectively. Doing the event as a relay of two people is also possible. Details: www.votwo.co.uk



Three marathons in three days

4–12 FEBRUARY 2012

yukon arctic ultra

For those familiar with James Cracknell's challenges, you'll know that this – deemed the coldest race on earth – is the one that nearly broke him. Set in Yukon, Canada, the average temperature in February is -13.7°C. Now in its ninth year, the challenge offers the choice of a 26-, 100- or 300-mile course and the disciplines of mountain biking, cross-country skiing or running. Entries are open to individuals or teams of two. So far, 284 athletes have participated – but only two-thirds have finished. Details: www.arcticultra.de/en

everyone's talking about . . .

kids' fitness

Has the age of austerity resulted in children's fitness dropping off the political agenda?
And has the health and fitness industry done as much as it can to keep the issue on the radar?

Childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century, according to the World Health Organisation. Globally, 42 million children under the age of five are now overweight. And in the UK, figures released in December by the NHS show that 23.1 per cent of children starting school are now overweight or obese. By the time they leave primary school, at the age of 10 or 11, this has increased to 33.4 per cent.

What makes it all the more shocking is that this is a modern problem: 50 years ago there were no obesity statistics, as the problem simply wasn't

there on any notable scale. In half a century, we've moved to a situation where it will not be unusual for children to die before their parents – a result of diseases arising from weight issues.

Given this information, it seems incredible that children's fitness isn't at the top of the political agenda. And yet, with much of the provision overseen by local authorities, kids' fitness seems to have been one of the first areas to feel the axe during the recent spending cuts.

Initiatives such as Sport England's new Sportivate programme – targeting 14- to 25-year-olds who don't participate in sport, coaching them for six to eight

weeks and hopefully inspiring them to carry on – might have some success. But since it will only reach 300,000 participants over four years, it can only scratch the surface of the problem.

So whose fault is it that this pressing issue is being shelved? Doesn't the government listen? Doesn't the fitness industry shout loud enough, or do enough to demonstrate its worth via measurable outcomes that justify the expenditure? Do we need legislation or will the government's Public Health Responsibility Deal, aimed at tackling the wider health issues with businesses and organisations, be sufficient? We ask our panel of experts...

HAS KIDS' FITNESS FALLEN OFF THE POLITICAL AGENDA? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

murdo wallace

the wright foundation • founder



"The fitness industry has tried hard to keep the issue of children's fitness on the political agenda. However, although politicians will let you think they've said yes, sadly the issue never actually progresses.

We approached government agencies about running a project like the Cooper Child Obesity Project in the US, where

children did three hours of exercise a week at school and learned about diet and nutrition. The Wright Foundation has been using the Cooper research over here in the UK and it's tried and proven, but still the government wouldn't fund it.

Exercise needs to become a habit, and the best place to do this is through schools. Healthier people have healthier minds: Dr Cooper found that those doing regular exercise did better academically. In spite of this, through our consultations, we've found that unfortunately exercise is often the first thing cut on pressurised school timetables.

The message is there: we've reached a time when parents will start to see their children die before them. We've gone past the stage for local and independent solutions. There needs to be a national outlook led by the government."

tam fry

child growth foundation • honorary chair



"Children's fitness is not on the political agenda. For some time now we've seen school sports co-ordinators being cut and no movement to extend school sport. The education department doesn't see obesity as part of its remit: it thinks school is a place to learn facts rather than to turn children into individuals ready for adulthood.

I think the fitness industry is doing as much as it can to raise awareness of the issue, particularly with the committee under the Responsibility Deal, but it is frequently knocking on a shut door. I think everyone has to be pulling the rope, but first of all the government has to provide the rope for people to pull and it's not currently doing that. People are doing what they can, where they can, but there's no strategic planning from government to allow people to react. The government has a responsibility to pull together and get its departments to work closely together on the objectives that need to be met.

If nothing really dramatic is done, the situation will get worse: we're in the midst of an awful economic situation that's leading to higher prices of foodstuffs, which will result in people choosing cheaper options, not the healthy ones."



PICTURE: WWW.SPORTINGENGLAND.ORG

Critics say that children's physical education is often the first to suffer as the spending cuts take hold in schools

jonathan williams
shokk • ceo



"I think kids' fitness has dropped down the political agenda, but I don't think it has fallen off altogether. In fact, we're involved in a joint venture with the Department of Health (DH) and Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) – a three-year project known as the Knowledge Transfer Partnership. Jointly funded by SHOKK,

LJMU and the DH, this is using cutting-edge science to validate and improve the effectiveness of our programmes in creating behaviour change among young people. We want to give people proven, measurable ways of dealing with childhood obesity, and the government has recognised the importance of this.

Times might be tough, but I'm actually very excited about the future: the benefit of it being a tough economic climate is that things start to change, and this can often be for the better. What I think we need from government now is a willingness of the departments to work together. The education and leisure departments need to recognise that kids' health is their issue too.

The fitness industry needs to make children's fitness more of a priority too – we can't expect external organisations to prioritise it if we don't all properly invest in it ourselves."

dave stalker
fia • ceo

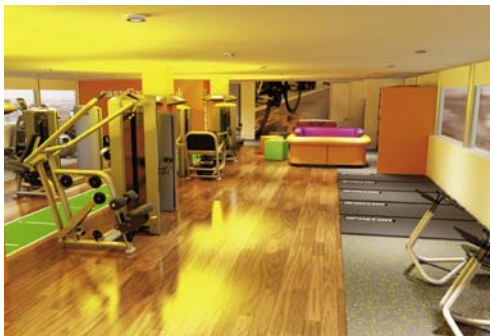


"Children's fitness is still firmly on the agenda. The Change4Life team at the Department of Health – the biggest force in the children's health agenda over recent years – has confirmed a £14m budget for the next phase of the campaign.

However, although government is receptive to supporting children's physical activity, there currently isn't an obvious route to funding, so our sector needs to be creative and think laterally, through innovative projects and partnerships with industry.

One way in which we can keep children's fitness on the political agenda is by playing our part in the government's vision of a Big Society. Indeed, a key finding of the TwentyTen Commission was the need to see our centres as community hubs – something that links in closely with the Responsibility Deal.

Jubilee Hall Trust's 'Active Places Pledge' is an example of how this can work. It aims to get fitness and sports facilities in Westminster to provide a minimum of two hours of free community access each week. This could be free off-peak studio hire for a local school, for example, or providing an instructor to support out-of-hours activity in a local school."



PAUL LORIMER-WING

The joint CEO of easyGym talks to Kate Cracknell about its 'premium low-cost' model

“It’s a high-profile start-up, so there’s lots to do and get right,” says Paul Lorimer-Wing, apologising for the fact that

his joint CEO at easyGym, Keith Burnet, is unable to join us.

That’s something of an understatement: the launch of easyGym is without doubt one of the more anticipated events in the fitness industry over recent years. So how did the whole thing come about?

Formerly an aspiring pro-golfer, Zimbabwe-born Lorimer-Wing then moved into accountancy, training for five years at Deloitte: “Not because I’d dreamed of being an accountant, but for the understanding it gives you of business. You get to see a lot of industries, their processes, what makes them work or not work, the controls they put in place.”

Moving to the UK seven years ago, Lorimer-Wing initially joined a privately-owned property company before moving into private equity. “It was here that I really started to see business for what it was. And seeing that model work – having a good idea, raising the necessary capital, investing it properly, watching it closely – gave me the impetus and courage to do something myself.

“I linked up with some people I trusted and respected professionally (see information box, p30) and we decided to do something together,

although at that stage we didn’t have any specific thoughts as to what it might be.” And so Fore Capital Partners was born.

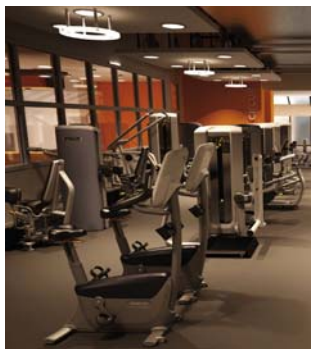
foray into fitness

One idea to come out of the brainstorming sessions was budget fitness. Although all the founding partners were physically active, none had specific expertise in fitness. But Lorimer-Wing had observed the trend towards low-cost gyms in other countries and felt it was a market with significant potential.

“We also liked the fact that fitness is quite a noble industry in many ways,” he says. “For us, it was important that we weren’t just setting up in business, but that we were doing so in an industry that appealed to all of our senses – something we could live by. When we came up with this idea, we immediately felt it was where we wanted to be.”

Fore Fitness was therefore set up as the first operating division of Fore Capital Partners, to drive forward the new business idea. “We’d usually appoint a separate team to manage each investment, reporting in to us, but with this first project we wanted to run it ourselves on a full-time basis.”

Although the budget model was on the table from the word go, Lorimer-Wing explains: “The easyGym idea only formulated in our minds months later. We were chatting through the concept, trying to come up with a name



for it, and someone said: ‘This feels like an easyGym’. We immediately started looking at how we could make that happen, but it was a long process – it was six months before we could actually meet Sir Stelios [Haji-Ioannou, founder and head of the easyGroup] and talk about the concept in person.

“It was a battle, but we felt that – given the number of other players in the low-cost sector – if we wanted to stand out we needed to be a bit different, a bit more powerful than the rest. And we felt we wouldn’t be able to do that without a brand, so we persisted and

“ We liked the fact that fitness is quite a noble industry in many ways ”

easyGym.co.uk



Premium low-cost: easyGyms are built to a high spec with high quality kit and service levels, with a design that adheres closely to the easyGroup brand manual



wouldn't move forward until we'd signed with the easyGroup."

easygym deal

The deal consists of a brand licence agreement to use the easyGym name "so long as we strictly follow the brand manual". This is in line with the way the rest of the easyGroup works – even the original product, easyJet, is now operated on a licence deal.

So will Haji-loannou have any involvement in the day-to-day running of easyGym? "He has an incredible wealth of experience and provides very valuable



guidance. There's a very clear voice and we like that. He also makes himself available whenever he can, for club openings and so on, and we meet often. But the business decisions are entirely ours," says Lorimer-Wing.

The easyGym agreement is a pure licensing deal with no financial stake held by Haji-loannou, but Lorimer-Wing stresses: "I would argue that he has an amazing stake in the business because his brand is so important to him, and that's what we must protect at all times. There's no two ways about that."

In addition to the trust and immediate recognition the 'easy' brand affords among consumers, Lorimer-Wing explains: "I think having such a strong brand behind us has been vital in raising funds – particularly given the economic climate when we were setting out – and it also serves us well

with potential landlords, as they're keen to work with recognised brands that enhance their portfolios.

"It's been helpful in attracting the big names too. For example, I don't think Keith [Burnet, former VP of global fitness and spa at Hilton Hotels, and prior to that MD at LivingWell – now joint CEO of easyGym alongside Lorimer-Wing] would have joined us if we hadn't had the easyGym name."

However, Lorimer-Wing is the first to recognise that the brand alone isn't enough: "We still have to do our job well. We have to deliver."

premium low-cost

The joint CEOs are now working closely together to do exactly that, as Lorimer-Wing explains: "I have overall charge of the business, setting the strategy and vision of the organisation, ▶



The team: Keith Burnet, Allan Casten and Paul Lorimer-Wing – the joint CEOs and CFO of easyGym

► managing the relationship with Sir Stelios and the investors, monitoring the overall investment, new business development and capital allocation. Keith implements the strategy from an operational perspective, and Allan [Casten, financial director] is in charge of all things financial and IT." But, he adds, meeting as we are just weeks before the opening of the first club: "It's all hands on deck at the moment!"

At the time of going to press, the first club was scheduled to open late June, in Slough, with a second due to open this month in Wood Green, Greater London.

So how has 'easy' been translated into the fitness arena? "We like to think of easyGym as a 'core-plus' model. A premium low-cost offering. It's still no frills – no pools, sauna or steam – and our prices, although they will vary by area, start at £15 a month. However, in addition to the core offering – the gym – there's also an element of choice that's not present in the majority of low-cost clubs, in that you can pay extra to attend group exercise classes: our clubs will have a group exercise studio and a group cycling studio.

"We're going to make sure the classes are really top-quality, with excellent instructors. You can't charge for something unless it's really special. At first they'll be pay as you go – £4 a time – but ultimately, once we have a programme in place that's working, we may structure membership packages so regular class-goers can opt for monthly 'gym plus 15 classes' or 'gym plus 20 classes' deals. Or they can continue with pay as you go.

"It won't be all-inclusive though, as we want members to feel they're in control of their monthly expenditure. Being honest, being transparent,

FORE CAPITAL PARTNERS

Founded in 2009, Fore Capital Partners (FORE) is a venture capital firm set up by Paul Lorimer-Wing, his former Deloitte colleague Allan Casten, great friend Malcolm Levy and Hong Kong-based Jonathan Bond, a former colleague of Levy's. FORE's focus is on identifying investment opportunities in growing markets, raising deal-specific equity and managing teams to deliver shareholder value.

Fore Fitness – overseeing the deal with the easyGroup to create an easyGym chain – is the first offshoot of FORE. Further offshoots will be established as new opportunities are identified. As the first project under the FORE banner, Lorimer-Wing and Casten remain hands-on with the easyGym project – as joint CEO and CFO respectively – while Bond and Levy continue to look for new ventures.

with no hidden costs – that's really important to us. The whole point of the easy brand is that we should be clear and simple at all times.

"We're also very flexible. We'll hold people's data for six months, so they can leave for a few months and then come back without having to pay another joining fee [£25 post-opening]. And there are no contracts.

