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participation goals

Driving participation in sport as a lasting legacy of the Olympics was one of the key promises that helped the UK to win the bid to host the Games – the pledge was for a million more people aged 16+ to be playing sport at least three times a week by 2013.

This was an ambitious goal. Perhaps overly ambitious – no other host city has ever managed to increase sports participation as a result of staging the Games, and some commentators have since suggested that it was never realistic. Implementation may also be at fault: allocation of funding has been questioned within the sports sector, while the fitness industry has been slow to develop clear goals. Whatever the reason, the publication of the 2010-11 Active People report sounded the final death knell for the target, which was officially scrapped by government at the end of last year.

The report indicates that 6.927 million people are now taking part in sport three times a week, including going to the gym – that's 632,000 more than when we won the bid in 2005. Not on target

perhaps, but still a notable growth, albeit with significant problem areas such as participation among older teens and women. However, within that picture, the gym sector remains static: in 2010-11, gym visits showed only a marginal increase from 10.71 to 10.74 per cent of UK adults, and the fitness industry's own figures suggest we're stuck around 12 per cent population penetration. The overall sport sector may be lagging behind target, but the fitness industry isn't providing much of a boost.

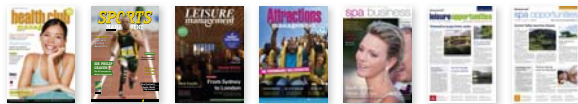
So what now for the legacy? Our industry bought into the original targets, and they inferred on the Games an exciting significance

– not just for the duration of the event, but for the future of the nation's sporting culture and its attitude to fitness. Government may have changed its mind, but we owe it to ourselves to remember our original ambitions. We should stick to our guns, remember our ethos – 'more people, more active, more often' – and use the Games to make as big a splash as possible. Indeed, by tracking frequency of participation, not just membership levels, Active People offers us an opportunity to monitor and improve on one of the industry's weak points: the number of inactive members. We should seize that opportunity.

Sport England is keen to stress that participation remains a key legacy goal, and that it is the specific target rather than the overall ambition that has been scrapped. Indeed, a government announcement due early this year will outline the new measure for monitoring participation, expected to focus on 14- to 25-year-olds. But the shift in policy offers us a chance to rethink what participation means for our sector. Watching sport on TV may not immediately drive people to our doors, so let's look beyond our four walls and be more creative in our approach. We need a broader outlook that encompasses the activity members do outside of our gyms, for example, as well as deeper involvement with the local community, including engaging with schools in line with the predicted new participation measures.

One thing is for sure: we can't stick with the status quo and expect participation to increase. The Games may prove more a catalyst for us to rethink our offering, and where we deliver it, than an immediate driver of new prospects to our doors – but they remain a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Kate Cracknell, editor
katecracknell@leisuremedia.com



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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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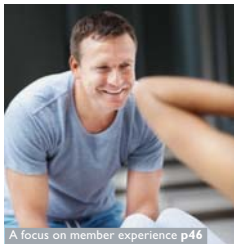
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write to reply



Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry? If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: healthclub@leisuremedia.com



PICTURE: WWW.ISTOCK.COM/ASIX

PTs using Hammersmith & Fulham parks pay an annual fee of £350

use of park space for paid-for training is easy to regulate

I would like to respond to Jean-Ann Marnoch's letter (*HCM* Oct 11, 06) regarding PTs paying to use parks.

It is correct that the licence safeguards local residents in ensuring all trainers are fully insured and accredited. However, the statement that the fee is £350 per park is incorrect – it costs £350 to enable a trainer to operate from 48 parks and open spaces in Hammersmith & Fulham (£7.30 per park per year). We have also found that, contrary to Jean-Ann's comments, many PTs do use parks instead of rented gym space.

Our decision to charge for park use has proven very easy to regulate: we have a dynamic, robust parks constabulary that has done an excellent job in identifying trainers and bootcamps. They use suitable tactics to approach and address the issue while remaining professional and courteous to both trainers and clients. It's also easy to differentiate between

friends training together and a paid-for PT session: those that advertise, have marketing material and more often than not a website need to obtain a licence.

The scheme is gaining momentum and support continues to grow. It's a model that's being introduced in many local boroughs, and which will hopefully lead to a more unified approach and some collaborative working for those trainers operating in numerous boroughs.

The FIA has also been in contact to request that we participate in a Working Group for the development of an Outdoor Code of Practice, which would act as a form of quality assurance, raising standards in the provision of outdoor exercise – a great idea that will benefit the industry in safeguarding the delivery of quality, safe outdoor fitness sessions.

james budkiewicz

acting sports community manager, london borough of hammersmith & fulham

cancer care: yogaworks joins forces with urban zen

Thank you for your story on the 'Move More' campaign (*HCM* Oct 11, p60), which raised awareness of the need for exercise programmes specifically designed for cancer sufferers and survivors.

We are truly impressed by our industry's efforts, and honoured to be joining the cause. YogaWorks, a global leader in yoga teacher training, has partnered with Urban Zen, the organisation founded by Donna Karan, to provide an Integrative Therapy Teacher Training Programme to assist in the treatment, wellbeing and empowerment of cancer patients. Together, we look to bring the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of yoga to terminally ill cancer patients around the world.

The 150-hour course brings together Eastern healing techniques, yoga therapy, essential oil therapy and nutrition with western medicine in a holistic approach to patient care. Participants will learn in-bed yoga postures, restorative poses, breath awareness and meditation to address common patient systems of pain, anxiety, nausea and insomnia. Once the course is completed, therapists will begin their practical experience working with patients at hospitals and cancer care facilities.

We look forward to giving teachers around the world the opportunity to get involved and make a difference.

phil swain
ceo, yogaworks



A new course enables instructors to offer yoga therapy to cancer patients



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write to reply

cutting human aspect of class instruction is a risk

I read the article entitled Money Spinner (*HCM* Aug 11, p36) and was extremely surprised to hear that clubs were running virtual classes without instructors. Although I do think well-made destination videos can work really well as a themed class (with an instructor) from time to time, I feel cutting out the human aspect of the instruction of the class is a risky way to squeeze profits out of a fitness business.

If you are a bigger gym and only run 10–15 indoor cycling classes a week, then maybe you are not making enough money out of your studio space to justify the square footage used. Removing the instructor's fee has an obvious financial benefit in black and white terms. However, it is the human element that makes one work so much harder in an indoor cycling session. In addition, customers become attached to

instructors' individual styles – they keep coming back to the instructors whose instruction styles they identify with. The instructor also educates and keeps an eye on safety and technique.

If you go to some of the US indoor cycling studios at, say, 10.30 am for a 45-minute session, you will see that those classes aren't packed as the timing is awkward. However, they generally get enough bums on seats to cover the costs and accommodate their riders who have to do the school run and don't get their 'me time' until late morning. This keeps those customers talking and reinforcing their brand.

At Boom! Cycle, a new independent cycling studio in London, we already offer 21 instructor-led classes a week and plan to launch more as soon as we can.

hilary gilbert
managing director, boom! cycle



PICTURE: WWW.STOCK.COM/TANKST776

The FIA's remit now extends well beyond its original gym-based origins

fia to rename to create 'more accurate representation'

As referred to in the recent editor's letter (*HCM* Nov/Dec 11, p3), the FIA (Fitness Industry Association) has announced its decision to rebrand – to change its name and visual identity to create a more accurate representation of its market position.

This is not to say that we are no longer the fitness industry, but that we are the fitness industry and then some! If a name is meant to follow the old mantra of 'does what it says on the tin', this is currently no longer the case for the FIA.

The current FIA membership base is over 3,000, with a plethora of operator and supplier members. These members now encompass both the indoor and outdoor activity spaces – a notable extension from our gym origins. Our partnership work is also growing at a fast pace, and that growth is beyond our 'fitness' boundaries. We are constantly building new and exciting partnerships across government, the private sector, sport and the 2012 Games legacy, in order to entice the nation to be active and break the 12–14 per cent glass ceiling.

The current brand fails to reflect this new capacity and actually feels constrictive to our market sector growth. As a business, we have outgrown our current name; this rebrand will be key to our long-term survival and leadership.

We will stay loyal to our vision of more people, more active, more often, but we believe 2012 is an ideal time to enhance our brand identity and showcase our offer to the wider market. A full stakeholder consultation process begins this month.

david stalker
ceo, fia



Boom! Cycle already offers 21 instructor-led classes a week and will launch more

500

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york gym revamp given green light by council

Members of the City of York Council's cabinet have approved plans for a £540,000 expansion of the Energise gym facility on an 'invest-to-save' basis.