"At the heart of this whole concept is a genuine desire to be accessible to everyone, helping people become healthier by making gym membership less of a discretionary spend – pricing it at a level whereby they won't immediately drop off when times are tough. But it's still very early days and the details will evolve over time.

"We'll keep looking at how to add value for the consumer. We're not trying to do everything at once though – for now, it's about keeping things simple and getting the core proposition right. That'll probably take us until club number three or four. I think it's important for the proposition to allow itself to be born – to settle in and give people a chance to appreciate what it stands for.

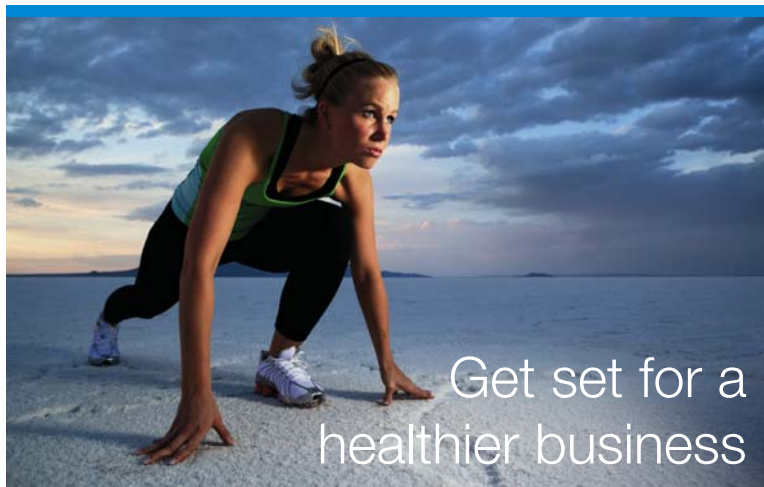
"And from our perspective, everything has to be accountable: we need to be sure of what works and what doesn't. We can only provide low-cost so long as we're in business!"

educational approach

The easyGym design project has been led by studioiansherman, with Peter Evans Contract Interiors taking on the building work and fit-out. "We've created a zonal gym concept – cardio area, circuit area, resistance by muscle group – to make it easy for members to find their way around.

"We believe education is very important, and we'll have lots of great information on our website – and eventually video tutorials too – so members can put together effective workout programmes." The simplicity of the gym layout is designed to make the transition from education to its application in the gym as self-explanatory as possible.

"There'll also be iPads around the gym floor, again offering advice and information. It's in these little details that we're trying to be a bit different. The ►



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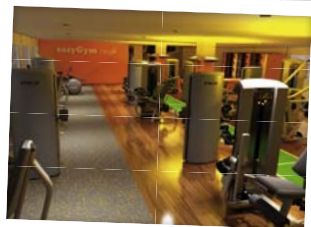
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Easy layout: The weights area is divided by muscle group to make using the gym even easier – in line with the brand concept



► model must never feel cheap. We have to do the small things right all the time, creating an excellent member experience.

"You'll walk in to one of our clubs and there'll be nothing cheap about it. It will look like a high-end gym, from the equipment to the chill-out areas – it won't just be an 'in and out' gym."

"We've signed a deal with Precor to supply the majority of the gym equipment – including its new P80 consoles – but we'll complement this with a few other products such as MyRide from the Indoor Cycling Group, which we'll use to run both instructor-led and virtual group cycling classes.

"We'll spend around £1m per club on fit-out, although we may well spend it in a different way from other operators."

In spite of easyGym's investment in technology, the gym floor will be staffed at all times and the clubs will not open 24/7; opening hours are 6.00am–10.00pm weekdays, and 8.00am–8.00pm at the weekend.

"We want to create a sense of community, with a human touch at all times," says Lorimer-Wing. "We won't be as highly staffed as the top-end clubs, but we want to find a way of using the man hours we do have to make members genuinely feel we're supporting them. People's health is at the heart of our concept, and we will continually strive to deliver on our members' needs."

roll-out plans

Although the first two sites are overhauls of existing clubs, acquired from Virgin Active, this was primarily to

get quickly to market, says Lorimer-Wing. "We're now primarily looking for shells rather than acquisitions; going forward, fewer than 20 per cent of the sites we take on will be acquisitions."

The model currently requires sites measuring 1,620–1,860sq m (17,500–20,000sq ft) in high footfall areas. But as Lorimer-Wing explains: "We will in time roll out different models. We're in it for the long haul, with a seven- to 10-year plan starting in the UK and then heading to Europe."

"We see easyGym becoming a global chain in the long run, possibly operating on a franchise basis in other markets. We've already had enquiries from the States, Australia, New Zealand, the Far East, India... Everyone wants to be part of this."

easyGym expects to open five clubs in the UK in the first year of trading. From there, "once the model has settled", the aim is to roll out between six and 10 clubs a year.

So is there space in the relatively saturated UK market for this? "If you look at markets where penetration levels are in the high teens, you'll see they're markets with a full complement of club types," says Lorimer-Wing. "If we can grow the UK market from 12 to, say, 16 per cent, I think there's plenty of scope for everyone."

"However, although the low-cost clubs are attracting new consumers to the fitness market, you still have to do something to keep members there

beyond the price tag alone. You have to engage with them, talk to them, try to be helpful – otherwise they'll leave."

"I don't think anyone's got retention right yet. Across the whole industry, there's a lot of promise but a lack of delivery on those promises. A lack of personal contact. Top-end operators who have the staff may need to start looking at using that manpower in different ways."

"As for the other sectors, I think the mid-market will survive, although there may be some consolidation. And the budget sector will get tougher as it starts stabilising. New entrants will find it harder to come in as landlords opt for brands with an established trading history."

"But there is scope for everyone, as well as for other non gym-based activities. We'll consider introducing running and cycling clubs at our sites in the longer term, for example, as we see ourselves – the gym – as only part of the solution. Ultimately, we want to act as a conduit to help people become healthier."



kate cracknell
healthclub@leisuremedia.com



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WORLD
FOCUS

Kate Cracknell talks to the
management of Spanish operation
Metropolitan about its new club in
Barcelona's Las Arenas complex

IN THE RING

If the architect Richard Rogers is connected with a new development, you can be pretty sure it's going to be a talking point. This, after all, is the man whose practice was involved in iconic projects such as the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Millennium Dome in London. And so it's proved once more with the transformation of Las Arenas, Barcelona's emblematic bullring, into a mixed-use leisure, entertainment and office complex.

Las Arenas held its first bullfight in 1900, but interest in the sport has diminished in Barcelona over recent years – the last bullfight took place there in 1977 and the sport will become illegal in Catalonia in 2012. Nevertheless, the building is a local landmark and sympathetic treatment was required.

The new development – which opened to the public at the end of March – has therefore preserved the red brick façade of the original bullring, which from the outside still looks very much as it always has. However, the whole building was elevated by one floor during construction to accommodate the 126 shops, restaurants, 12-screen cinema, gym/spa and car parking.

But it's the 'piazza in the sky' that really puts the Rogers signature on the whole development – a habitable dish-like roof measuring 100 metres in diameter, covered by a 76-metre diameter dome, that floats above



the former bullring, structurally independent from it. The perimeter of this covered piazza area incorporates large terraces with space for cafés and restaurants and great views over the city.

development pipeline

These same views are available from the Metropolitan health club, which opened in the Las Arenas complex last month. Tucked just beneath the floating roof, on the fourth floor of the development, the club occupies a 2,400sq m (25,830sq ft) space – almost three-quarters of the floor – and is flooded with natural light thanks to five metre high, floor-to-ceiling windows that make up the entire external wall of the circular building.

Metropolitan, a leading player in the Spanish health and fitness market, already has 16 sites operational across the country. This includes two new openings in the last two months – in Madrid in May and Las Arenas, Barcelona, in June. Three further sites are scheduled to open this year – including one this month, in Murcia – and the company predicts that its membership will rise from the current figure of 50,000 to 65,000 by the end of 2011 as a result.



Holistic: Metropolitan encompasses wellness, health and relaxation

Work is also well advanced on a new club opening scheduled for 2012.

"We aim to open four or five clubs every 12 months," says CEO Javier Pellón. "We'll consolidate our position in Spain – we're one of the only operators expanding in this market – but we're also planning to expand internationally to markets such as France, Portugal and Germany. We hope to sign on our first international site this year, with the opening perhaps a couple of years away." With investment averaging €4–5m in each club, sometimes rising to €8m, that's no small ambition.

But back to Barcelona and the new club at Las Arenas. Not only are members guaranteed great views while

working out thanks to the large expanses of glass and clear sightlines throughout, but there's also an outdoor running track that circles around the facility and takes in the city vista. Outdoor relaxation areas are also available.

The gym is divided into CV, resistance and stretching zones and is equipped by Technogym – including Kinesis – Life Fitness, Keiser and Power Plate. There are also pilates and group exercise studios offering 700 hours of programmed classes every month. This is complemented by diet and nutrition support and programming, and an on-site doctor.

Alongside the fitness offering is a 25-metre swimming pool and a spa area with an extensive range of wet facilities ▶



A run with a view: An outdoor running track circles the gym on the fourth floor of the former bullring

METROPOLITAN: CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

High-end operator Metropolitan currently has 16 operational clubs across Spain, with four in the domestic pipeline and plans to expand internationally to markets including France, Portugal and Germany.

Already in existence for 25 years, the company was originally set up by Jose Antonio Castro and Javier Pellón, who remain president and CEO respectively. Pellón – a qualified lawyer with an MBA from the Madrid business school – was a professional squash player for a number of years, ranked number one in Spain. Prior to setting up Metropolitan, he established various businesses selling sporting equipment, was involved in the management of sports centres, and also spent many years working in construction and property.

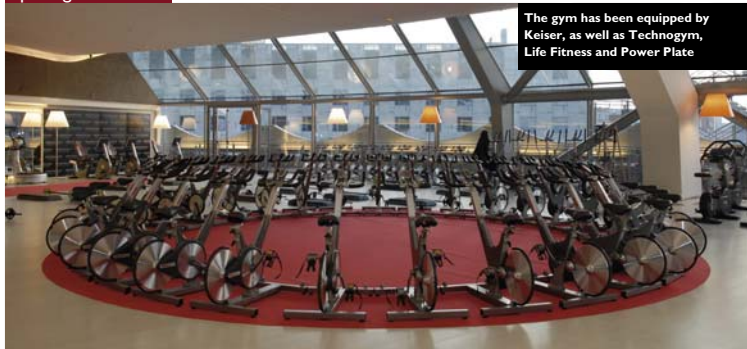
Although not a family business, Pellón's brother Sergio later joined the company in an independent appointment as general manager. Originally qualifying in business studies, he then went to work in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Returning to Spain, his career path took him into marketing for companies including L'Oréal and Nike. He joined Metropolitan 10 years ago, overseeing



The firm: Jose Luis de la Guardia, Javier Pellón and his brother Sergio Pellón

the opening of the first Madrid club and the development of the marketing department. He is now responsible for operations across the whole chain.

Metropolitan's other general manager, Jose Luis de la Guardia, also has a background in professional sport – again squash, in which he was Spanish national champion before becoming a national selector. Having already worked with Javier Pellón in the sports equipment business, he joined Metropolitan at the outset, as manager of the first club. He is now responsible for co-ordinating design and maintenance across the group.



The gym has been equipped by Keiser, as well as Technogym, Life Fitness and Power Plate

▶ including feature showers, a hydrotherapy pool, Turkish bath, sauna and relaxation areas. "Our offering isn't centred on sport but on broader wellness, health and even relaxation – looking after yourself in body and mind," explains Pellón. "The spa is integral to this approach."

There's also a beauty salon offering everything from massages to facials, manicures and pedicures to physiotherapy and ayurvedic treatments.

more for your money

It's certainly an extensive offering, so the price tag comes as a pleasant surprise – membership starts at just €60 a month. Indeed, although Metropolitan's clubs are all finished to the highest specifications, with great attention to detail in terms of both offering and design, €60 is its average monthly fee.

"One of our main USPs is the fact that we offer five-star quality at a three-star price," explains Pellón. "Our prices are also all-inclusive, encompassing spa use, reciprocal membership across all our clubs and so on. We want to make sure people get a lot for their money."



Smile as standard: A friendly greeting is one of Metropolitan's USPs

We have excellent retention levels and no sales team at all. We don't even advertise.

So it says a lot for Metropolitan's service levels that – in spite of the high-end aesthetics of the clubs and the extensive, high quality offering – Pellón concludes: "The clubs are great, but it's our staff who really make the difference." Equating Metropolitan's service levels to those of a top hotel, he explains the company's approach to staffing: "One of the first things our members will say, if you ask them about us, is that our people are really nice. We aim to do the simple things well and we constantly train our staff in the area of service. Every member must be greeted with a smile and a few words of welcome. That smile is one of our USPs, alongside the quality of our clubs and our price point."

"Everyone – from the instructors to the cleaners – is trained to see the bigger picture. For example, our cleaners' goal isn't to keep the changing rooms tidy; it's to make sure the member is happy and comfortable."

"As a result, we have excellent retention levels and no sales team at all. We don't even advertise – we get all our new members through word of mouth, with members referring their friends, and we have waiting lists for all of our clubs."

"At our new club in Las Arenas, we had 4,000 people sign up in advance, again with no advertising or marketing. People simply heard about it, went online and registered their interest."

There certainly seems to be a strong appetite for Metropolitan's way of doing things, and the company's bold expansion plans mean that demand will be met in more and more areas of Spain – and beyond. So where do they see themselves five years from now?

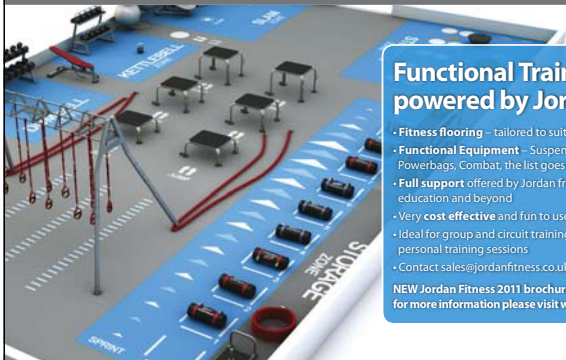
"Metropolitan has been in business for 25 years and it's not controlled by any external funds or financial organisations, so its future rests in its own hands," says Pellón. "Remaining profitable lies at the heart of our expansion strategy. We don't have any preconceived ideas about particular new markets to enter, or number of clubs we'd ultimately aim for, but we do have a predisposition to pick up on good opportunities, wherever those may be."

"We feel our concept would be popular in many different markets, as we believe there's nothing else like it, but we're not obsessed with the idea of growth. More important to us is doing things properly, and at some point not growing any more might become the best option."

For now though, in a climate where the budget clubs are dominating the fitness industry's growth figures, top-end Metropolitan certainly has ambitious expansion plans at home and abroad. It will be interesting to see if it can replicate its success in other markets.



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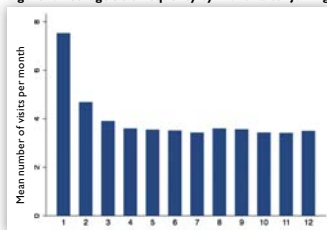
Melvyn Hillsdon makes the case for training and incentivising fitness staff to interact with members

Are fitness staff really your best sales people? The model in most clubs would seem to be based on this assumption.

To achieve maximum sales, most clubs employ sales teams who are usually paid a commission for each membership sold. They're normally working to monthly targets based on the club's income projections, with the presumption being that the sale of a membership is income-generating.

However, it's not just the number of memberships sold each month that matters; the majority of a club's income is determined by the number of memberships sold multiplied by the membership yield from each member (the membership retention). And we know from previous research (see *HCM* July 09, p37) that the number of months a new member stays varies considerably and is influenced by factors such as their age, contractual arrangements and the type of membership they take out.

Figure 1. Average visit frequency by month after joining



Yes, the membership sales staff have some influence over membership yield by selling varying types of membership package to different types of member. However, a range of club factors not involving sales people also determine how much income a new sale generates.

One of the factors, arguably the most important, is the activity of the fitness staff. In a previous edition of *HCM* (see *HCM* Sept 09, p45), we reported that

the frequency with which fitness staff speak to club members when working out impacts on the risk of members cancelling, and thereby the average yield from membership payment. Part of the explanation for this is that, when members are spoken to, they tend to attend the club more often – and that, in turn, increases the length of time they remain a member.

encouraging frequency

The frequency with which members use their clubs is surprisingly low. Using data provided by The Retention People (TRP), Figure 1 shows the average attendance for each month after joining. In the first month after joining, members typically attend the club nearly eight times – just under twice a week. By month three, this has dropped to less than once a week; it typically stays at this frequency for the duration of the membership.

So should members be helped to attend more frequently? Why should clubs care? After all, if members don't visit, then more members can be squeezed in...

Well, compared to members who make no visits to their club in a month, every additional visit reduces the risk of a member cancelling in the next month by 33 per cent. This is true for new and old members alike. So not visiting is a trigger for cancellation throughout the membership. Worryingly, the proportion of members who don't



ALL PICTURES FEATURE: GEMMA SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

“INVESTMENT IN FITNESS STAFF WOULD YIELD MORE INCOME PER MEMBER COMPARED WITH INVESTMENT IN SALES STAFF”

Figure 2. Average number of fitness staff interactions by month after joining

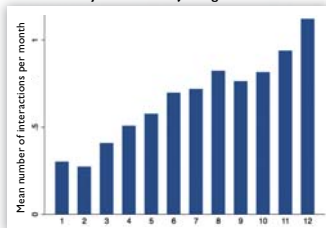
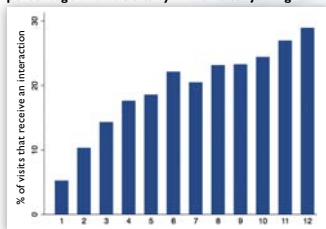


Figure 3. Number of fitness staff interactions as a percentage of club visits by month after joining



visit their club at all in a month is high. In the first month after joining, most members attend at least once, but in month two the proportion of non-attenders is already up to 25 per cent and by month four it's just short of 50 per cent, where it stays for the duration of the membership.

Interestingly, data gathered using TRP's software suggests that each time fitness staff talk to a member in a given month, the probability that the member attends at least once the following month doubles, thereby reducing the risk of cancelling; the potential for preventing attrition through interaction is high.

club is an opportunity to sell them another visit. Fitness staff are extremely well-placed to make this sale given the opportunity they have to interact with members. So how often do fitness staff currently talk to members? Again using TRP data, Figure 2 shows that it varies considerably over the life of a membership. On average, members can expect just one interaction every 12 weeks, with new members least likely to be spoken to and long-standing members most likely to be spoken to.

This isn't especially surprising, as of course long-standing members get to know the staff over time and tend to attend more frequently. However,

fitness staff as sales staff

One way to interpret these findings is to think of fitness staff as sales staff. What is it that they are selling, you might ask? The answer is repeat visits. Every visit a member makes to a

long-standing members are the least at risk of cancelling compared to new members – the focus of interactions should in fact be on new members.

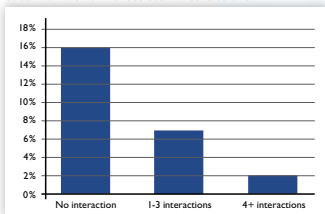
It's possible that one reason why new members (who turn up frequently in the first month) rapidly drop their visit frequency is that they are unlikely to be spoken to in the first month of their membership. Of course, members can only be spoken to if they attend – Figure 3 shows interactions as a proportion of club visits. Again, it can be seen that new members have only a one in 20 chance of being spoken to each time they attend in their first month, compared to members who are in their 12th month who have a 30 per cent chance of being spoken to.

The importance of speaking to members when they visit is greater than just the effect on club visits. Independently of the number of visits a member makes to a club, if fitness staff talk to members they save memberships. Figure 4 shows (p40) that, in members who attend at least once in a month, the

A reason to reward: Fitness staff could save up to 1.5 memberships an hour by chatting to 12 members for less than five minutes each

"IT IS REASONABLE TO ASSERT THAT FITNESS STAFF INTERACTIONS ARE CONSIDERABLY SHORTER THAN THE SALES PROCESS"

Figure 4. Monthly risk of cancelling by total number of fitness staff interactions



► risk of them cancelling in the subsequent month is roughly halved if they are spoken to at least once. Speaking to them at least four times (which means they must have been in at least four times) virtually eliminates the risk of them cancelling in the next month compared to if they visit and don't get spoken to at all.

The added benefit of reduced attrition is of course less demand on sales staff to replenish lost members.

staff-member interaction

But is it cost-effective to speak to members more frequently? This is an argument put forward by many clubs – that they simply can't afford the man-hours required to talk to each member.

Many sales staff are paid a commission for each sale they make as an incentive to make more sales. If fitness staff interactions can increase membership yield, should they receive a financial incentive to do this more, especially as the interaction rate is now so low?

To illustrate why this might be financially beneficial, we present a case study based on 1,000 members over three years, using actual retention data from one 'typical' club. For illustrative purposes, analysis is restricted to members who pay monthly, did not pay a joining fee and are not signed to a minimum-term contract. In our sample of 1,000 members, the average length of membership is 11 months (a range of one to 36 months) including both live and cancelled members.

We can estimate the financial benefit of sales staff by taking the average length of membership among members who

Table 1. Membership yield by average length of membership

Interactions	Average length of membership in months	Total income from dues
None	4.2	£188
1 to 3	9.9	£444
4+	27.3	£1,229

software for *Life*



received no fitness staff interactions (see Table 1) – in other words, how long members might be expected to stay if there were no fitness staff. For members in our case study, this equates to four months of membership at £45 a month – a total of £188.

If, during their membership, members receive one interaction from fitness staff, then the membership yield increases by £256, and by £1,041 if they receive four or more interactions. The extra income can be attributed to the efforts of fitness staff.

Although no official figures are available, it's reasonable to assert that fitness staff interactions are considerably shorter than the sales process and therefore cheaper to conduct. Further, it only takes eight interactions to save one membership. Assuming each interaction lasts approximately five minutes (it is almost certainly less), then fitness staff can potentially conduct around 12 interactions an hour and

therefore potentially save up to 1.5 memberships an hour.

It's clear that both sales and fitness staff are critical to maximising income from dues, yet at present their training and value to the business may not reflect their potential to generate income. Investment in fitness staff – training them to be better sales people and rewarding them for their actions – would be expected to save memberships and yield more income per member compared with investment in sales staff, who arguably spend a lot of their time replacing members who fitness staff might have saved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to The Retention People for sharing the data to support this article – www.theretentionpeople.com



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Kirstyn MacRandal pays a visit to the MOD's rehabilitation centre at Headley Court

ON THE MEND

Set within beautiful grounds just outside Leatherhead, Surrey, the MOD's Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Headley Court is a premier facility for the rehabilitation of injured service personnel, providing world-class levels of care. First used as a centre for rehabilitation after World War II, Headley Court recently underwent a major renovation, made possible by a generous contribution from the charity Help for Heroes.

The brand new, state of the art facilities now available at Headley Court – including a 25m swimming pool and gym facilities – were officially opened by Prince William on 4 June 2010.

Headley Court originally served only service personnel from the Air Force, but now draws from the ranks of all three services: Air Force, Navy and Army. Supporting a wide range of injuries sustained both on the battlefield and on the services' training grounds, it works to return all injured or seriously ill personnel to full fitness.

DMRC has more than 300 dedicated military and civilian staff who provide clinical rehabilitation, training and research to achieve optimal military health and fitness for their patients. This involves the treatment of complex injuries, including those of amputees and brain-injured patients, plus a large volume of work to treat musculo-skeletal injuries.

DMRC offers access to a wide range of on-site specialists: consultants, physiotherapists, remedial instructors, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, social workers, a psychologist and a cognitive therapist. There's also a dedicated amputee unit, where patients are fitted with high quality prosthetics and adaptations

which are tailored on-site to the specific needs of the individual.

Given the nature of the work undertaken at Headley Court, you may expect the atmosphere to be sombre, but nothing could be further from the truth. As Prince William said at the opening of the new Help for Heroes complex: "Here reigns courage, humour, compassion and, above all, hope for the future."

facilities

The new complex is an £11m facility that's designed to the highest standards throughout. It offers a wide range of facilities including a sports hall with sprung floor, four specialist gyms, consulting rooms, a gait analysis lab, a 25m, five-lane swimming pool and even a spa pool.

In the design of the complex, the unique requirements of the centre have been carefully considered. For example, the pool has a moveable floor that allows activities to be carried out at variable depths, helping the physiotherapy staff to adjust their treatment regimes to meet the differing needs of their patients.

Headley Court is also equipped with some highly specialist equipment including a Bod Pod that can accurately



**The Bod Pod:
Accurately
measures body
composition**



Facilities at Headley Court

- Sports hall with sprung floor
- Gait analysis lab
- 25m, five-lane swimming pool with moveable floor
- Spa pool
- Consulting rooms and examination areas
- Gardens with therapeutic work greenhouses
- On-site accommodation
- Four gyms – including a full strength and conditioning gym and a CV gym with Technogym equipment

"Technogym is honoured to supply physical training equipment to support the remarkable work achieved by the staff at DMRC Headley Court. The equipment plays a vital role in the rehabilitation programmes, from general rehabilitation right through to complex trauma cases."

Neville Jones, uniform services national account manager, Technogym

assess body composition, and an anti-gravity treadmill that can alleviate up to 90 per cent of an individual's body weight, allowing patients to gradually increase their strength.

Meanwhile, the gyms – one cardio, one strength and conditioning, and two smaller gyms – offer top of the range Technogym equipment, including a selection of its IFI-accredited kit such as wheelchair-accessible machines. Much of the equipment was donated by Technogym in 2008.

rehabilitation

The rehabilitation process for all service personnel begins at Headley Court. Patients arrive at the complex directly from the training ground or battlefield or, in the case of complex trauma, from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Edgbaston after acute treatment is concluded.

Under the direction of Surgeon Commander Andrew Franklyn-Miller, the organisation of the centre is team-led, with patients divided into five categories: complex trauma, upper limb, lower limb, spinal and medical injuries. For each area, there's a specialised team of experts to conduct the rehabilitation.

Catering for a vast range of injuries, the experts have devised a three-and-



Facilities: Technogym has equipped the gyms at Headley Court, with much of the kit donated



a-half-week rehabilitation timeframe that's used with the majority of patients who come to Headley Court. Carefully tailored to each individual, and continually adapted throughout the process to accommodate the person's progression, this course is packed with a combination of different rehabilitation techniques. From hydrotherapy to sports massage, patients are offered an all-encompassing treatment programme.

"Run by a multi-disciplinary team led by a consultant physician, alongside a physical therapist and a remedial instructor, the three-and-a-half-week period is very intense, using all the centre's facilities," says Franklyn-Miller. "We use the outdoors, the indoor space, the gyms, sports hall facilities and also the swimming pool."