The 60-station gym, which currently measures 195sq m (2,095sq ft), will now be expanded by a further 219sq m (2,357sq ft). This will enable more residents to use the facilities, either on a membership or a pay-as-you-go basis.

Councillors approved the project on 6 December 2011, and the work is scheduled to be completed by October 2012.



The centre will house a 25m pool and health club

dc leisure to run new birmingham pool

DC Leisure has been appointed by Birmingham City Council to operate and manage the city's first new public swimming pool to be built for more than 20 years. The £12.2m Harborne Pool and Fitness Centre will remain under local authority ownership, with facilities to include a 25m main pool, a learner pool and a 60-station adult gym.

An interactive children's fitness suite and an aerobics and dance studio are also proposed as part of the facility, which was due to open on 3 January and which was expected to come in £600,000 under budget.

pendle facilities in line for investment

Members of Pendle Borough Council's executive have backed plans to invest £160,000 in a refurbishment and replacement programme for leisure facilities across the area.

The full council has now been recommended to approve the proposal, with the additional capital expenditure to be funded using windfall income from a successful claim for overpaid VAT.

The construction work has been scheduled to commence in early 2012 and will be undertaken on a phased basis.

retention report announced

A new report, benchmarking the retention performance of the UK's fitness industry, will be published in summer 2012.

As well as charting retention figures, the National Retention Report (NRR) will look to provide strategic insight into member aspirations, expectations, motivations and experiences.

Published by Dr Melvyn Hillsdon and Dr Paul Bedford, NRR will follow the methodology of the 2002 and 2008 retention reports published by the Fitness Industry Association (FIA). The FIA survey analysed 293,000 member records from 507 sites.

NRR will also collect and report on member retention data for 2009, 2010 and 2011, enabling trend data comparisons.

In total, NRR will include analysis of one million member records, allowing retention



The study will aim to offer strategic insight into member expectations

information to be presented for the whole industry, by region and by sector, as well as understanding the consumer variables such as how retention varies by age, gender, Mosaic type, membership type and fee.

Dr Bedford says: "The aim of the report is to deliver a current benchmark for the industry and the various market sectors."

dll opens flagship farnham club

David Lloyd Leisure's (DLL) new £12m health and fitness club in Farnham, Surrey, was officially opened by Olympic gold medalist Denise Lewis on 6 December.

Facilities at the 6,000sq m (64,583sq ft) development include the group's largest Amida-branded beauty spa, which will span more than 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) and offer six treatment rooms.

Four relaxation rooms, a nail studio, a spa plunge pool, a spray tanning salon and steam experience rooms also form part of the spa, while an outdoor area will offer sauna cabins and a hydro spa pool.

A new agreement signed by DLL will see Aromatherapy Associates, Rodial and Alpha-H supply products for treatments and therapies.



David Lloyd Leisure has invested more than £12m in the new facility

A 25m swimming pool with a separate children's pool, as well as a 1,337sq m (14,391sq ft) gym with a wide range of cardiovascular and resistance machines, are also available at the new facility.

annual sales growth for leisure connection

Leisure Connection, the operator of more than 70 sports and cultural venues across the UK, has reported an increase in like-for-like sales for the financial year ending September 2011. During the 12-month period, fitness membership revenue and like-for-like personal training sales

grew by 1 per cent and 6 per cent respectively, compared with the previous year.

Swimming membership revenue and swimming school revenue also increased in the period, with the adult swimming programme growing by 200 per cent in 2011.

upgraded kingswood opens

Kingswood Leisure Centre has been officially unveiled following the completion of a major £3m refurbishment, which has been funded by South Gloucestershire Council (SGC).

The venue is operated by the Circadian Trust on behalf of the local authority, and now offers an upgraded health and fitness club and a new swimming pool.

The centre now offers more than 30 pieces of new Technogym equipment, along with the supplier's Wellness System and more than 20 studio bikes.

The completion of the refurbishment also coincided with the 50th anniversary of the opening of the first swimming pool for Kingswood, which was known as Soundwell Baths. Two remodelled and refurbished swimming pools were unveiled at the centre



Members of SGC with Circadian CEO Mark Crutchley (second from right)

in July following a first phase of work, while the second phase included the new gym area and dry changing facilities.

SGC chair Mike Drew says: "We are recognising both the importance of the facilities today and, at the same time, celebrating the rich history during the past five decades."

newcastle's jubilee 2 opens to the public

The new £10m Jubilee 2 leisure centre in Newcastle has opened. Newcastle Borough Council (NBC) was given the keys to the facility by developer Morgan Sindall on 9 December, with a full opening taking place on 12 December.

Facilities at the centre include a 25m, eight lane swimming pool, a 12m training pool with moveable floor and aqua gym equipment, a 90-station health club, a sauna area with steam rooms and feature showers, a 12m climbing wall, 4m bouldering and traverse wall, interactive children's activity zone and a café.

The centre was designed by Wm Saunders Partnership, and NBC worked in partnership with NHS North Staffordshire



The centre includes a 90-station health club and extensive wet areas

and Sport England on the project. The centre incorporates a number of sustainable and eco-friendly features, including using wood from sustainable Scandinavian forests in its glulam beams.

experts call for 'physical literacy' tests

Leading sports medicine specialists are calling for the introduction of mandatory 'physical literacy' tests in schools, both to help kids with health problems and to identify future talent.

Dr Andrew Franklyn-Miller told the BBC that the "physical competence" of young people

has been jeopardised by the failure to give PE the same priority as other school subjects.

Franklyn-Miller says that current testing helps identify children who struggle with maths or English, but don't look at physical development, CV fitness or co-ordination.

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pole dancing and vibrations at new club

A new Manchester-based independent health club is targeting students and young professional women by offering a mix of pole dancing and vibration training.

Pole Plates Studios was set up with an investment of around £44,000 and is located in a refurbished office space.

The club includes a pole dancing studio and a separate Power Plate studio with four Power Plate pro6 machines. Customers can buy one-off exercise sessions that start at £15 per Power Plate class and £12 for pole dancing, with membership and session package options also available.



The club will limit membership to 100 people

'vip gym' token yard club opens in putney

A newly launched private members gym in Putney, London, aims to give people a "VIP experience without the VIP price tag".

The Token Yard Club, owned by Giuseppe Minetti, is based on the business model of offering bespoke training schedules and limiting its membership numbers to a maximum of 100 members. Facilities include a main gym area for members, a large group exercise studio, and a Technogym-equipped personal training space – with en-suite shower – designed for one-on-one training.

Minetti says: "What's different about The Token Yard Club, apart from the exclusive look and feel, is that we give you a bespoke programme based on analysing your fitness, body type and metabolic rate. With this intelligence we create a bespoke programme to help you achieve your goals fast – be that weight loss, improved speed and performance or just getting back into shape."

"We designed the club to give people the things they need to work out while getting expert advice and guidance to help them exceed their goals."

power vibe opens in wales

Power Vibe, a new independently-owned Power Plate studio, has been unveiled in Tonyrefail, South Wales, by Helen and Paul Hoare following the conversion of a former office in the town.

The pair have invested £40,000 into the new fitness studio, which has been equipped with five Power Plate pro6 machines and which will offer 25-minute classes that start every half an hour.

Different classes will be held on each day to allow members to select a programme that meets their needs, with the timetable including legs, bums and tums and upper body workouts.

Classes cost £4.95 per session with multiple packages available. There are also plans to offer new classes during 2012, such as Power Plate Boxing.



The centre in Tonyrefail has been equipped with five Power Plates

Co-owner Helen Hoare says the club has a wide target market: "We quickly learned that the Power Plate machines can benefit many people, from those looking to improve their fitness to those with health issues such as arthritis and cystic fibrosis."

pro sw gym opens its doors in loughton

Pro SW Gym, a new independent gym set to be used by Ghana's national boxing team ahead of the London 2012 Games, has opened its doors in Loughton, Essex.

A Life Fitness-equipped cardio suite and 15 Spinner NXT bikes from Star Trac are among the facilities at the new 372sq m (4,000sq ft) boxing and fitness centre.

Designed to cater for amateur and professional boxers alike, Pro SW Gym also offers a full-size ring with six ringside punchbags, a speed ball and two floor-to-floor ceiling balls.

The new facility offers £49 monthly membership, which includes fitness classes, while a pay-as-you-go option is also available starting at £10 for use of the gym.



The centre will aim to cater for amateur and professional boxers

Pro SW Gym owner Michael Amoo-Bediako says: "Boxing requires a lot of cardio and resistance work. Speed and stamina are vital, but to achieve greatness, time needs to be spent on building up cardio and respiratory fitness."

boom! cycle opens in shoreditch

American model Hilary Gilbert has teamed up with British entrepreneur Robert Rowland to open a 230sq m (2,500sq ft) purpose-built indoor cycling studio in London.