During the programme, patients stay at Headley Court, creating a great sense of community among the service men and women. After the initial round of treatment, they return to their families to rest before another three-and-a-half week round of therapy begins. This process continues until the patient has recovered sufficiently to be supported from home through regional rehabilitation units or primary care rehabilitation facilities.

Multi-disciplinary interaction is key to the success of all work at Headley Court. Each injury sub-grouping has a designated inter-disciplinary team of experts working together to adapt the courses to individuals; with the development of the new complex, these teams have been co-located on-site to support the interaction between experts.

prehabilitation

Headley Court has also designed a seven-day 'running re-education course' tailored towards improving running performance, tackling existing complaints and preventing the occurrence of injury. This 'prehabilitation' caters for service personnel with exertional leg pain, such as shin splints, compartment syndrome and runners' knee. Created by Franklyn-Miller, the course combines the work of physicians, physiotherapists, research staff and remedial instructors into a single comprehensive package.

Franklyn-Miller says: "From research undertaken at Headley Court and within the field of elite sport, we have a new understanding of common running injuries which allows us to change the way people run in just a week." Re-assessment, completed six weeks after the course, has – across ▶



Clockwise from below left: The gait analysis lab, the reduced gravity running machine, and the pool



Asics UKSEM

The Asics UKSEM conference will be held at London's ExCel from 23–26 November 2011.

Organised by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine (BASEM), UKSEM is the leading forum for the sport and exercise medicine community. The conference will once again bring together the top speakers from around the world for four days to cover a wide range of subjects within sport and exercise medicine. This

will include practical workshops from experts at Headley Court.

In addition, the Military Rehabilitation Conference will take place within UKSEM. Comprising two workshops – both of which will be open to non-military participants – this conference will look at developments in military rehabilitation and plans for the future.

Booking is now open for the conference. For more details, visit www.uksem.org

- the first four trials – shown an 80 per cent success rate in terms of patients maintaining the new running style developed during the course.

This area of injury prehabilitation plays a particularly important role at the centre, as physical fitness is an essential factor to effective military operations. "This course can get servicemen suffering from common running injuries to a good level of fitness, so they can be deployed into action alongside the colleagues they have trained with," says Headley Court media manager Peter Haslam.

assessment

The experts at the DMRC have recognised the importance that assessment plays in recovery. Not only does it provide a way for practitioners to measure performance and record improvement, but it has also proven to be a source of motivation for patients.

The principal method implemented at Headley Court is the Physical Competence Assessment, designed by Kelvin Giles. This technique uses a selection of exercises that give an overview of a person's ability to squat, lunge, push, pull, brace and rotate, based on the idea that these movements, or competencies, underpin all daily activity.

A person's ability is graded on a scale of one to five in each area and results

are charted in a radial graph so that both practitioners and patients can visualise improvement.

Staff at Headley Court are also investigating the role of body composition assessment in rehabilitation. Franklyn-Miller explains: "The maintenance of weight is important to complex trauma patients. With a patient who has lost a leg, for example, the stump size is incredibly important: the socket for the new limb, which is made bespoke to the patient, is cast based on the stump size. Maintaining weight is vital to ensure a comfortable fit, so it's important that we teach our clients how to balance energy expenditure and nutrition." All complex trauma patients admitted to Headley Court have their body weight continually tracked using the Bod Pod.

education

In addition to the world-class rehabilitation programmes and facilities offered at DMRC, Headley Court is also renowned for its contribution to the field of research. Since January 2010, 10 papers have been published, with a further 16 currently undergoing peer review. As Franklyn-Miller explains: "There's a strong culture of sharing at Headley Court, and the rehabilitation research undertaken here is readily accessible in the public domain."

Headley Court also collaborates with a number of university research projects, sharing its knowledge and expertise: for example it's currently working with Salford University on gait analysis and with Bath University on energy expenditure.

Furthermore, it has a close relationship with the armed forces in the US and shares information with them regarding their rehabilitation facilities, to further enhance research. "Between us, the US and the UK have the largest cohort of complex trauma injuries. We can both learn from the rehabilitation pathways we each use," says Franklyn-Miller.

following suit

The DMRC has certainly set the bar for the future of rehabilitation, and it seems others are now following suit. The Football Association, for example, is currently developing a new elite training centre – the 330-acre National Football Centre just outside Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire – which will incorporate state of the art rehabilitation facilities. Opening next year, this centre is set to be built to the same standard as the DMRC and will help ensure rehabilitation in the UK remains at the forefront of its field.



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making a splash

The shimmering blue of a swimming pool provides an alluring feature for a club, but they are costly to run. Is yours earning its keep? Kath Hudson looks at ways to get the most out of this asset

As pools look set to become one of the major differentiating factors between the budget chains and other operators, it's time to get the most mileage out of them.

Backing this up is The Big Splash, the latest campaign from the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) – launched in May – which hopes to generate a 'Wimbledon effect' for pools via a number of initiatives, including television programmes featuring celebrities undertaking swimming challenges.

We take a look at other ways in which operators can maximise use of, and revenue from, their pools.

AQUA CLASSES

Recognising that Zumba classes at a local church hall were packed to the rafters, Deane Valley Leisure Centre decided to get in on the action and sent instructors on official training courses not just for Zumba but also for Aqua Zumba. Now these have been added to the centre's pool timetable, alongside existing classes such as Aqua Tone and Nifty Fifty. Sixty people a week are now taking part in Aqua Zumba, with sessions free for members and £5.10 for non-members.

"It's been absolutely massive," says assistant manager Craig Bradford, who came up with the idea. "There has been an 80 per cent increase in class attendance in the pool since we introduced Zumba. It's similar to the studio class, but slower."

Meanwhile aqua jogging and aqua circuits are becoming a feature of pools up and down the country, bringing a bit of the bootcamp mentality poolside. According to studies by Dr Robert Wilder, a physiologist and director of sports rehabilitation at the University of Virginia in the US, aqua jogging is said to offer a better workout than jogging, since water is about 800 times denser than air and offers up to 12 times the resistance of jogging on land: land runners burn off eight calories a minute, while aqua-runners burn 11.5.

SLM, the ASA's Operator of the Year in 2010, is in the process of rolling out aqua jogging across all its sites. "It's a good use of water space, it's good fun

and it's non weight-bearing. Swimming is all about having fun and it's a nice way to exercise," says Jacqui Tillman, group swim development manager.

STAFF TRAINING

If you need to upskill your staff in order to offer these programmes, the Institute of Swimming (IoS) – the ASA's training delivery arm – can help. In May, the IoS launched a new training programme for aquatic fitness qualifications. These include a Level 2 Certificate in Fitness Instructing (Aqua) and a series of REPs-accredited CPD seminars, including Aqua Jogging and Aqua Circuits (see information box, p48).

The training programmes have been piloted by DC Leisure, and the resulting boost to the pool timetable has led to an upsurge in swimming. "Running aquatic fitness courses has given us a great opportunity to increase the number of individuals participating in aquatic activity," says Sarah Leonie, group

**"THERE HAS BEEN AN 80 PER CENT
INCREASE IN CLASS ATTENDANCE IN THE
POOL SINCE WE INTRODUCED ZUMBA"**



For many clubs, the pool is often an under-used resource. New programmes such as the Rookie Lifeguard training (right) can generate extra revenue



fitness manager at DC Leisure. "Many have been new customers to the facility. We've also seen an increase in the number of gym members using the pool, realising the benefits of incorporating it into their regular fitness regime."

UNDERWATER GYMS

An activity currently taking Europe by storm, but yet to catch on in the UK, is group cycling on underwater bikes, which is said to be excellent for improving cardiovascular fitness without putting pressure on joints. Manufacturer Beco-Beermann is at the forefront of this trend with its SharkBike.

Another option for exercising in water is Beco-Beermann's SharkWalker, an underwater treadmill with additional bars and belts that can be added to the sides to allow the upper body to be trained at the same time as the lower body. And new to the range is the SharkJumper – a mini trampoline that works out the whole body and, claims the company, reduces stress and releases endorphins thanks to the fun factor. Beco-Beermann will also arrange training for fitness instructors.

Italian company Hydorider also sells underwater equipment, accompanied by a range of programme options including

aquacycling, aquatreadmill, aquaboxing, aquacombat and aquatriathlon, which involves underwater cycling and running as well as swimming.

Not only do underwater classes add a bit of variety to the class timetable, but underwater equipment is also good for one-to-one use with rehab patients, as well as with those who are deconditioned and find exercising in the gym uncomfortable. The water not only keeps them cool but is also load-bearing, meaning pressure is taken off the joints.

Meanwhile Lifehouse, the Surrey-based health club and spa, employs an in-house physiotherapist to provide individual water-based sessions for rehab clients. "Typically our physiotherapist works with five to 10 clients a day doing exercises that lend themselves to weight loss. They use very simple equipment – such as foam noodles, floats and weights – and the body is perfect for creating its own

resistance in water," says Sue Davis, Lifehouse's health and wellbeing manager.

LIFEGUARD TRAINING

Becoming an approved training centre for lifeguard training can create another revenue stream for clubs, as well as bringing down your own training costs as it can then all be delivered in-house.

IQL UK – which runs the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification – currently uses 2,200 pools across the country. The top seven providers have a collective income of £500,000 a year as they can charge their own fees and receive all of the income; the only cost is the NPQL training pack, purchased from the IQL.

Meanwhile, the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) UK has launched a Rookie Lifeguard programme for kids – an excellent progression from swimming lessons, as well as being easy to implement. To take the course, ▶

NEW QUALIFICATIONS

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SLM – ASA Operator of the Year 2010
(main image); Water Babies (inset)
spends over £2m a year on pool hire

▶ the instructor doesn't have to be a lifeguard, but does need a recognised teaching qualification. Most swimming teachers then need no more than the £42 Rookie Lifeguard Pack to qualify to teach the programme, with no additional annual fees to pay.

Ceri Kingston, assistant lifesaving programmes manager at RLSS, says the programme is good for keeping children interested in swimming, as well as providing another revenue stream for the club or leisure centre: "Income can be generated through the sale of places on the course, ongoing Rookie Awards and Progress Books – there are a number of bolt-on awards that Rookie Lifeguards can work towards, which add an element of fun, build confidence and help retention."

FIND OTHER USERS

Hiring your pool out to external organisations is another way of bringing in revenue, from diving or canoeing clubs to baby swimming lessons run by freelance swimming instructors.

Water Babies is the world's largest baby swimming company, teaching more than 24,000 babies and toddlers each week through a network of more than 400 franchises. This year, the company

will spend more than £2m on hiring pool facilities across the UK.

Water Babies' MD Steve Franks says: "Water Babies can offer pools secure and ongoing additional revenue, not only through secondary spend on food and drink but also through membership conversions and hire of dry-side facilities for our underwater photo viewings.

"The nature of our business means we can often schedule classes to run during quiet pool times and our courses offer a natural progression into operators' existing Learn to Swim programmes."

Shire Hotels runs Water Babies classes at three of its six hotels and has found it to be a good retention tool for members with new families. "The programmes are a great income generator, particularly as they take place in quiet times and parents often stay for refreshments," says group spa director Stuart Angus. "These classes also help differentiate us from our competitors."

SPORTING CHANCE

While delighting some members, tying up the whole pool with classes may annoy those who prefer lane swimming, so programming requires a fine balance to optimise pool use while keeping everyone happy.

Sarah Hobbs, David Lloyd Leisure's head of family and programming, says: "It's always a challenge, but we do know the usage patterns for our members and try to ensure that the programme

reflects the needs of everyone.

Generally, group swimming lessons account for 15 per cent of term-time pool programming and we always ensure that, during these times, there's an option for members who just want to take part in swim training by keeping one or two lanes open for lap swimming."

In fact, DLL aims to get all of its members using the pool in some way. Personal training is offered for the pool, bringing a touch of gym culture to the water, and adult and children's swimming lessons are also offered. However, gone are the days when adult lessons focused on adult beginners who missed out when they were younger: with triathlons becoming increasingly popular, a growing number of half-decent adult swimmers are now keen to brush up on their technique.

Another opportunity for operators is to host water polo matches. Not only is this one of Prince William's favourite sports, but it will be making an appearance at the 2012 Olympics, and British Swimming CEO David Sparkes is hoping this will kickstart the sport across the country.

Now is the time for operators to think big with their pools, making sure they get the most from their assets, ensuring their USP is maintained – and boosting their profitability.



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Dawn Tuckwell looks at ways in which operators can track their members' progress outside the four walls of their facilities

ON THE MOVE >>>>>>>>

Every fitness professional appreciates the importance of motivation, but also the challenges associated with inspiring gym users to achieve their goals – particularly when you consider that most of those goals cannot rely solely on exercise done in the gym. Activity levels during 'free living' time, diet and other lifestyle choices can greatly influence the effectiveness of a fitness programme.

So how can clubs and trainers help users integrate the advice and guidance offered within the gym into the outside world, while still being centred around the club? And how can data be captured both inside and outside the centre for use as a monitor and motivator? We take a look at some of the options available to help get the most out of every membership...

The medically-certified Ki armband is worn by members outside the gym, giving a 24/7 log of their activity



KI
Ki is a hi-tech tool that's able to measure exactly what your body is doing 24/7. The medically-certified armband records calories burned, intensity and duration of physical activity, steps taken and even sleep quality and duration – information that can then be uploaded to the Online Activity Manager. This interactive website is also used as an intelligent food diary that calculates calories consumed and nutritional values, like a balance sheet for your body. By measuring motion, galvanic skin response (sweating), temperature, heat flux and steps, sensors in the armband give a minute-by-minute record of daily activity to inform the user and help guide them to a fitness goal.

As well as enabling gym workouts to be reviewed objectively – to evaluate time efficiency of a workout or pinpoint the most effective exercises for calorie burn, for example – the Ki technology gives fitness professionals a window into members' lives outside the centre and an opportunity to assess all the contributing factors to goal realisation. The data from the armband can be shared, so a trainer can consult and guide while the user is away from the gym, and that knowledge can then be applied to maximise use of facilities in a workout programme.

The accountability afforded by the nutritional diary opens a unique channel for communicating nutrition advice and

evaluating lifestyle. Ki Lifestyle Solutions offers gyms the option to package the armband within a weight-loss programme, to measure and improve effectiveness of the programme. The weight-loss package can be used as a secondary revenue channel among members and non-members alike.

POLAR FT40

The Polar FT40 comprises a heart rate monitor belt and a training computer worn on the wrist. Customisable heart rate target zones motivate the user to optimise training intensity, while the EnergyPointer feature automatically calculates an individual point where the main effect of training turns from fat burning into cardio fitness improvement.

A Polar FlowLink data transfer unit (available to buy as an accessory with this model) is needed to connect to a computer. The exerciser's workout information can then be uploaded and used in conjunction with the online Polar Personal Trainer, in which personalised training programmes can be designed.

The Polar FT40 can be used to assess training intensity, and allows PT plans to be better tailored





>>> Training can even be scheduled using the diary function, meaning that activity undertaken during unsupervised in-club sessions, as well as outside training, can be recorded and reviewed. Data is analysed to assess training intensity, so training load can be catered to individual fitness levels.

Installing a FlowLink data transfer unit and computer terminal in-club would provide members with a centrally located base for their training plan, giving them insightful feedback – as well as motivation, by showing progress – whenever they visit.

Clubs can also use this data to ensure that personal training programmes are created with more accuracy, while a fitness test function in the heart rate device could be used to highlight any changes needed to an existing programme.

The online service allows users to challenge each other and compare workout data, for example, while clubs could set motivational challenges for any members with Polar devices, bringing them together around a common, club-specific fitness goal.

LIFE FITNESS VIRTUAL TRAINER

As well as tracking in-club activity on Life Fitness Elevation Series Engage equipment, this online virtual trainer has



The Life Fitness Virtual Trainer can log outdoor workouts using a new mobile phone app that utilises GPS functionality

the capability to log workouts done on other cardio equipment, during weight sessions or outdoor cardio activities via a new mobile phone app that's just launching on the market now.

The free app, which anyone can sign up to use, is an extension of the online tool and syncs information for ease of use. By plugging your mobile device into the dock of any Elevation Series Engage product, the user can choose a pre-programmed workout. Workout data is then stored for posting to social media, measuring progress and assessing the information with a trainer.

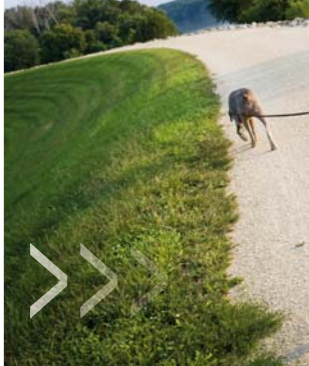
The app also utilises GPS functionality to track exercise done outdoors – plotting distance, route, calories and pace. Exercise programmes can be designed – with or without a trainer – and scheduled on the app, which can then be synced to the iPhone's calendar to give workout reminders.

Clubs therefore encourage members to stick to training plans – and thereby get the most out of their membership – by enabling them to complete their scheduled workouts even if they are unable make it into the gym, as well as by reaching out into their 'free living' time via the calendar sync tool.

MYZONE

MYZONE is a heart rate monitor aimed at clubs and other institutions wanting to measure and promote active lifestyles, monitoring calorie burn, effort and heart rate. Heart rate belts are supplied to clubs, to distribute to members – either as a joining incentive or as an additional purchase. Each belt can store 15 hours of data – whether carried out

Collecting data on members' activities outside the club can help create more effective in-club programmes



inside or outside the club – which is viewed via MYZONE kiosks. The kiosks, located in-club, automatically download data from the heart rate belts when members enter; the data can then be viewed either on-screen at the kiosk or on the MYZONE MOVES website.

As well as secondary revenue from MYZONE belt sales (clubs buy at £30 and sell at a recommended £40–45), the system allows members to track progress and be motivated by other users. Clubs also gain insight into members' habits and progress, as all

data is available to trainers and can be analysed centrally.

A gym chain could, for example, use the results to measure which of their clubs achieve the best fitness improvements for members.

Users are encouraged to wear their MYZONE belt by rewarding them with 'MYZONE points'. Points are allocated to the user for time spent in the different heart rate intensity zones and can be used as a loyalty scheme to redeem gifts, helping with member retention.



Data is automatically downloaded from heart rate belts into a central MYZONE station



Pocket PT delivers fitness videos to members' mobile phones to support their workouts outside the club

POCKET PT

Pocket PT is an affordable, plug-and-play system for engaging large volumes of members inside and outside of clubs, offering online training programmes and support. The system is based on a website and mobile app that provide fitness information in the form of text and videos. Software is customised for clubs to include branding and any other specific requirements. Members complete an online fitness and goal assessment via a series of questions that lead to a templated fitness programme. Programmes can then be customised further – by trainers or members – and the videos and information available are designed to support and motivate in the manner of a virtual personal trainer.

Although there is no actual activity monitoring with this option, as long as members stick to their programmes, clubs are able to guide and support higher volumes of members along a fitness path. The tool allows for

increased levels of direct, two-way communication between members and PTs, with trainers able to access member accounts remotely to customise or design new workouts as often as required.

Calendar and messaging functions allow clubs to further personalise and engage members, reminding them about events, classes or sessions, while the automated messaging capability – programme reviews after completing a first workout plan, for example – give members a personalised experience that requires almost no admin or man-hours from the club.

Pocket PT also acts as a direct marketing channel, with the ability to analyse users' data and target specific groups. Advertising space on webpages and communications can be sold, providing extra revenue for the club.

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THE EXPORT MARKET

India's wellness services market – encompassing beauty and rejuvenation, slimming and fitness, and alternative treatments – is growing at 33 per cent annually, according to an April 2010 report by global knowledge services firm Netscribes.

The country also has enviable growth predictions: in July of last year, the Economic Advisory Council to the Indian prime minister forecast a growth of 9 per cent in the economy for the current financial year (2011/12). Even the more pessimistic predictions – taking into account India's inflation levels, interest rates and current account deficit – suggest that growth of around 8 per cent is achievable.

And this trend is set to continue: Economist Intelligence Unit analysts predict that India's real GDP will continue to grow by an average of 8.7 per cent a year until 2014/15. This is a market not only of burgeoning business potential but also rising consumer spending; some experts predict this will quadruple between 2005 and 2025.

In the first of a two-part series, Kate Cracknell investigates the lure of India for the international fitness franchise

Yet, in spite of this – not to mention the reported growth of the wellness services market – the local fitness industry is still relatively undeveloped, even when compared with those of other emerging markets. *The IHRSA Global Report 2011* is now out and indicates that, with a population of 1.3 billion, China has 2,427 health clubs, 3.2 million members and annual revenues of US\$1.26m; in India, only 0.41 million of its 1.2 billion population are members of 1,175 clubs – a penetration level of 0.05 per cent – with annual revenues of just US\$0.5m.

Compare this with established markets such as the US – revenues of US\$20.3m from 29,890 clubs and 50.2 million members, all from a population of just over 300 million – and it's easy to see why India and China are both seen as high potential markets.

But India in particular seems to be grabbing operators' attention. It's set to

overtake China as the most populous country in the world by 2025-2030, with English relatively widely spoken and a demographic split that favours health clubs: some reports claim more than 50 per cent of the Indian population is aged under 25, with more than 65 per cent below the age of 35. Little wonder, then, that a number of international fitness brands are lining up to enter this market.

According to *The IHRSA Global Report 2011*, the market is led by local operator Talkwalkers, with 100 clubs, followed by international franchises Gold's Gym (50 clubs) and Snap Fitness (22 clubs). Franchises are also leading the latest surge of international interest: women-only operations Curves and Vivafit have recently announced plans to enter India.

This focus on franchising is perhaps not an unexpected situation given the complexity of doing business in India, with its high levels of bureaucracy, and the invaluable local knowledge and existing contacts that a master franchisee can bring to the table. But even then it's not always easy. We talk to a number of fitness franchises either already operating in, or looking to enter, the Indian market about the opportunities and challenges it presents.

“ More than 65 per cent of the Indian population are below the age of 35 ”



Challenges: Women-only operation
Contours Express has been in India for five years, but says high rental and advertising costs remain an issue

CONTOURS EXPRESS INTERNATIONAL – LOCAL NUANCES

ENTRY TO INDIA: 2006

NUMBER OF SITES: Seven

EXPANSION PLANS: 100 gyms in the next five to seven years

“Specifically within franchising, India offers more freedom than other countries, not to mention the opportunity for potential fast growth and brand building in the fitness market,” says Keith Dziki, president of Contours Express International.

“Indians are also starting to take their health and lifestyle more seriously and are turning to professionals in the health and wellness industry to help them gain control over their lives, with proper diet and exercise. This is especially true of the female population.”

Chandra Gopalan, director of Contours International India, adds: “Women in India are not fitness savvy – they often confuse ‘slim’ with ‘fit’. Most are content with their half-hour power walks and don’t see strength training as essential as one ages. Only a very small percentage of women currently go to gyms.

“Our typical member is rich or ‘super rich’ – other social classes struggle to make ends meet, so a gym simply doesn’t fit in their life – and aged between 30 and 45. Older women do not go to gyms.

“We’ve altered our business model in India in response to demand. Our 29-minute workout has not been accepted that well, simply because women only feel satisfied if they spend an hour or more in the gym, so we’ve

added programmes such as toning and abs, body sculpting and yoga classes, plus personal training. Members do the circuit and then opt for one or two of the added programmes.

“Our biggest challenge has been exorbitant rental costs, particularly in larger cities. Maintenance is also an issue due to the pollution levels – we need to change our displays almost annually.

“Other challenges include low awareness about women’s fitness, particularly in ‘tier 2’ cities, with much education required. There’s also very little knowledge about franchising within the Indian culture: most potential franchisees don’t understand the need to pay a franchising fee or ongoing royalty.”

She continues: “It’s a challenge to generate enquiries and footfall too, and the cost of growing a brand here is significant. Due to the clutter in India, especially in the big cities, your brand can only be visible with repeated presence in the media, on billboards and so on – but advertising is very expensive. Most gyms resort to small local promotions with hardly any brand promotion. There are therefore still a fair number of women in our neighbourhoods who are not aware of our presence at this point, despite us being here for five years.

“Unless your brand is very well known – like Gold’s Gym – franchising with an international brand has little value in India. Although it remains

true that anything from the west is perceived to be superior to Indian products, women do not yet appreciate the value of our product as Contours International is still an unknown brand here.

“There’s also hardly any price differentiation between large gyms like Gold’s or Fitness First and small gyms like Contours International. The big players work on member volumes and smaller ones find it difficult to compete.”

On a positive note, Gopalan explains: “There’s a huge untapped market here. Indians are willing to pay for good health if you can create a fitness centre to which they aspire. Location is very important – despite the high rents, your brand must be seen in upscale locations – and price must be moderate. But people are willing to pay for a place in which they want to be seen.”

However, she warns: “A franchise route does not cut the bureaucracy and red tape, and you must perform a proper study before you launch your operations. India is very diverse, with each state very different. Your business needs will be equally diverse.”



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fitness
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Do your research: Curves spent two years preparing for its entry to the Indian market. Hiring the right people is key, says its CEO

CURVES – TRIED & TESTED

ENTRY TO INDIA: 2010

NUMBER OF SITES: Two, with three more to open soon

EXPANSION PLANS: 250 sites over three to five years

“India is a very challenging yet promising market, with high awareness of health and a significant need for gyms. The potential market is estimated to be 200+ million people,” says David Ramadan, CEO of Curves for Women – India. “However, as yet there’s a lack of women-only fitness centres, in spite of a huge need due to high rates of obesity and related illnesses such as diabetes.

“Our business model and offering in India is therefore the same as in over 60 countries worldwide – a 30-minute concept that specialises in women-only fitness and weight loss – although costs vary from one city to another. We want to really drive women’s fitness in India and plan to keep our membership rates affordable for the majority of the middle-class.

“The member profile in India is also very similar to that of our members worldwide, from women

who are very dedicated to exercise to women who have never exercised in their lives. We cater for all, and our basics are the same around the world; the whole point of buying a franchise is that it offers an opportunity to follow proven successes and avoid known failures.

“I don’t think you have to take a fundamentally different approach in India from anywhere else: all countries and markets have specific laws, rules and regulations. If you do your research and follow them correctly, with the right local talent in place, I believe you can overcome all obstacles. We spent almost two years preparing for our entry into India, and thus far we’ve enjoyed a smooth start to our operations.”

He concludes: “I strongly encourage international companies to enter the Indian market – but take your time, hire the right people and do your research locally.”





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ÉNERGIE – FITNESS PORTFOLIO

ENTRY TO INDIA: **TBC**

NUMBER OF SITES: **None**

EXPANSION PLANS: **10 clubs in two years once franchisee secured**

Last year, the énergie Group revealed a two-year plan to target the recruitment of a master franchise partner to launch the group's fitness brands in India. The plan specifically targets the rapidly developing western and southern regions of India.