Located in Shoreditch, BOOM! Cycle is the first in what will be a chain of indoor cycling

gyms in and around the capital – and possibly the UK. BOOM! offers clients the cost-saving and flexibility of pay-per-class pricing rather than a fixed monthly membership. The average class fee will be £12.50, with discounts given for both block and group bookings.

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new 'recruits' for cyq service

Awarding body Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ) has announced that Aquababies, Ariel Yoga and YMCAfit are among the providers to have signed up to its endorsement service.

Launched last year, the endorsement service aims to provide employers with a quality assurance kite-mark for the training they provide, even if no qualification is offered.

CYQ director Lori Randall says: "This endorsement is of particular benefit where training does not lead to a qualification, or go through the rigmarole of having a qualification attached. This independent quality assurance mark also adds value to in-house training and lessens the need for companies to send employees off-site to an external training provider."



Aquababies is among the providers to have signed up to the scheme

CYQ, which acts as an awarding body for the health, fitness and wellbeing sectors, is operated by Central YMCA and oversees qualifications delivered through a range of institutions.

deputy pm announces £1bn youth contract

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has announced details of the government's new Youth Contract, a £1bn programme that's designed to help young people into employment. The initiative, which is due to launch in April, will cover a three-year period and includes wage subsidies worth £2,275 a year for employers who recruit 18- to 24-year-olds.

It is hoped the programme will help at least 410,000 young people into employment, with a focus on getting the most "disengaged" 16- and 17-year-olds into school or college. There will be extra funding for apprenticeships and £50m to help people "persistently" not in education, employment or training between the ages of 16 and 17 years old.



The initiative will aim to create jobs for the young

Clegg says: "This is a £1bn package, and what's different about it is that it gets young people into proper, lasting jobs in the private sector. But it's a contract, a two-way street: if you sign up for the job, they'll be no signing on for the dole. You have to stick with it."

chelsea club to showcase ciclotte

London's Chelsea Club has become the UK's first health club to showcase Ciclotte, the world's first designer exercise bike.

Made with materials including carbon, steel and glass fibre, Ciclotte is said to represent a new solution for the luxury fitness world: gym-standard training on a machine weighing only 120lbs.

Ciclotte - which has been designed to target 'advanced users, dynamic fitness enthusiasts and those who appreciate the art of design' - has been created by Milan-based Luca Schieppati and built by the Italian Lamiflex Group.



The Irish register took two years to develop

new fitness register launches in ireland

Fitness Professionals Ireland (FPI), a nationwide independent register that has been backed by the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA), has been officially launched.

The new register for Irish exercise and health professionals took two years to develop and is now fully integrated with the European Register of Exercise Professionals. FPI is aiming to register around 600 professionals during its first year of operation, with its members meeting prescribed minimum standards of good practice.

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in brief...

ihrsa leadership award

Anastasia Yusina, president of Strata Partners in Russia, and Franck Gueguen, chair and CEO of Club Med Gym in France, were recognised for their achievements at the 2011 IHRSA European Congress, which took place in Milan at the end of October (see p20 for a full review of the event).

Yusina and Gueguen were joint winners of the 2011 IHRSA European Club Leadership Award, which is awarded annually and which recognises the European club leaders who have done the most to advance both their own company and the industry.

sale of bally total fitness sites

Fitness International – an affiliate of LA Fitness International – has acquired 171 Bally Total Fitness clubs in the US in a deal reported to be worth US\$153m.

The acquisition relates to all of the Bally locations in the states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington, the District of Columbia, all clubs in the greater Los Angeles area and certain sites in New Jersey, New York, Texas and Virginia.

The remaining 100 Bally-owned clubs will continue to be operated by Bally under the Bally name.

new signings for gymaround

GymAround – a network linking the best fitness clubs worldwide and designed to help business travellers to stay fit – has signed up more clubs to its international network.

In Spain, DiR has been signed up as the group's exclusive Barcelona partner. DiR operates 18 high quality clubs, of which 17 are located in the city centre (for an interview with DiR CEO Ramon Canela, see HCM Oct 10, p24).

GymAround works by allowing travelling executives to purchase day passes to health clubs belonging to the GymAround network, helping them stay fit as well as driving extra revenue to the clubs.

gogo launches fifth and sixth clubs

Finnish operator GoGo Liikuntakeskus opened its fifth club on 31 October, with the sixth scheduled to open on 11 January.

The chain, owned by Taru Vähätalo and Päivi Aholaita-Mäenpää, operates two distinct brands: full-service GoGo clubs and the low-cost gym brand GoGo Express.



The Finnish operator has two brands: a full-service fitness club and a low-cost gym offer

GoGo Express Seppälä, which opened in Jyväskylä at the end of October, is the operator's third budget site, while GoGo Hermia will be the third full-service club in the chain when it opens this month.

Equipped by Life Fitness, Concept2 and Sterling, the 1,100sq m GoGo Express Seppälä charges just €18 a month – the lowest membership fees in the country. Members have access to top quality facilities and equipment 365 days a year, including a 200sq m free weights area, virtual group cycling and a café.

Meanwhile GoGo Hermia, in Tampere, is a 2,000sq m new build club. For €40–60 a month, members have access to two large group fitness studios, a group cycling studio, large Star Trac gym, free weight and cardio areas, functional training area, core zone, Finnish saunas and free childcare.

vivafit opens first club in uruguay

Vivafit has opened its first club in the Americas with the launch in October of its inaugural club in Uruguay.

Located in downtown Montevideo, the club is overseen by master franchisee Ulises Fontanini. The master agreement foresees the opening of 20 Vivafits clubs in Uruguay over the next three years, and includes the right of refusal and the right to sell franchises in Argentina, Chile and the southern states of Brazil. Negotiations are now underway for more openings in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In addition to its market-leading position in Portugal, Vivafit already has clubs in Singapore, India and Spain, with the first club in Cyprus also under construction.



There are plans to open 20 Vivafit facilities in Uruguay over the next three years

club med gym: new smoking cessation course

Club Med Gyms (CMG) has recently launched a new smoking cessation programme at all of its clubs.

The programme, which has been developed in conjunction with medical professionals, lasts for two to three months and focuses on cardiovascular work. "This has been shown to help get rid of the desire for a cigarette," says CMG CEO Franck Gueguen.

There's also a strong nutritional element. "People think they'll get fat if they quit smoking," says Gueguen. "But

with our programme, which takes place in a health club environment, that's not true – we get them fit." Personal training sessions "with empathetic coaches" are also used to coach people in behaviour change, transforming their mentality to that of a non-smoker and breaking negative habits.

Different programmes are available for those under and over the age of 35 years, acknowledging that the smoking habit will be more deeply ingrained in older people.



The airport gym has 24-hour access and will offer group exercise classes and nutritional seminars

air fitness at barcelona airport

The gym at Barcelona's El Prat airport has been taken over by Rod Hill following a deal with World Trade Center.

World Trade Center, which operates the business centre and airport lounges at El Prat, built the gym in terminal 1 of the airport when it opened in 2009. The 450sq m gym, equipped by Technogym, was launched under the Air Fitness brand, targeting an executive market with a monthly membership of €35.

Hill, who took over operation of the site on 1 November 2011, has maintained the Air Fitness brand but has lowered the price to €19.90 a month in a bid to appeal to the 20,000 workers employed at the airport. "The aim is to create an affordable

corporate gym," he explains. "Pay as you go" options are also available for those transiting the airport.

The gym, which offers 24-hour access, will now introduce personal training and group exercise classes – gym-based circuits, for example, and group cycling. Further investment in equipment is likely. Seminars are also being considered – nutrition, the benefits of exercise, and so on – as well as bespoke workout programmes for specific job roles such as baggage handlers.

Madrid Barajas airport, where the business lounge is also operated by World Trade Center, has already expressed an interest in a new-build gym should this first project in Barcelona prove successful.

xbox 360 forms partnership with the nfl

In the US, the National Football League (NFL) has announced a new partnership with Microsoft, whereby Xbox 360 becomes the official console sponsor of the league.

Under the terms of the agreement, the entertainment and games console will work with the NFL's youth health programme, NFL PLAY 60, to teach youngsters about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and tackle childhood obesity. Kinect for Xbox 360 will be integrated into events and programmes.

NFL Media COO Brian Rolapp says: "Fitness is core to our game, and we are looking forward to working with Kinect

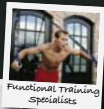
for Xbox 360 to evolve NFL PLAY 60 in new and innovative ways."