"We've been looking at the Indian fitness market for some time now and have already begun investing considerably in understanding and identifying the right opportunities," says énergie's co-founder and brand and marketing director David Beattie. énergie believes there's a significant gap in the Indian market for its brand, as Beattie explains: "We deliberately created énergie to be a universal offering, and this is helped greatly by the diversity of our four key brands: Fit4less by énergie, énergie Fitness for Women, énergie Fitness Clubs and SHOKK énergie."

He continues: "The Indian market offers many cultural and language challenges – in addition to the physical distance from our UK head office. However, our experience in the Middle East over recent years has given us a knowledge and understanding of the many aspects needed to satisfy local cultures, from language translation to physical construction, as well as marketing to the right audience. We work with local intelligence to understand and respect differences, in order to create a fitness club that best appeals to the local market."

To ensure the right investor and master franchisor is found, énergie has increased its international reach via online marketing and has put further emphasis on international opportunities at its monthly 'Discovery Days', giving prospective entrepreneurs both domestic and international options.



The second part of this series, to appear in the next issue (HCM Aug 11), will feature Snap Fitness, Vivafit, Holmes Place and Anytime Fitness.



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research round-up

A combination of aerobic exercise and resistance training can help diabetes sufferers, a new study has shown

think twice

The number of adults with diabetes in the world has doubled since 1980, according to new research by Imperial College London and Harvard University in the US, published in the *Lancet*.

However, a new study by Canadian researchers^{*} offers a ray of hope, finding that glycaemic levels among patients with Type 2 diabetes can be improved by a workout programme that includes both aerobic exercise and resistance training.

Typically, those who suffer from diabetes are recommended sessions of aerobics to help treat their medical condition. However, the study – which was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* – suggests that adding strength training could result in greater benefits.

the study

The randomised, controlled trial was based on 262 sedentary men and women in Louisiana, US. The average age of the group was 55.8 years old; 63 per cent of participants were female and 47.3 per cent were non-white.

All participants had Type 2 diabetes, and all took part in a nine-month exercise programme. The participants were split into four groups.

Forty-one participants comprised the non-exercise control group: they were offered weekly stretching and relaxation classes and were asked to continue with their typical physical activities.

Seventy-three participants were assigned to a resistance-only training group, where they exercised three days a week. Each session included two sets of four upper body exercises, three sets of leg exercises and one set each of abdominal crunches and back exercises.

Incorporating resistance training in a workout can help patients with Type 2 diabetes to improve their glycaemic levels

Seventy-two people took part in the aerobic-only exercise group, where they expended 12 kcal/kg of bodyweight each week – around 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week.

Then there was the combined aerobic exercise and resistance training group, to which 76 people were assigned. Two resistance training sessions a week consisted of one set each of upper body, lower body, abdominal and back exercises. In terms of aerobic activity, they expended 10 kcal/kg bodyweight a week.

All exercise sessions were supervised and were designed to have approximately equal time requirements.

Glycaemic levels were measured by testing the amount of haemoglobin A_{1c} (HbA_{1c}) in the blood.

resistance is not futile

The baseline glycaemic level across the group was HbA_{1c} 7.7 per cent.

Compared with the control group, the HbA_{1c} mean change in the combination exercise group was -0.34

per cent, while the mean changes in the resistance-only group at -0.16 per cent and the group that focused on aerobic training at -0.24 per cent were not considered to be statistically significant.

While all of the exercise groups reduced their waist circumference, only the combination group improved their maximum oxygen consumption compared to the control group.

In addition, while the resistance-only training group lost an average of 1.4kg fat mass, the combination training group lost an average of 1.7kg fat mass compared with the control group.

The report states that “only the combination of the two [resistance and aerobic training] were associated with reductions in HbA_{1c} levels.”



^{*} Church, TS et al. Effects of Aerobic and Resistance Training on Hemoglobin A_{1c} Levels in Patients with Type 2 Diabetes. *JAMA*. Vol 304, No 20, pp2253–2262 - Nov 10

CHANGING TIMES?

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Imagine this: you're browsing the Amazon website for a book on the hottest new exercise routines. You find exactly what you're looking for and, just before you use the 'one click to buy' option, a message pops up explaining that a course is starting next week at the health club round the corner: would you like to add it to your purchase?

You choose 'yes', instantly download the book to your e-reader, receive a QR (Quick Response) code for access to the club, and see receipts for both items on your smart phone. Every time you go back to the club (swiping your phone to gain entry), a small, 'micro' charge is taken via your Amazon account, and you're sent regular text and email messages from both the club and the author of the book to encourage you to stick to your programme. Fantasy? Science fiction? This scenario will be here sooner than you think.

The internet has transformed our lives – personally, professionally and financially. Shoppers in the UK spent a whopping £5.1bn online in January 2011, a year-on-year increase of 21 per cent, according to the Capgemini e-Retail Sales Index.

And it isn't going to end there: in a study commissioned by Google, the Boston Consulting Group predicts that the UK internet economy will account for 10 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2015. That's more than the country's construction, transportation or utilities industries.

One reason for this explosive growth would appear to be that the internet simply takes the hassle out of buying things – it's quicker, easier and more efficient than other, traditional methods. Banks and credit card companies may still wield a tremendous amount of power, but the giant e-tailers such as Amazon and eBay are where we've been introduced to radically new and easy ways of spending money. They convinced us that entering credit card details online was safe and socially acceptable; then they showed us increasingly more creative ways of demanding and receiving goods and services through 'friction-free' payments.

Think about how we receive the items we buy on the internet. Click on an app on the Apple Appstore and it's downloaded. Choose an e-book on

Amazon and it's available on your Kindle reader in seconds. Want to keep your music current? Pay your monthly fee to Spotify and you need never download music again; all your favourite tunes reside on servers in 'the cloud' and can be played on all your devices anywhere, any time – simple, affordable and convenient.

These changes have proved to be the catalyst for many new businesses, but they have also become hugely disruptive for those clinging to the status quo. So how is the leisure industry responding to the changes in the way we pay for things?

tried and tested

The traditional way to join a health club was to walk in or to enquire by phone (no prices given out under pain of death!), book a tour, consider the membership options, get signed up by a salesperson, then set up a payment plan with the internal finance team. It involved lots of people and expense for the club, and plenty of friction for the customer.

A cheaper alternative was to outsource the membership collections process to a bureau. For a fee, these agents took over the electronic BACS submissions and debt collections, leaving the operator free to focus on other elements of the business. This streamlined the back office transaction but didn't address the time and cost of signing up new members, or the fact that data was rarely collected to leisure management software.

The simple solution was to strip back to very few membership options and then move everything online; if you could book and pay online for something as complex as a flight, why not a health club membership? The smartest operators recognised that outsourced BACS payments, combined with carefully designed websites, created a compelling end-to-end solution for managing the whole joining and payment experience.



Mobile wallet: Payments via mobile devices are growing as technology rapidly accelerates



E-tailers: Amazon and eBay introduced us to new and easy ways of spending money online that are safe and socially acceptable

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"Since we moved to online joining, our customers tell us they prefer the feeling of convenience and control without the worry of being 'hassled' by salespeople," says Neil Henshaw, owner of Hello Fitness. With clubs in Blackpool, St Anne's and Bolton, all using a low-cost operating model, the benefits of friction-free joining quickly became apparent. "I simplified my memberships, outsourced collections and made sure everything integrated well with my website and leisure management software," Henshaw continues. "As well as reducing costs, it has meant my staff are now more visible and they focus exclusively on providing great service."

Ray Algar, MD of Oxygen Consulting, adds: "The business model for the new wave of budget club operators means they were compelled to use technology rather than people wherever possible."

The process of moving routine payments online also forced operators to reconsider existing processes; it was clear these were often simply too archaic or complex to transfer. This is where managers who view technology as

"Since we moved to online joining, our customers say they prefer the feeling of convenience and control"

somehow 'separate' from their operations can fall down. Technology drives business change by allowing more creative ways to charge for products, services and memberships – something mobile telephone and airline operators have long since realised and perfected. Get ready for unbundling and micro payments.

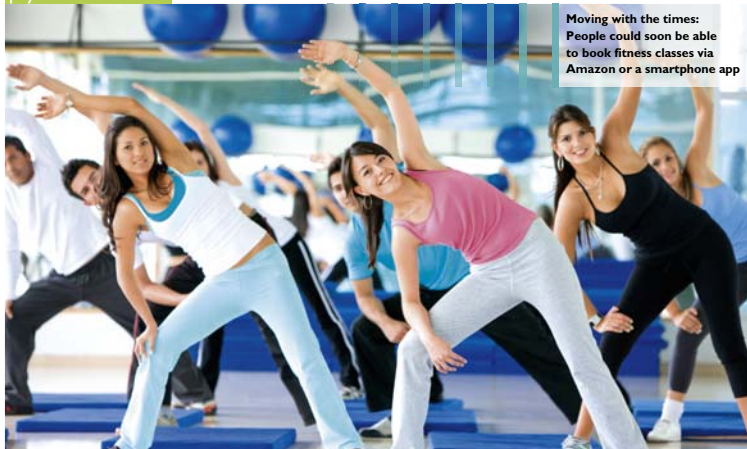
payments 2.0 – small and very mobile

Now that it's so much cheaper to process money, there are many more opportunities for making small charges in a cost-effective manner, which in turn encourages 'unbundling'. Operators are starting to look at how they can provide a varying 'a la carte' menu of products

and services to generate wider usage and increase spend per head, rather than the traditional 'one fee for all' structure.

Hans Muench, IHRSA director Europe, says: "The use of modern technology in health clubs is making it easier for members to spend money in a cashless way, particularly secondary spend."

"Leading indicators at IHRSA clubs show non-dues revenue to account for more than 30 per cent – and climbing – of total revenues. Particularly where clubs 'unbundle' their services, the control element becomes more important – permitting those who paid for extra services to use them while preventing others from accessing them. Technology plays a crucial part."



► Fresh Fitness in Denmark allows members to pay for add-on options such as group exercise classes via a contactless wristband, which also doubles as a membership ID. Other operators such as Fitness First in Frankfurt offer cashless facilities through the use of 'smartcard' bracelets, where drinks can be purchased simply by placing the bracelet against the reader.

"Munich-based operator Nautilus Fitness has even applied the principle to the gym itself, whereby a member can pay extra for use of a 'premium' piece of cardio equipment," says Muench. "Its income per member doubled as a result of this unbundling."

Where the basic membership fee for the club becomes so cheap, in effect, it becomes a commodity. People don't cancel, but pay more as they use more of the facility's resources. This approach could mean a complete rethink of customer retention measurement, as paying a minimum fee is seen merely as a neutral state rather than being a sign of continued use and commitment to a club.

"Now that the low-cost club model is becoming established and successful, many of these new ways of working are sure to be taken on by mid-market and premium operators over time," says Algar.

cash moves to 'the cloud'

Payments using mobile devices are also growing rapidly, with almost a third of internet users accessing the web through smart phones, according to the Boston Consulting Group. In the past,

people thought of internet use as a 'sit forward' activity using a screen, keyboard and mouse. Now you have internet TV, iPad and other tablets (so called 'sit back' internet) as well as – the biggest change of all – mobile devices and smart phones. Joining online can just as easily be 'joining on the move', as the power and sophistication of mobile devices accelerates at a dizzying pace.

Along with being able to pay for something on your mobile via SMS, pretty soon most (if not all) mobile devices will be equipped with a chip for Near Field Communications (NFC). NFC transforms your mobile into an electronic wallet every time you place it near the appropriate receiver – think London Underground Oyster card in a mobile phone. No more membership cards: just wave your phone to gain access. Owe money? A wave of the phone deducts the amount and allows access again.

The Olympics in 2012 are proving to be a big driver for friction-free payments via mobile devices, with a recent partnership between Visa and Samsung sure to be the first of many. The biggest thus far has been the recent announcement of Google Wallet for the Android mobile phone operating system. With market researcher Gartner predicting the total value of mobile transactions to reach £147bn in 2014, demand for mobile wallet services will be huge and can't be ignored by operators or suppliers.

Another interesting development is the growth of Quick Response (QR)

codes. These are similar to barcodes but can hold substantially more data, opening up the possibilities for buying goods and services. For example, a trial membership or day pass can be purchased online, with the QR code sent to the customer's phone. All they have to do on arrival is show this to the appropriate QR reader and they can gain access. A member could also be given a personal QR code which they can use to pay for items in a 'cashless' system.

Kevin Scott, managing director of collections services provider Harlands Group, has seen the potential of friction-free payments for club operators and predicts that the health and fitness industry will see many more changes in the near future: "With so many new technologies coming into play, club operators will need to re-evaluate and re-engineer what they currently offer. Customers won't tolerate long-winded paperwork, complicated processes and less-than-instant access. For innovative operators and their suppliers, this is a tremendous opportunity to reach out to many more people than was previously possible – and at a much lower cost."



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Urban adventure

Franck Gueguen is CEO of the newly combined Club Med Gym, in France, and Swiss brand Silhouette Fitness. He talks to Jo Talbot about the takeover, the international alliance and the urban market

What's your professional background?

I started as a stage designer at Club Med in 1976 and progressed through the ranks, including group HR director and CEO for the Pacific area. I joined the management committee in 1984 and have been CEO of Club Med Gym (CMG) for over five years.