"The Xbox 360 brand represents many of the same values as the NFL, including fun, fitness and great entertainment," adds Microsoft's Dennis Durkin.

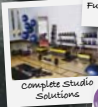
Since NFL PLAY 60 launched in 2007, the NFL has committed more than US\$250m to youth health and fitness through programming, grants and media time for public service announcements. The NFL and its teams have built more than 100 NFL Youth Fitness Zones and organised over 1,500 Play 60 youth events.



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millward to retire as sta chief executive

Roger Millward will retire as chief executive of the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) in July 2012 after 17 years in the role.

He will step down on his 70th birthday in July and will be replaced by Alan Siddons, STA's current business development director. Millward will retain a consultative role within the association.

During Millward's tenure as CEO, STA has quadrupled its membership and increased the number of people it has taught to swim from approximately 1,000 a year to more than 30,000 a year in the UK.



Templeman will help IMSPA expand its reach

templeman named on rfu board

Miles Templeman, chair of the Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (IMSPA), has been appointed to the board of Rugby Football Union as a non-executive director. The appointment was welcomed by IMSPA CEO, Sean Holt.

Holt says: "One of our key objectives at IMSPA is to develop the workforce of tomorrow by driving professional standards and sharing best practice across the sector. Miles' involvement with the biggest national governing bodies can only be of benefit in achieving this."

ocl appoints new chief executive

Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) operations director Stuart Lockwood has been named as the trust's new chief executive, effective from this month. Lockwood replaces former chief executive Ian Kendall, who is stepping down after eight years with the organisation.

With more than 20 years of experience in the fitness industry, Lockwood has held a number of senior management positions in both the public and private sector.

OCL operates 14 facilities on behalf of Oldham Council.

fia announces new board

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has announced its new board members for the three-year period from 2012 to 2015.

In all, 10 people were added to the board. The new board members will attend four board meetings a year and be FIA ambassadors at FIA events and media gatherings.

The full list of the 10 new board members is as follows:

- Scott Lloyd, DLL
- Martin Long, LA Fitness
- John Oxley, Active Nation
- David Bibby, SLM
- Pete Todd, Pontefract Leisure Club
- Neil Mosley, Imperial College
- Dave Pugh, St Helen's Council
- James Preece, British Military Fitness
- Sue Anstiss, Promote PR
- Malcolm McPhail, Life Leisure (formerly Stockport Sports Trust)



Scott Lloyd, CEO of DLL, is one of 10 new FIA board members

David Stalker, CEO of the Fitness Industry Association, says: "Our new board members bring a great mix of different experience, expertise and insight, which will be an invaluable asset to the FIA and the wider industry as we approach what will be the most dynamic period in our 21-year history."

new chair and chief executive for bisl



Simon Johnson joins BISL to replace interim chief executive officer Dominic Harrison

Business in Sport and Leisure (BISL) has announced the appointment of Chris Bell and Simon Johnson as its new chair and chief executive officer respectively.

BISL founder and life president John Brackenbury confirmed the news at the organisation's annual conference, which was held in November at Lord's Cricket Ground in London.

Bell is former CEO of Ladbrokes and replaces David Teasdale, effective from this month, with Teasdale taking up the role of vice chair. Johnson, meanwhile, is former CEO of England's 2018 World Cup bid and joins BISL with immediate effect, replacing interim chief executive officer Dominic Harrison.

Brackenbury says: "This combined level of experience, knowledge and expertise will undoubtedly add to BISL's growing reputation as the authoritative voice in, and for, sport and leisure, and help it to rise to the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead."

north country leisure appoints new chair

Following the retirement of long-standing chair and founding member David Thompson last summer, leisure charity North Country Leisure (NCL) has appointed a new chair, Chris Roberts, to head its sport and leisure management services across Northumberland and Copeland.

Previously, Roberts was executive director of the Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council, then moving on to become executive director of the Skills Funding Agency for the NE, NW and Yorkshire and Humber, with a period as COO for the whole country.

PEOPLE PROFILE



Wil Graham

Wil won the 2010 edition of the hit ITV series *The Biggest Loser* after shedding more than 8 stone. He's now training to become a PT with Future Fit Training

When and why did you decide to 'turn your life around' and get fit?

I'd been extremely overweight since I was 19 and, at the age of 28, I realised I was putting on a stone or more every single year. By March 2010 I weighed 29 stone 6 pounds, and I talked to my GP about bariatric surgery. I was approved for a gastric band, where they remove over 80 per cent of your stomach.

When I told my parents, they were really disappointed – they felt it was the easy way out. While at my parents, I used their PC to check my emails and came across an application form for *The Biggest Loser*. I entered never expecting to be selected, but after numerous tests and checks I had to make a choice – surgery or the show! I thought I'd try everything available to me before surgery, so went on the show.

Can you describe the experience of winning *The Biggest Loser*?

It was the best and worst situation I've ever been in. The best because I'm now looking forward to a healthy, happy life, but the worst because I did it in front of millions of people.

Trying to change, crying, eating and tackling physical as well as mental demons head-on in public is definitely not for everybody. It sounds silly, but when I used to imagine being semi-naked with someone like Davina McCall nearby, standing on cattle scales for a television programme wasn't at all what I had in mind!

What was your profession before featuring on the show?

My background is in marketing. Right before the show, though, I worked anti-social hours for a bank – I felt like I wasn't capable of doing anything else because of my weight.

What made you decide to pursue a career in fitness?

It's such a significant part of my everyday life now that I know better than anybody

else how beneficial fitness can really be. To think I might be able to have a positive impact on somebody else's life is just immense – and the fitness industry is growing so quickly that I just know I can make a positive difference. When I found out about Future Fit, I knew I had to train with them – they have great courses and I just felt they'd support and prepare me to help others to the highest standard.

You are training to be a personal trainer – what are your plans after you complete the course?

I'm really fortunate to already have a waiting list of clients! As soon as my training is done, I'm going to complete my GP referral and specialise in fat loss and the obese market, since I know first-hand how hard the first steps can be – and how rewarding it is afterwards.

I'll set my own business up – I can't wait! In the long-run, I'm aiming to open gyms targeting people who are obese or morbidly obese. I don't believe there's anything affordable out there at the moment that specifically caters for people struggling with overwhelming targets.

I'm also going to launch my own weight management group in 2012 – weight loss with a difference!

What's the number one weakness in the fitness industry

Based on my own experiences, I'd have to say that only the best fitness providers get the balance right between sales and retention through good service. It's one thing to get a new member, and completely another to keep them happy afterwards.

What's your favourite life motto or quote?

My trainer from the show and now one of my best friends, Richard Callender, used to say to me: "The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people think you cannot do."

This really sticks out for me. He believed in me when I never even believed in myself.

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IHRSA European Congress 2011

Nearly 500 delegates from a record 35 countries attended the 11th Annual IHRSA European Congress, which was held on 27–30 October 2011 in Milan, Italy. Industry federations from across Europe, as well as South Africa and New Zealand, were also represented at the event.

recognising achievement

Among the highlights of the event was the presentation of the 2011 IHRSA European Club Leadership Award to two recipients: Anastasia Yusina, president of Strata Partners in Russia; and Franck Gueguen, chair and CEO of Club Med Gym in France. The award recognises the European club

leaders who have done the most to advance both their own company and the industry.

Together with her husband, Yusina started Strata Partners 10 years ago with one club. Today, the company has 33 clubs across two brands – Orange Fitness and City Fitness. It has locations in three countries, 70,000 members and over €29m in annual revenue. In presenting the award, IHRSA president Joe Moore noted that Yusina, a founding member of the IHRSA Europe Council, “places a high value on industry education and continually encourages her colleagues to attend the Congress and other industry events”.

Gueguen has been CEO of Club Med Gym for over six years. The company was

started in 1980 with five clubs in France and had grown to 22 by the end of last year. With the acquisition in February 2011 of Silhouette, the number one Swiss player, Club Med Gym now has 45 clubs in three countries, 107,000 members, and annual revenue of more than €80m.

“Under Franck’s leadership, the company is constantly innovating in an effort to better serve the needs of members,” Moore said at the congress.

business ideas

In addition to concurrent educational sessions aimed at both the strategic and operational levels, the Congress featured four general session presentations:

- **Santiago Alvarez de Mon**, professor of Managing People in Organisations at the IESE Business School, presented on ‘Leadership: The Art of Engaging People’. He explained that leadership is the art of exercising influence over others that results in them changing their minds, thoughts and/or emotions. But you cannot lead until you build trust by having truthful, caring conversations where you are receptive to the ideas of others – conversations that may result in you changing your mind, he added.

- **Andrea Guerra**, CEO of Luxottica Group SpA, presented on ‘Competing in the NEW NORMAL Era’ (sponsored by Technogym SpA). Guerra’s company owns high-end glasses brands such as Rayban and Oakley, but he considers the iPod to be his biggest competitor. ‘I’m selling things you’ve seen on a catwalk, on a movie star – not a frame with two lenses,’ he said, noting that innovation is something that allows your customers to have a different experience.

- **Simon Bolton**, professor and director at the Centre for Competitive Creative Design at Cranfield University, and co-founder of Creative Resource Lab, spoke on ‘Building Equity and Business Value through Effective Product and Brand Development’. Bolton encouraged attendees to “co-brand” with compatible companies as a way of increasing business volume. He noted that it is important to stand for something, to own your space –

“It was an excellent event with a great agenda, which was fantastically well attended”



The congress offered many opportunities to catch up with colleagues in the health and fitness industry



The 2011 IHRSA European Congress was held in Milan, with almost 500 attendees from 35 countries

whether high-end, low-end, or boutique – and to enable customers to trade in and trade up.

• **Jonny Hewlett**, MD of Diesel-UK and Ireland, spoke on 'Driving Positive Change: Transforming Diesel in the UK'. Charged with taking a successful company to the next level, Hewlett described how he worked with the leadership team at Diesel-UK and Ireland to realign staff functions and talent with the goals of the company. He noted that it was essential to work with the team to create the vision in order to effect the necessary change.

The Congress also featured a CEO Forum, Sponsor Showcase and a tour of some of Milan's leading health clubs.

"The Congress provided a great opportunity to meet industry leaders and forward thinkers," says Giorgio Turri, international trade marketing manager for Technogym SpA.

"This year's experience was very helpful and important for me as a club owner and director," says Ana Sekulic of ORANGE club in Belgrade, Serbia.

"It was an excellent event with a great agenda, which was fantastically well attended. Catching up with colleagues from across Europe was motivational

and inspirational," comments David Stalker, CEO of the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) in the UK.

"This is the first year that Zumba Fitness had participated in the IHRSA European Congress, but we should have done this a long time ago," says Petra Robinson, Zumba Fitness senior vice president. "The event was amazing for us – great contacts, lectures, tours and networking."

looking to 2012

The 11th Annual IHRSA European Congress was sponsored by: American Council on Exercise (ACE), Anytime Fitness, LLC, Fit interiors, Fitness Equipment Depot Worldwide, GANTNER, Johnson Health Tech. Co., Ltd. / MATRIX FITNESS, Keiser, Kommuniera Communications AB, Les Mills International, The Medical Fitness Association, STOTT PILATES / Merrithew Health & Fitness, milon industries GmbH, MYZONE, Polar Electro Oy, Precor, QualiCert - Qualitop International, Retention Management, Slim Belly, Star Trac Europe, Technogym SpA, Total Gym, wellink and Zumba Fitness LLC.

IHRSA's 2012 European Congress is scheduled to take place in Vienna, Austria. Dates and other details will be posted at ihrsa.org/congress as they are finalised.

news in brief

ireland faces health tsunami

Northern Ireland faces a "tsunami" of obesity-related diseases within five to 10 years – stroke, heart attacks, respiratory conditions – reports BBC Northern Ireland.

That is the warning from Dr Mike Ryan, who runs a weight management clinic in the Northern Health Trust. In the past year, over 2,000 referrals have been made to his clinic. A two-year-old is currently being treated.

"It's not just about prevention but about intervention. Unless significant resources are put in place now, the NHS will not be able to treat these patients effectively," Ryan says.

events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

12 January 2012

Effective Solutions to Increase Membership Sales (Webinar)

2 February 2012

Successful Youth Programming for Your Club (Webinar)

14-17 March 2012

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

30 October-1 November 2011

13th Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show – So Paulo, Brazil

About IHRSA

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

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

Conference season in Europe

20+ events in 11 countries.

IHRSA director of Europe, Hans Muench, looks back on autumn 2011

Autumn is a busy period in the European health and fitness market. From Birmingham to Bucharest, a vast portfolio of shows and conferences dot the landscape. I attended half of them, and the following are my impressions of a select few.

fitspiration

Taking place in Den Bosch, Netherlands, on 16 September, this new event was initiated by nine suppliers who did not feel the value of attending the traditional "Fitvaktagen" (renamed Health and Fitness BeNeLux) in Utrecht. The traditional major event in October, Health and Fitness BeNeLux was cancelled in 2011 as a result.

The new event – Fitspiration – took place near Rotterdam. The 360 attendees were treated to a presentation from keynote speaker Mark Mastrow, formerly the CEO of 24 Hour Fitness, who is currently involved in over 800 clubs across 20 countries, with brands such as Hard Candy, UFC Fitness Clubs and Mrs.Sporty.

In his speech, Mastrow outlined 13 keys to success and included tips on brand building, team leadership and development, site selection, the personal training and retention connection, choosing partners, and execution. His most significant statement was that membership penetration rates of 30-40 per cent are realistic, citing one area of California where his 24 Hour Fitness clubs alone had 31 per cent of the population as members.

leisure industry week

Leisure Industry Week (LIW), which took place in Birmingham, UK, on 20-22 September, is the UK's main event of the year for the leisure sector. It includes amusement, leisure and catering in its broad focus.

Although this show has shrunk in recent years, it still attracted close to 20,000 trade visitors. The FIA (Fitness Industry Association) reception, the



From Romania to Malta, the many fitness expos around Europe are a great place to generate new ideas

inaugural Health Club Awards, and the party for the IOU (Independent Operators Unite) group – created in 2009 by Dave Wright of Creative Fitness Marketing – were after-hours networking highlights.

A wide range of product launches and innovations were showcased across the three days of the event.

wellfitexpo

Wellfitexpo, which was held in Bucharest on 23-25 September, is Romania's fitness show. It started in 2009 and attracts attendees from across south-east Europe. Speakers included Italy's Gianluca Scazzosi, as well as investment specialists.

Club memberships in this market are priced significantly higher than the European average, with market leader World Class operating 10 clubs throughout the country. Franchises are emerging, and high growth is expected in the coming years.

agap & ilam

The AGAP / ILAM National Conferences, on 24 September and 13 October respectively, were the Portuguese and Irish trade associations' annual events. Both attracted approximately 300 attendees.

Both of these countries – part of the so-called 'PIGS' group of troubled nations – are struggling with higher and new taxes (VAT over 20 per cent), government regulations and economies that are leaving

consumers with less disposable income, causing clubs to close. The growing budget club sector further complicates matters.

world fitness and wellness forum

World Fitness and Wellness Forum – which took place in Basel, Switzerland, on 14 October – is organised by *Fitness Tribune* magazine publisher Jean-Pierre Schupp. This event, now in its sixth year, attracts close to 200 attendees, introduced a new partner (Vitawell) and presents yearly awards for entrepreneurs in the Austrian, German and Swiss markets.

sibec europe

SIBEC Europe, held this time in Malta from 2-5 November, is the 'mother' of all B2B concepts, with hundreds of face-to-face meetings between leading operators and suppliers taking place over two days.

ihrsa events

IHRSA roadshows in Bled, Slovenia (23-24 November) and Kuwait (13-14 December) followed a rich tradition of providing education in emerging markets and supporting local partners.

Meanwhile, IHRSA's European Congress (see p20-21) welcomed participants from over 30 countries. This year marked the 15th think tank of leading European operators – an event that's now firmly established in the autumn European fitness landscape.

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vanguard group: a quest for knowledge

David Stalker, CEO of the FIA, reports on a busy fortnight with the Vanguard Group – from networking with politicians to sharing best practice with market-leading brands

Health Club Management is the
FIA's Public Affairs Media Partner



vanguard

In the short space of two weeks, the FIA (Fitness Industry Association) Vanguard Group heard how to create a McJob, debated Body Confidence with a government minister, learnt how the Olympic Legacy extends beyond the logo, and dined out with one half of the coalition in a perfect example of what the group is all about.

These encounters were part of the autumn series of Vanguard events and included two focus groups, the quarterly Vanguard Council, and the Vanguard Liberal Democrat Dinner.

an olympic legacy

The first event – with the tier one Olympic sponsor, Lloyds TSB – focused on how the physical activity sector can help deliver a long-lasting legacy from the Games. Lloyds TSB representatives presented their research on the effect of the Games, including the £5.1bn total stimulus to the UK economy, a £750m boost in consumer spending for the seven weeks of the Games, and a £1.14bn increase in UK economic output during those seven weeks.