Tell us about Club Med Gym

It's a network of clubs in Paris that targets young urban professionals, with a strong focus on innovation, particularly in group exercise. We're number one for group exercise in France with more than 50 types of class, including 12 aqua classes, nine dance classes, and even singing and piano classes – all for wellbeing. CMG has 70,000 members across 22 clubs in Paris. The largest club has 6,500 members alone.

How many CMG sites are there?

We have 74 clubs worldwide – the 22 CMG clubs in Paris, 32 sites managed by our subsidiary company Club Med Gym Corporate, and 20 in luxury hotels or within Club Med Villages, which is run separately but for which I'm an advisor. We also run the fitness industry training provider IMF.

Tell us more about your focus on innovation

We work with the leading suppliers – Technogym in Europe and Life Fitness in the US. We react to what people want. For

Aside from traditional exercise classes, Club Med Gym also offers singing and piano classes for wellbeing



example, our members wanted aqua cycling so we brought it in. These sessions involve specially designed exercise bikes being lowered into the water for a group exercise class that's easier on the joints than traditional cycling, and it's very successful. Soon we'll also be launching our new aqua running classes – the same thing but with running machines.

Tell us about the sale of CMG to 21 Centrale Partners in 2008

21 Partners is a private equity company that's active in the growth of mid-market companies in France and Italy. It acquired Club Med Gym in an LBO [leveraged buy-out] in July 2008, because Club Med wanted to focus on its core business – namely holiday resorts.

How did CMG come to buy Silhouette Fitness?

I met the owners of Silhouette in 2006 when I sold them our CMG club in Brussels; at that time, CMG had a strategy to focus only on Paris. Afterwards, we kept in contact because we found we shared the same business vision – a love of the urban market. For personal reasons, one of Silhouette's owners wanted to move away from the fitness business, and so they offered Silhouette to us.

How was the purchase funded?

I can't disclose the price but it was a typical LBO. Acquisition was financed by two private equity funds: 21 Centrale Partners and its Swiss partner SEC Partners. Two banks were involved: UBS and LfPE.

Can you describe the Silhouette business?

Silhouette runs 23 clubs, very similar to those of CMG – urban and hi-tech – in Geneva, Zurich, Brussels and Paris. It's the Swiss leader, with 37,000 members; the high level of local brand recognition was very reassuring to us.

Why did you want to take on an operation in Switzerland?

My main strategy, supported by 21 Centrale Partners, is to grow our business. There's a strong consolidation process going on in our industry across Europe at the moment, and Switzerland seemed a very good first step for us given that we plan to expand in Europe.

Why was Silhouette seen as a good prospect for you?

Primarily it's a question of people, and I have a long-time relationship with Raoul Walter, the former CEO of Silhouette. Also, we're looking to expand in large European cities and Silhouette is active in large cities. Together, we now operate 45 clubs in three countries [France, Switzerland and Belgium], we represent a customer base of 107,000 members and we expect



“ We react to what people want. For example, our members wanted aqua cycling so we brought it in ”

to generate aggregated revenues of €80m. The deal fits in with our overall expansion plans and will bring value to our shareholders [2I Centrale Partners and SEC Partners].

Why are you expanding internationally before expanding nationally in France?

Our expertise is running clubs in big cities and there are not that many big cities in France besides Paris.

What are the plans for the merged company?

The two companies will focus on strengthening their leadership position in France and Switzerland through the opening of new clubs. We plan to open three or four more clubs in Switzerland in the next few years, and the same in Paris. The first two new Silhouette clubs in Switzerland should open in the next 18 months and the next CMG club is due to open in Q1 2012 in Place de la Bastille, Paris.

What will you change at the Silhouette clubs?

We're keeping the Silhouette brand because it's so well known. I can't disclose much else yet, but our first step will be to enhance the client experience. Listening to clients is one of CMG's core values, so we're talking to all current and former clients to help us tailor our offer – opening hours, schedules and so on. We also have aggressive refurbishing plans.

What other markets might you consider entering?

We're interested in all European markets, as well as Asia and South America.

Will your future growth always be through acquisition?

Not necessarily, but it is a good way to grow. We're also looking at going into franchising.

How do you feel about being the CEO of this new, larger company?

I'm very excited. It's a lot of work because my time is now shared between France and Switzerland, but I appreciate the



Club Med has acquired all of Silhouette's clubs in Switzerland – but these will continue to run under the Silhouette brand

new set of challenges, working with different people and getting to understand a new country and the market there.

Tell us about your home life...

For the moment, in terms of relationships, I'm free like the wind! My job is my family. In my spare time I walk, walk, walk and I like movies and skiing – in the winter I ski and in summer I water-ski. I also have a personal trainer twice a week and we run together outside.

What's your motto in life?

Life is beautiful: it's not easy every day, but when you have the energy and good people around you, it's fantastic.



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everlasting nutrition

Although it is largely known for its boxing equipment and accessories, Everlast has now launched its own sports/health supplements range in the UK.

Among it is the Everlast Energy Bar, a 45g bar containing 14g protein, 4g fibre, and 100 per cent of the daily recommended quota of vitamins C and E. It comes in three flavours: dark chocolate nut, oatmeal raisin walnut, and peanut butter chocolate crunch.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

everlast



new all-rounder to get you buzzing

New Get Buzzing natural energy bars, created by personal trainer Kate Wallace, are proven to help delay fatigue and enhance performance, according to a study at Buckinghamshire New University. The bars, which have no additives, are rich in protein and carbohydrate and can be eaten before or during exercise without upsetting the digestive system, or afterwards to aid recovery.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

getbuzzing

fitness-kit.net

the search engine for leisure buyers



Wherever you are in the world, find the right products and services 24/7 by logging on to *Health Club Management's* free search engine www.fitness-kit.net

appetite-suppressing protein bar from nutrichem

Nutrichem has introduced a protein bar that suppresses appetite, called Active Balance. The bar contains 32 per cent protein, plus vitamins and 2g of PinnoThin – a natural product that stimulates the release of the hormones that send satiation signals to the brain. It also uses the sweetener Isomaltulose that helps process carbs more slowly for lasting energy.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

nutrichem



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

multipower

new from multipower

Multipower has launched two new bars. Multipower Energy+Fruit is a 50g bar to eat during exercise. It contains 34g carbohydrates, gives an energy release from glucose and contains protein to protect muscles. The chocolate-flavour Recovery Bar, also 50g, is to be eaten after exercise as it contains 28 per cent protein and antioxidants for muscle recovery.

reflex offers tasty flapjacks and superior protein

Reflex Nutrition has two protein bars: High Protein Flapjacks, which are oven-baked and made from wholegrain malted oats, with no hydrolysed gelatine/collagen, containing 20g of protein and probiotics; and Pit-Stop bars, with 34g of extra high quality protein from ultra-filtered milk protein isolate and superior whey protein.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

reflex

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Nutritional products



fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

clif bar

'whole nutrition' bar made just for women

Luna Bar is a new 'whole nutrition' bar for women, made by Clif Bar, a California-based family business started by a man who wanted to create a better-tasting energy bar, and who named it after his father. Luna, the latest in the company's growing range, contains 23 vitamins and minerals that contribute to a woman's overall health. It comes in Caramel Nut Brownie (190 Kcal) and Nutz Over Chocolate (180 Kcal).

viper range for easy digestion and energy boost

Viper Active bars, from Maxifuel, are specifically designed to enable athletes to refuel on the go, without the digestive stress caused by many sports bars. It contains 36g of carbohydrates with the slow-releasing power of real oats and fruit, and the soft texture means it's easy to digest during intense exercise or at any time of the day. The Viper Boost bar contains a stimulating blend of caffeine, guarana and tyrosine to help rapidly enhance mental focus while energising the body.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

maxifuel

lucozade covers all bases with range of bars

Lucozade offers a range of four energy bars. The Body Fuel Energy Bar contains 36g of carbohydrate for performance and is suitable for before or after exercise; the Pro Muscle All in One Bar, has 34g of carbohydrate, 23g of protein and 5g of creatine, making it more suitable for high intensity training to increase muscle mass, power and strength; the Pro Muscle Protein bar, with 33g protein and 33g carbohydrate, is suitable for high intensity resistance exercise; and, for post-exercise, the flapjack Recovery Bar offers 10g protein and 20.7g carbohydrate.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

lucozade

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At SIBEC UK, keynote speaker Darren Campbell said his local leisure centre was key to his ultimate success. Katie Start talks to him, and other SIBEC delegates, about the critical importance of local authority leisure provision

changing LIVES

Darren Campbell MBE is a sporting superstar. In 2004 he defied the odds and claimed an Olympic gold medal as part of the 4 x 100m relay team at the Athens Games. "People from my background just don't experience this kind of success," he says. "I grew up in Moss Side, Manchester, where gun crime and drugs are rife. "My teachers wrote me off at a very young age. I was constantly being told that I would amount to nothing, that I was no good, that I was a waste of space. Yet on the sports field I could excel. Had this talent not been coached and nurtured, I honestly believe I would have spent much of my life at Her Majesty's pleasure. Sport really does have the power to change lives.

"The local leisure centre played a crucial role in my adolescence. It was here that I started to explore the physical talent I had been blessed with. I played badminton every Saturday and held my Level 3 coaching certificate by the age of 13. While most of my friends were hanging about on the streets, I was honing the physical and mental skills that would eventually lead to me being crowned Olympic champion."

Leisure services may not be classified by the government as statutory, and of course not everyone who uses a leisure centre will end up on the world stage, but access to quality services can clearly have a hugely positive impact on individuals as well as on the community as a whole.

community impact

In 2009, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council instigated a steering group to discuss how to tackle the growing issue

of anti-social behaviour. Sitting at the table were representatives from community youth teams, health services, the Greater Manchester Police and Oldham Community Leisure (OCL).

Ian Kendall, CEO of OCL, says: "Go!Oldham is a co-ordinated approach to promoting and delivering activities to the young people in the town. As well as promoting what's already on offer, we identify any gaps in key areas and fill them. We receive ongoing intelligence from outreach workers, who identify anti-social behaviour 'hot spots' throughout the borough. This allows us to step in early, providing appropriate activities to try to get young people engaged and drive down anti-social behaviour."

A dedicated website was set up to provide more effective signposting to

existing services, while programming was adjusted to include more taster sessions to engage those new to the activities. The scheduling of activities was also revised to ensure that services were being provided at the times of day when young people wanted to use them.

"The results have been incredible," says Kendall. "Greater Manchester Police reported a 46 per cent reduction in anti-social behaviour over the summer last year. This is a great example of how leisure operators, working in partnership with the local authority and other local community groups, can have an impact on the communities they serve – an impact that extends way beyond the boundaries of the facilities they manage. What started as a summer programme



Darren Campbell (left) with Noor Kassam, chair/CEO of McLean Events, which runs SIBEC (meeting forum inset)



We need to ensure our leisure offering evolves with changing interests and cultural trends

is now very much part of an ongoing community delivery plan."

engaging young people

In addition to introducing better programming and signposting, some local authorities are starting to develop radical new facilities to better engage with core community groups. Paul Cluett, commercial director at Alliance Leisure Services, says: "Thankfully, local authorities are starting to see the value in moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach to leisure. Thinking more creatively and engaging with partners such as Alliance to access capital funding and manage the build works has opened up a whole new world of opportunity."

"Working in partnership with local authorities, Alliance Leisure has recently developed two 10-pin bowling facilities and a public day spa. Next year, Bournemouth Borough Council will open a high ropes course at the Littledown Centre, and we're just about to start work on an indoor extreme sports centre with Flintshire County Council. This will include a climbing wall and a skate park."

"It's not enough to provide a traditional leisure centre and simply expect people to use it. If we can build programmes and facilities that excite and interest local residents, we have a much better chance of getting them active and addressing wider social and health issues."

Nigel McArthur, group operations manager for Sportspace (Dacorum Sports Trust), shares this opinion. He explains: "In July, the trust will open a radical new leisure development in Hemel Hempstead. The site will incorporate the longest indoor caving system in Europe, a climbing centre, a skate park, a BMX track and a high ropes course."

"The centre will also house a recording studio, a band rehearsal room, an internet café and a teen-focused health centre with counselling rooms. Youth Connexions Hertfordshire – a service for young people that provides information and advice, guidance and personal development opportunities for all 13- to 19-year-olds – will also be based on-site."

"The new centre will be accessible to the whole community, but our main target groups will be families and young adults. We want to create a

safe, fun and controlled environment where young people can hang out. In the leisure sector, we often talk about wanting our leisure facilities to become community hubs – this is exactly what we're aiming to create here."

"While there's still a place in the community for a more traditional multi-sports facility and swimming pool, we need to make sure our leisure offering continues to evolve in line with changing interests and cultural trends. Extreme sports are attracting interest from more and more youngsters. We want to respond to this and harness it for the benefit of the community as a whole."

SIBEC UK took place on 25–26 May, at the Marriott Forest of Arden Golf and Country club, and attracted 150 of the UK's most influential operators from the leisure and higher education sectors – www.sibec.co.uk



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[EASY DOES IT]

INTERIOR REFURBISHMENT COMPANY PE CONTRACTS
REVIEWS ITS RECENT WORK WITH EASYGYM



Specialist interior refurbishment company PE Contracts has been appointed as the principal contractor for the UK's first two easyGyms which will be located in Slough, Berkshire and Wood Green, London.

PE Contracts, which has been in business since 1967, is a true 'one point of call' business. It does not subcontract out the key elements of its services and therefore controls every aspect of the project, offering a more complete and competitive service.

easyGym Slough, formerly a Virgin Active club, was scheduled to open late last month. Covering a total of 1,115sq m (12,000sq ft), the work included demolishing walls to increase the size of the existing gym, forming a new group cycling studio, redecoration, replacement flooring, creation of a new women-only gym area, new electrics, signage and joinery. All of the work was completed and managed by PE Contracts.