But despite these figures and the notorious 'Wimbledon effect' – the three-month window of intensified sports participation around major elite sporting events – the group also heard that there has never been a real and measurable Olympic physical activity legacy, which is both our challenge and our opportunity.

redefining the 'mcjob'

Next up was McDonald's, who gathered leading figures from the HR departments of Vanguard Group operators and training providers to present the impressive tale of how it took 'McJob' from a derogatory term to one of the most successful apprenticeship schemes in the UK.

The group heard how, in 2006, McDonald's realigned its recruitment and training strategy, abandoning the focus on qualifications in its recruitment and choosing to focus on psychometric tests, and more importantly on-the-job testing.

Emphasised throughout the day was the focus on understanding what your employees think about working for you. McDonald's undertook a wide-ranging internal survey of employees to inform its training strategy.

Through this exercise, it learnt that employees had a huge desire for further training, and so decided to offer voluntary qualifications in literacy and numeracy. This was just the start, and McDonald's now operates its own awarding body and apprenticeships programme, which has seen almost 30,000 qualifications delivered to date.



The Department of Health's Liz Woodeson speaks to the Council

dinner debate

Lastly, on 25 October 2011, the entire Vanguard Group – comprising representatives from 30 member organisations – came together to review the progress of the FIA Public Affairs and Policy strategy, covering everything from music licensing to engaging with the medical community.

The group also heard from the Minister for Equalities, Lynne Featherstone, on how the sector can promote healthy body images, and the Department of Health's Director of Health and Wellbeing, Liz Woodeson, on how the department is supporting physical activity and the progress of establishing new local health commissioning groups.

In the evening, the group sat down for dinner with the Liberal Democrat Party, including the party spokesman for the Olympics, Tom Brake, and several of his political colleagues. The room also included the chief medical officer for the Olympics – Dr Richard Budgett OBE – as well as Sport England, Lloyds TSB, Asda, and the Olympics' ad agency McCann Worldgroup.

All the guests were made to 'earn their dinner', with discussion on a range of topics including commercial brands' plans post-Olympics, Sport England's plans to increase sports participation, and the change to VAT eligibility for sporting activities.

sharing best practice

Events such as these are a great opportunity for Vanguard members to learn best practice, often looking at lessons from a different sector, and discuss the key issues and challenges we face as an industry.

Large companies such as Lloyds TSB and McDonald's do not open their doors and share the secrets of their success with just anyone, and these events demonstrate just how far the Vanguard group has come.

The outcomes from these events provide a progressive structure for my team to work towards, and I look forward to what our Vanguard members bring to the table next.



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31 MARCH–15 APRIL 12

north pole challenge

Only a select few complete the journey to the North Pole each year. If you think you could be one of them, this open charity event by Charity Challenge is for you. Travelling across polar ice requires patience and agility, not to mention flexibility and strength of mind. Participants will ski and sledge for up to eight hours daily. On a good day they will encounter large, flat pans of ice; on a bad day they may have to face open water leads and pressure ridges up to 5m in height. Details: www.charitychallenge.com



PICTURE: OLSON WWW.SUTTERSTOCK.COM

Participants in the challenge will need patience and a strong mind



Height of fitness: 38 floors to climb

4 MARCH 2012 step change 2012

The NSPCC's goal is to put a stop to child cruelty in the UK. As part of this, it has a help line for kids called ChildLine. To raise money for ChildLine, the NSPCC is challenging hundreds to race to the top of one London's most iconic buildings – The Gherkin. Tower running involves running up flights of stairs to the 38th floor, finishing at the 40/30 bar with views of the city. Registration costs £20 and minimum sponsorship is £250. Details: www.nspcc.org.uk



PICTURE: KOWALCHUK WWW.SUTTERSTOCK.COM

Race is said to be a world first

13–17 JUNE 12 uk challenge

Get a team of four colleagues together and go head to head with employees from 130 of the top corporate firms such as Barclays, BT and Coca Cola. Set in Stirling, Scotland, this is a strategic and physical event – by kayak, bike or on foot, your team will buy and sell commodities from competitors along the route. You look at the map, judge the terrain and distances and come up with a plan – do you go as a team, split into pairs or individuals? What's your spending budget? Who will be best at which leg? The winners are those who come up with the most profit within three hours. Details: www.ukchallenge.co.uk



Strategy and fitness will be tested

14 NOVEMBER 12 solar eclipse marathon

As the sun's rays re-emerge from behind the shadow of the moon at 6.38am on 14 November, the world's first solar eclipse marathon will start in the tropical seaside village of Port Douglas in Queensland, Australia. Up to 2,000 runners are expected and the route starts on the beach, going through sugar cane fields, old mining roads and lush tropical landscapes. Basic entry costs AU\$310 (£194). Packages including accommodation are offered by the event's organisers Albatros Adventure. Details: www.solar-eclipse-marathon.com

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JANUARY

23-24 The Facilities Management Forum

Venue Radisson Blu Hotel, Stansted, London, UK

Summary

This event will offer facility managers and directors access to free seminars and networking opportunities.

Web www.forumevents.co.uk

FEBRUARY

4-6 Spatex

Venue Hilton Metropole, Brighton, UK

Summary

The 16th annual event showcasing the pool, spa and lifestyle industry.

Web www.spatex.co.uk

16-19 IDEA Personal Trainer Institute

Venue Alexandria, Virginia, US

Summary

This conference is aimed at personal trainers and has sold out for the last three consecutive years. The event includes four days of preconference sessions, lectures and workshops.

Web www.ideafit.com/ptrainer

23-25 FORUMCLUB

Venue Bologna, Italy

Summary

International congress and expo for fitness, wellness and aquatic clubs.

Includes FORUMPISCINE.

Web www.ncforum.com



IDEA's conference for PTs has sold out for the past three years



IHRSA 2012, the fitness convention and trade show, is off to Hollywood this year

MARCH

4-5 Professional Beauty and European Spa Convention

Venue ExCel, London, UK

Summary

The UK's largest beauty exhibition attracted more than 400 brands in 2011. Also includes the European Spa Convention for national and international spa and wellness professionals.

Web www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

5 | SMMEX

Venue Wembley Stadium, London, UK

Summary

Specialist exhibition for sports merchandise and marketing. Offers buyers and specifiers from sporting clubs and associations across Europe the chance to meet up with suppliers.

Web www.smmexevent.com

8-11 | ECA World Fitness Conference / OBOW Show

Venue New York City, US

Summary

ECA World Fitness is an international organisation representing the wellness and fitness community. Its theatrical One Body One World New York show features a strong dance programme.

Web www.ecaworldfitness.com

14-17 | IHRSA 2012 Annual International Convention & Trade Show

Venue LA Convention Center, Los Angeles, California, US

Summary

The 31st IHRSA Convention & Trade Show is going to Hollywood. The annual event draws thousands of industry professionals for four days of education and networking opportunities.

Web www.ihrsa.org/convention

19-25 | International Fitness Week

Venue Fitness First clubs worldwide

Summary

The third International Fitness Week aims to encourage the world to become more active. In 2011 it involved more than 40 Fitness First clubs across 12 countries.

Web www.internationalfitnessweek.com

23-25 | International Fitness Showcase

Venue Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK

Summary

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

Web www.chrysalispromotions.com

27-30 | ACSM's 16th Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition

Venue Las Vegas, Nevada, US

Summary

The event bridges the gap between the science of sports medicine and its practice for the fitness professional. It covers a wide range of disciplines – from nutrition and exercise to sports medicine and professional development.

Web www.acsmssummit.org

APRIL

11-12 | BASES Student Conference

Venue University of East London, London, UK

Summary

The BASES (British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences) forum for undergraduate and postgraduate students. This year's theme is 'Olympic and Paralympic Athletes: Research and Applied Perspectives'.