Set to open on 19 July, easyGym Wood Green – also a former Virgin Active club – will occupy 1,486sq m (16,000sq ft) and is a much larger project than Slough. The existing male changing rooms are being demolished

PE contracts take responsibility for every aspect of the project, from creating new spaces to redecoration



The fit-out features the familiar 'easy' orange branding, making it instantly recognisable

and converted into a new gym, while new changing and shower facilities are being installed for both male and female members on the fourth floor. A new group cycling studio is also being created, along with redecoration, new flooring, electrics, signage and joinery.

Dominic Evans, MD at PE Contracts, says: "The easyGym brand is well recognised and the opening of the first two easyGyms in the UK is attracting a lot of interest from the national media, other fitness operators and the leisure sector in general. All eyes are on this project and we're proud that easyGym chose us. We're excited to be able to show off our workmanship to the world."

The new sites will remain true to the familiar 'easy' brand protocol, making gyms accessible to a wide demographic through the provision of a high quality service at an affordable price (see also interview, p28).

Both sites have been designed with a mix of hi-tech and function in mind, and the building materials reflect this. Durable bespoke rubber flooring with stylish coloured wall cladding, digital vinyl wallpaper and contemporary lighting have been used alongside fresh white walls and orange touches.

Keith Burnet, joint CEO of easyGym, says: "We chose PE Contracts for two reasons: its proven experience in the fitness industry and the fact that its work came highly recommended. For me, it's important not only that the finished project looks great and performs well over time, despite high levels of usage, but also that it comes in on time and on budget. I'm confident that PE Contracts will deliver on all of these criteria."

PE Contracts has seen significant growth in sales throughout the past year, despite the current economic climate. The company puts this down to its wide range of services, from the management of an entire build project to individual components that include ceramic tiling, dry lining and partitioning, hygienic wall cladding, flooring, suspended ceilings and decoration.

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MEMBERS' CHOICE

Shortlist for inaugural health club awards announced

The shortlist has been announced for the first ever Members' Choice Health Club Awards, supported by *Health Club Management*



The Health Club Awards are unique, being the first consumer awards for the industry. Clubs that enter are rated by their members, who answer a series of 15 questions about facilities, customer service and value for money. Simon Brown, who runs the competition, 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 Members' Choice 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 rating clubs this way, we will find out who's giving the best membership value in regions around the country."

Liz Terry, managing director of The Leisure Media Company, adds: "Creating a successful club isn't simply about providing the best facilities – it's about the staff, communication, customer service and whether the club provides value for money. The Health Club Awards are designed to recognise clubs that are excelling in these areas, giving a new dimension to their marketing efforts."

THE METHODOLOGY

Between January and March of this year, more than 16,000 members completed the questionnaire about their club. Across each of the 14 regions in the UK, clubs were subsequently ranked based on their average score, with up to 10 clubs then shortlisted in each region provided they achieved the minimum numbers of votes required.

In phase two of the competition, clubs' scores will be weighted according to their percentage return rate – ie number of votes as a percentage of their total active membership during the voting period. This will determine each club's final score and ranking both regionally and nationally.

Gold, silver and bronze winners will be awarded for each region, in addition to which individual Grand Prix Awards for Best Club in the UK will be awarded in two categories – over 2,000 and under 2,000 members.

"The format of the award scheme enables small, independent clubs to compete on a level playing field with the larger chains. This was one of our core aims when designing the competition format," says Brown.

One such club to make the shortlist is Activzone in Guildford, Surrey. Gym owner Sonja Botha says: "The reason for our success is purely down to our fantastic staff. They make people feel welcome – our club is non-intimidating and friendly. Sometimes it's hard to get our members to leave when we need to lock the doors for the night!"

There are also national categories for larger groups of clubs, including Best National Chain for operators with 30 sites or more. Nuffield Health, which entered most of the sites in its estate, has 30 clubs shortlisted. "We know this is down to the hard work of our staff," says regional director Ceri Morgan. "It's a real testament to them that so many of our members took the time to vote."

Meanwhile, Best Medium Chain will be contested between QHotels and two of the budget brands: Pure Gym and The Gym Group. "We're extremely proud of the nine sites that have made the Health Club Awards shortlist," says John Trehan, CEO of The Gym Group. "With shortlisted clubs being selected on member feedback, this is a great endorsement for us."

The winners of the first Health Club Awards will be announced in September.



Best Medium Chain will be contested between Pure Gym (this image), QHotels and The Gym

If your club would like to take part in next year's competition, you can register now at www.healthcluboftheyearawards.com

THE SHORTLIST

SCOTLAND

- Nuffield Health Aberdeen
- Nuffield Health East Kilbride
- Pickaquoys Leisure Centre
- Pure Gym Edinburgh
- Pure Gym Glasgow

NORTHERN IRELAND

- Pure Gym Belfast

NORTH WEST

- Absolute Fitness Blackpool
- Crewe Hall Leisure Club
- Ladies Only Rochdale
- Nuffield Health Barrow
- Park Royal Leisure Club
- Ribby Hall Sport & Leisure
- The Gym Liverpool
- Thornton Hall Health Club
- Vibrant Fitness Clinic
- Y Club Manchester

NORTH EAST

No clubs were shortlisted

YORKSHIRE & HUMBER

- Aldwark Manor Leisure Club
- Crown Spa
- Nuffield Health Cottingham Manor
- Nuffield Health Doncaster
- Nuffield Health Guiseley
- Nuffield Health Harrogate
- Nuffield Health Hull
- Pure Gym Sheffield
- Tankersley Manor Leisure Club
- The Fitness Village, Doncaster

WALES

No clubs were shortlisted

WEST MIDLANDS

- Chesford Grange Leisure Club
- LD Fitness Tamworth
- Nuffield Health Cannock
- Nuffield Health Nuneaton
- Nuffield Health Telford
- Pure Gym Birmingham City Centre
- Pure Gym Birmingham West
- Pure Gym Wolverhampton
- The Gym Birmingham

EAST MIDLANDS

- Amber Valley Training Club
- Curves Lincoln
- Enderby Leisure Centre
- Hucknall Leisure Centre
- Nuffield Health Chesterfield
- Nuffield Health Leicester
- Nuffield Health Northampton
- Nuffield Health Nottingham
- The Gym Nottingham
- West Lindsey Leisure Centre

EAST OF ENGLAND

- Cambridge Belfry Leisure Club
- Everybody Health And Fitness Swaffham
- Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre

SOUTH WEST

- Bath Sports and Leisure Centre
- Bridport Leisure Centre
- Centurion Fitness Centre
- Easton Leisure Centre
- Nuffield Health Bristol
- Nuffield Health Plymouth
- Nuffield Health Yeovil
- The Gym Bristol
- The Gym Plymouth

SOUTHERN

- Beechdown Club, Basingstoke
- Fareham Leisure Centre
- Nuffield Health Aylesbury
- Nuffield Health Newbury
- Nuffield Health Portsmouth
- Nuffield Health Stoke Poges
- Nuffield Health Swindon
- Oxford Belfry Leisure Club
- Pure Gym Southampton

LONDON

- Nuffield Health City
- Nuffield Health Wandsworth
- The Gym Vauxhall
- The Gym West Hampstead
- YMCA Club London

SOUTH EAST (NORTH)

- Fanshawe Leisure Centre
- Grand Paddocks Leisure Centre

- Hartham Leisure Centre
- Loughton Leisure Centre
- Nuffield Health Letchworth
- Nuffield Health Twickenham
- Ongar Leisure Centre
- Spelthorne Leisure Centre
- Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre
- Watford Leisure Centre Woodside

SOUTH EAST (SOUTH)

- ActivZone Guildford
- Ashford International Leisure Club
- Isenhurst Health Club
- Nuffield Health Farnham
- Nuffield Health Leatherhead
- Nuffield Health Surbiton
- The Gym Brighton
- The Gym Guildford

BEST MEDIUM CHAIN (10–30 clubs)

- Pure Gym
- QHotels leisure clubs
- The Gym Group

BEST NATIONAL CHAIN (30+ clubs)

- Everyone Active Leisure Centres (SLM)
- Nuffield Health & Fitness Centres

GRAND PRIX AWARD (Best Health Club in the UK)

Grand Prix Awards will be presented in two categories (up to 2,000 and over 2,000 members). All shortlisted clubs are eligible to win in these categories.

FIBO AWARD WINNERS

Each year, FIBO hands out Innovation Awards to its pick of the latest fitness technology. We showcase the three 2011 winners



CATEGORY: Design
WINNER: Lamiflex
PRODUCT: Ciclotte

The Ciclotte is essentially a very funky home exercise bike. Designed by Italians, the idea behind Ciclotte was to update the look of the traditional exercise bike, creating a contemporary design that people would actively choose to have in their homes or offices.

Ciclotte is constructed from materials including carbon, steel and fibreglass, all of which is designed to keep the bike lightweight and portable. The saddle is ergonomic, comfortable and adjustable in three directions (forward/back, side to side and up and down) and the bike offers 12 programme choices.

Instead of using a chain-driven system, the Ciclotte has gears that turn the magnetised main wheel, creating a magnetic field and maximising the level of resistance.

It's a cool piece of kit that you might want to keep for yourself rather than put in the gym! For more information, visit www.ciclotte.com

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
lamiflex

CATEGORY: Health promotion
WINNER: Technogym
PRODUCT: mywellness key

Technogym's mywellness key is a small, portable device that measures daily physical activity in and out of the gym. FIBO judges praised the fact that it embraces a client's whole lifestyle.

The key assigns a daily activity target based on the user's lifestyle and goals, and then measures intensity and duration of physical activity performed throughout the day – clients are meant to wear the key every day, everywhere.

In the gym, the key also activates the Technogym equipment used in the client's programme, saving the results. It provides immediate visual feedback – a bar that's filled in the closer the user gets to their target – with data able to be uploaded at mywellness.com for further feedback.



The key is aimed at the intermediate bracket of clients who cannot afford personal training but, at the same time, are not satisfied by just working out themselves at the gym. For more information, visit www.technogym.com

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
technogym



CATEGORY: Training Equipment
WINNER: Cube Sports
PRODUCT: Kju:b

Kju:b, by Cube Sports, is a modular system of exercise equipment – comprising boxes, walls, poles and bars – designed for fitness and rehabilitation settings as well as school sports, free running and military fitness. Assembled using a simple slot-in system, the modules

take the place of classic equipment such as the high bar, double or balance bars. The FIBO judges felt the system would provide new exercise motivation for school children. Sets range from €6,150 to €16,500, or purchase pieces individually. For more information, visit www.cubesports.de

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
cube sports

health club management

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Printed by Womersley Midland.

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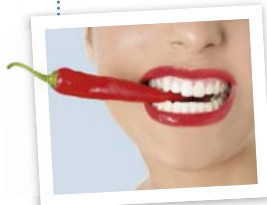
BRUSH UP TO GET BUFF WITH NEW SPORT

BrushBoarding, an extreme sport that originates from Exeter, has been given a credibility boost following a six-week study by Exeter University into its impact on people's strength and fitness levels.

BrushBoarding has been designed to simulate the feeling of surfing, snowboarding or skateboarding and involves riding a board, similar to a surfboard, on a ramp made of rotating brushes. James Kelly, who helped carry out the research, says: "Volunteers increased their performance in areas that are most likely to be important in board sport performance. This research identifies BrushBoarding as an effective way for board riders to train when there are no waves, no snow, or when it's too wet to skateboard."

The sport was invented by Kyle Dent, CEO of Extreme Sports Zone, two years ago. Details: www.extremesportszone.co.uk

SPICE UP YOUR FOODS FOR FITNESS BURN



Spicing up your daily diet with cayenne chili pepper, especially for those who don't normally eat it, could help curb your appetite and burn calories.

Researchers at Purdue University in Indiana, US, observed 25 non-overweight people – 13 who liked spicy food, 12 who did not – over six weeks.

Non-spice lovers ate 0.3 grammes of pepper with a meal while the others ate 1.8 grammes. In general, pepper consumption increased core body temperature and burned more calories through natural energy expenditure. Those who didn't regularly eat pepper also experienced a decrease in hunger after eating it.



PHOTO: BLACK PUDDING THROWING COMPETITION

PUDDING THROWING IN RAMSBOTTOM

Competitors from as far away as Australia are expected to gather in the small town of Ramsbottom in Bury, Lancashire, in September for the annual Black Pudding Throwing Competition.

The idea is to throw the famous Bury black puddings at a stack of Yorkshire puddings on a shelf. The competition standard puddings are 6oz and can only be thrown underarm. The person who knocks down the most Yorkshire puddings wins. The event is held alongside the town's annual festival, PudFest.

The bizarre contest is said to be based on the War of the Roses, a civil battle between Lancashire and Yorkshire in mediaeval England. When the armies ran out of ammunition, they apparently threw food at each other instead.

not so virtually impossible

Health clubs looking to improve the outcome of weight-loss programmes might think about adding a virtual element to their websites.

Online weight-loss programmes with weekly meetings could be as successful, if not more so, than those delivered in health clubs according to scientists at Indiana University in the US.

The 12-week study focused on people taking part in two different

weight-loss programmes – one involving typical health club meetings where members met for at least four hours a week, the other involving equivalent sessions in a 3D virtual world.

Both groups lost similar amounts of fat and weight, but the online group changed their behaviours more than the face-to-face group – they reported more positive changes in healthy eating and physical activity measures.



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