Web www.bases.org.uk/student-conference

18-21 | SPATEC Europe

Venue Don Carlos Leisure
Resort & Spa, Marbella, Spain
Summary

A two-day forum of face-to-face meetings between UK and European spa owners, directors and senior personnel, with more than 70 leading international spa suppliers.
Web www.spateceu.com

19-22 | FIBO 2012

Venue Exhibition Centre Essen, Germany
Summary

Over 560 companies from 35+ countries showcase products, concepts and solutions for the fitness, wellness and health industries. The show has distinct areas catering for training equipment, products and services, sports nutrition, wellness and beauty and medical fitness.
Web www.fibo.de

25-28 | Russian Fitness Festival

Venue Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia
Summary

The mission of this festival is to popularise and develop mass physical education and healthy lifestyles in Russia. It includes a business conference, fitness convention, aqua convention, trade show, kids' marathon and Russian open fitness aerobic championship.
Web www.fitness-convention.ru

27-29 | Australian Fitness & Health Expo

Venue Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia
Summary

Exhibition, seminars and training for the Australasian fitness industry. Offering innovative training techniques, equipment, advice and live demos.
Web www.fitnessexpo.com.au

MAY

2-3 | SIBEC UK

Venue Forest of Arden
Marriott, Birmingham, UK
Summary

SIBEC UK brings together 120 of the most important and influential suppliers and buyers of the UK leisure, health and fitness sector. It focuses on the local authority, trust and education markets, with two days of interaction, face-to-face meetings, forums and networking opportunities.
Web www.sibec.co.uk

13-14 | Holistic Health

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK
Summary

Holistic and complementary therapy exhibitors showcase their latest products, equipment innovations and training courses. The event also hosts an annual educational congress.
Web www.beautyserve.com

13-14 | BeautyUK

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK
Summary

The Midlands' largest beauty trade exhibition and training congress takes place alongside Holistic Health.
Web www.beautyserve.com

18-20 | BodyPower

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK
Summary

This event focuses on sports including strongman, wrestling, boxing, MMA, gymnastics, cycling and athletics. The exhibition incorporates sports nutrition, equipment, clothing and associated products. There are also seminars with sports personalities.
Web www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk



Over 500 companies will showcase products at FIBO 2012 in Germany

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Beauty UK will take place alongside Holistic Health at the NEC in May

JUNE

7-10 | Festival del Fitness

Venue Parco del Foro Italico, Rome, Italy
Summary

The 24th exhibition for the Italian fitness industry. Around 250,000 participants attend this outdoor event.
Web www.fitfestival.com

25-26 | Facilities Management (FM) Forum

Venue Heythrop Park, Oxfordshire, UK
Summary
For FM directors and managers who are directly involved in the procurement of FM products and services. Offering a professional, time-saving way to source product, service and solution providers.
Web www.forumevents.co.uk

25-28 | 8th Annual International Conference on Kinesiology and Exercise Sciences

Venue Athens, Greece
Summary
Organised by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER), this conference brings together scholars and students from all areas of applied and integrated health sciences, including physiology, health psychology, health promotion, epidemiology and biomechanics.
Web www.atiner.gr

JULY

TBC | FIA FLAME Conference

Venue TBC
Summary
The annual FIA FLAME Conference offers a range of seminars and motivational discussions, with thought-provoking keynote speakers and

presentations from thought leaders both from within and outside of the health and fitness industry. The FLAME Awards take place in the evening – a gala dinner and ceremony celebrating the UK's best clubs and leisure centres.
Web www.fia.org.uk

5-8 | IDEA World Fitness Convention

Venue San Diego, California, US
Summary
More than 5,000 fitness professionals from around the world travel to attend this event, with hundreds of informative sessions taught by renowned presenters and guest speakers. More than 200 companies attend the IDEA expo.
Web www.ideafit.com/world

19-24 | ICSEMIS 2012

Venue SECC, Glasgow, UK
Summary
The first ICSEMIS (International Convention on Science, Education and Medicine in Sport) was held in China in 2008, just prior to the Beijing Olympics. The title of this year's conference, being held in the UK around the London Olympics, is 'Sport... Inspiring a Learning Legacy'. The BASES Conference 2012 will be integrated into ICSEMIS 2012.
Web www.icsemis2012.com

AUGUST

30-1 September | Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show

Venue São Paulo, Brazil
Summary
The premier conference and trade show in Latin America, with commentary on trends shaping the local fitness industry.
Web www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil

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The FIA FLAME conference includes the annual FLAME Awards, recognising the UK's best clubs and centres

SEPTEMBER

10-12 | Spameeting Paris

Venue Porte de Versailles, Paris, France

Summary

Spameeting Paris is a trade show that combines an exhibition area, business meetings and the European Spa Summit. The exhibition – Beyond Beauty Paris – features over 500 exhibitors.

Web www.beyondbeautyevents.com

18-20 | 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. The show spans a range of zones, each offering insight into the latest trends and innovations. Last year's event saw the launch of a new Education Village which hosted seminars. The members' choice Health Club Awards take place alongside LIW.

Web www.liw.co.uk

19-21 | Health+Fitness Business Expo & Interbike Expo

Venue: Sands Expo & Convention Center, Las Vegas, US

Summary

Running the Health+Fitness Business Expo and the Interbike International Bicycle Expo in adjacent rooms offers an opportunity to interact with suppliers from both areas of the fitness industry, and attend seminars. The Outdoor Demo event takes place in Boulder City, Nevada, on 17-18 September.

Web www.healthandfitnessbiz.com

26-28 | European Fitness Summit

Venue Barcelona, Spain

Summary

This summit offers suppliers from the fitness, wellness and health industry an opportunity to meet decision-makers from leading fitness studios and wellness centres from selected European markets.

Web www.european-fitness-summit.com

OCTOBER

TBC | IHRSA European Congress

Venue Vienna, Austria

Summary

The 12th annual IHRSA congress provides club owners, operators and suppliers the chance to gather to discuss the European market, its challenges and opportunities.

Web www.ihrsa.org/congress

TBC | Inner IDEA Conference

Venue TBC

Summary

An educational event for integrative wellness with the world's top researchers, teachers and presenters. It offers a chance to explore the latest research and wellness programmes.

Web www.inneridea.com/conference

10-12 | Club Industry Conference and Trade Show

Venue Las Vegas, US

Summary

An independent fitness industry event focusing on for-profit and not-for-profit facilities.

Web <http://clubindustryshow.com>

15-17 | ISPA Conference & Expo

Venue Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center, Kissimmee, Florida, US

Summary

This is the largest ISPA event of the year for spa professionals. It's designed to provide spa owners, directors, managers and suppliers with tips on where the industry is heading.

Web www.experienceispa.com

26-28 | The Yoga Show

Venue Olympia, London

Summary

All things yoga under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, kids' yoga, demonstrations and lectures.

Web www.theyogashow.co.uk

31-3 November | SIBEC Europe

Venue Corinthia Hotel, Budapest, Hungary

Summary

SIBEC Europe is a one-to-one meeting forum where Europe's leading operators from the health, fitness and leisure sectors meet face-to-face with the industry's leading suppliers. It will bring together more than 200 delegates.

Web www.sibec.co.uk

NOVEMBER

13-14 | Spa Life UK 2012

Venue TBC

Summary

Two-day forum, summit and conference that's dedicated to UK spa professionals. Up to 400 attendees are expected.

Web www.spaconference.co.uk



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David Stalker, CEO, FIA

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everyone's talking about . . .



2012 predictions

The year of the London Olympics – and the year Nostradamus predicted the earth would be devastated by a comet – is here. So what does it mean for our industry?

We're back to January, when the gym floors should be buzzing and the race is on for operators

to sign up those who have 'get fit' on their list of New Year's Resolutions.

Some perennial challenges remain to be tackled: questions such as how we can be taken more seriously by the healthcare sector and lock onto funding, how to activate the deconditioned market, and how to make sure members see the benefit of their efforts. Could this be the year when we make a breakthrough in one or all of these areas? It will be interesting to see if there will be any major innovations.

Meanwhile, the London Olympics will push sport to the forefront this year – but will that give a mid-year boost to gym memberships? Or will it mean people stay away from the gym to watch the Games while having a BBQ and a few beers?

With almost everyone in society continuing to feel the pinch – apart, perhaps, from the very wealthy – and significant unrest in many European economies, this year operators need to pull out all the stops to retain members. Simon Harrison, director of corporate finance advisory at Deloitte LLP, says clubs must focus on member recruitment and retention by allowing

greater flexibility in format and fees. So will contracts start to be phased out?

All of our columnists agree that the low-cost sector will continue to go from strength to strength in 2012, although Harrison believes it will experience increased competition from local authority trusts. Meanwhile Mark Mastrov says the high-end market is still performing well – will we see more operators chasing this market?

Zumba has taken the industry by storm, so will any similarly exciting new concepts emerge this year? Or will the industry finally get the weight-loss product it so needs? What does 2012 hold in store? We ask the experts...

WHAT DO YOU THINK 2012 HAS IN STORE FOR THE SECTOR? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

mark mastrov

new evolution ventures • chair / 24 hour fitness • founder



"I think, for most markets, 2012 will be a more positive year than 2011. The US has come through the curve and is slowly starting to ramp up again. Europe will remain flat to slightly down; outside of Germany, the UK and Scandinavia, the European markets are still very choppy. Asia will continue to be up, as it remains under-clubbed, with

mainland China growing at a very solid rate. Overall, Asia's price points remain high, so low-cost won't come into play as the rents are too high. The only exception is mainland China, where overall membership prices are still quite low.

Elsewhere, budget clubs will grow the most as they will continue to activate new members who are price-conscious. It's yet to be seen if lots of budget clubs can be operated in close proximity of each other – time will tell as the competition heats up. Mid-market clubs will have to decide to go up or down in price to stay competitive; my view is that they will have to play on their amenities and push their prices up in order to perform. I think upmarket is a great market and will continue to perform well, in line with the high income market. I think we will also see more niche studios, such as yoga, group cycling, dance and PT."

john treharn

the gym group • chief executive



"My feeling is that the UK fitness industry will continue to be largely the same in 2012: overall it will be flat. However, that shields the detail of what is happening, because the budget sector is growing aggressively, the local authority/trust market is strong, and there is some growth in the premium end – but the mid-market is in decline.

The economy is showing no signs of improving: the debt market in the UK is getting worse, and with the economic problems in Europe, and insecurity about jobs, consumers will continue to move towards low-cost offerings. Our research shows that our members are attracted both by the price and by the freedom of no contract. The health club industry is antiquated in the way that it ties people in for 12 months. Membership by compulsion doesn't work. The budget model reflects what people do, allowing them to drop off in December, the summer months and Ramadan, and join again in January and autumn.

In the year to March 2011, there were 89 health club closures and I think this year that number will increase. The mid-market will be forced to either trade up or trade down. However, I am very optimistic for my business: we have 20 new sites planned."



Zumba has been a star performer for the fitness market, but what new trends are club operators predicting for 2012?

simon harrison

deloitte llp • director of corporate finance advisory



“The fitness industry, alongside other leisure sectors, is likely to continue to face economic pressure on discretionary consumer spend. Compensating factors include the increased public awareness of health and wellness, together with the Olympic Games acting as a high profile showcase for a health, fitness and sporting lifestyle.

Operators will need to focus even more on new and innovative membership packages and propositions, particularly to recruit members who are totally new to the sector.

2011 saw further consolidation of the UK sector in the Virgin Active/Esporta transaction, with CVC providing growth capital for Virgin Active. Both transactions highlight the future value creation seen in the sector by operators and financial investors through M&A initiatives. With the likelihood of continued pressure on consumer spending and some stretched company balance sheets remaining within the sector, such dynamics may also be a catalyst for further transactions in 2012.

However, given the current economic environment in Europe, operators with international reach may focus their growth plans more on international markets.”

john kersh

anytime fitness • vice president of international development



“I feel very optimistic going into this year. There is an ever-increasing global awareness of the importance of regular exercise, and it's our opportunity as operators to be appealing to consumers. But we will all need to work harder amid greater competition and more choice.

I think the main emergent trends will be innovative industry segmentation and group fitness training concepts. A few years ago I thought group exercise was dead, but it's actually now evolving into new formats and concepts which excite members and prospects. There is lots of opportunity in group personal training and innovative classes.

The budget club sector will continue to expand worldwide and there is vast opportunity there. The budget clubs indicate to consumers that they have choices, and this realisation paves the way for new brands to emerge which serve different segments of the market. There will be pressure on upmarket operators, who will have to raise their level of play to justify higher pricing. Lazy mid-market clubs will be taken over, and poor operators will struggle. However, overall the industry numbers should continue upwards.”

ALFONSO JIMENEZ



The head of the Centre for Sports Science and Human Performance at the University of Greenwich, and chair of EHFA's Standards Council, talks to Kate Cracknell about setting standards, providing evidence, and the public health agenda



Professor Alfonso Jiménez may be a self-confessed academic, but he's spent enough time out of the ivory tower to be able to offer insightful, practical guidance and recommendations to the health and fitness industry.

The chair of the EHFA Standards Council since April 2009 – a body formed by, but independent of, EHFA – Jiménez is also head of the Centre for Sports Science and Human Performance at the University of Greenwich, from where he oversees the recently formed FIA Research Institute (for details, see HCM Aug 11, p24).

But in spite of this academic CV, Jiménez began his professional career very much within the fitness industry. In 1989, while studying PE at Madrid Polytechnic, he took a part-time job as an aerobics teacher at the local Palestra health club. "It was more than just a gym – people would meet there socially as

well as for business – and it changed the view of the potential of the fitness industry in Spain. It had a genuine social impact," he says.

After graduation, he was employed at the Estadio de la Comunidad – the Madrid track and field arena – where, as director of the sports centre, he was involved in the development of a year-long planning cycle for all programming: "an efficient system to properly manage customised exercise programmes and ensure proper training processes," Jiménez explains.

However, he left after three years, disillusioned with the public sector – "where the delivery of services was always subject to the whims of politicians" – and keen to return to the "more evidence-based" private sector. Recruited by Reebok Spain to develop its research institute, as part of this role Jiménez also oversaw the development of training and education for exercise professionals, as well as new software to

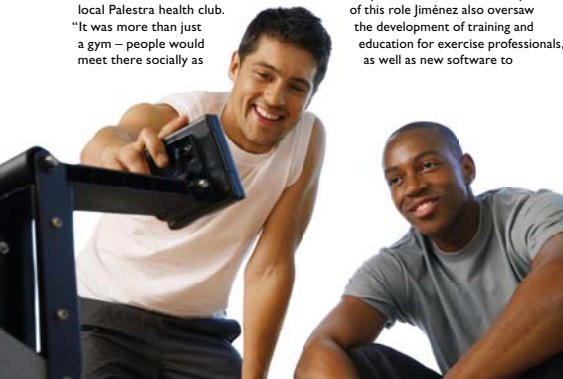
organise the training process. A brief stint as sales manager of Reebok Spain and Portugal followed before Jiménez returned to an operational role – helping to develop the six-storey Reebok Club in Madrid, taking on the position of head of fitness.

public health agenda

All the while he was at Reebok, throughout the late 90s, Jiménez was also studying for a PhD in exercise physiology, and in November 2000 he decided to return to full-time academia. A government grant followed, to undertake a post-doctorate degree in exercise physiology at Arizona State University, investigating dose-response in resistance training. But it was very much applied academia, with the first step being the launch of his own consultancy firm, Proyectafit. "We consulted for governments, fitness operators and so on. For Spanish operator Metropolitan, for example, we worked on quality control, product development and staff training, all of which was organised and delivered internally.

"We also led two projects for the local government of Madrid, one of which was an intervention study assessing the activity levels of the Madrid population. It was at this time – 2007 – that I really realised the critical role the fitness industry must play in the public health agenda of any government in the world.

"But in order to do so, we need to change society's perceptions of the sector. The problem is not that the



The Sector Qualifications Framework outlines 22 occupations in the fitness industry – from PTs to physiotherapists



PHOTOS ABOVE AND BOTTOM LEFT: STOCKPHOTO.COM

fitness industry isn't ready; it's that people don't realise what we can do. They don't even realise we're here. For example, we recently did a project in Madrid with Sanitas [the BUPA brand in Spain] – a one-year intervention with 700 of its staff – and Sanitas was genuinely surprised by the benefits exercise was able to bring.

"Potential partners – governments and other sectors – won't come to us. We need to go and open the door for ourselves by proactively engaging in the public health agenda."

In 2009, Jiménez was invited by EHFA to apply for the Standards Council job, to which he was duly appointed in April of that year. "This provides potentially the best platform for the industry to move into the public health arena," he says. "We can centrally develop a strong agenda and communicate this to the industry, as well as having the ear of the EU and governments across Europe so we can make them aware that we do indeed have an agenda.

"Not only that, but the EU provides funding opportunities in areas such as learning, health promotion and research. These are co-funding schemes – you have to invest your own money as well – but they're a chance for us to prove what it is we're capable of delivering. Other industry sectors are already doing this very well, but the fitness industry isn't as yet."

But to effectively deliver a public health agenda, he explains: "We need to modify our main skills and look for new competencies in our staff: physiological knowledge is important, but we need staff with psychological know-how too. We need people who can engage with individuals and lead behavioural change, and we need proper assessment and evidence-based programmes – not only for people who pay for personal training, but for everyone.

"People pay us for structured exercise, advice and expertise, and the quality of our product is not currently good enough. So we need to raise our

Jiménez's team has applied for EU funding to investigate the impact of structured exercise on those aged 65 and over

standards, with a fundamental shift in what we are offering."

setting standards

To that end, the EHFA Standards Council has begun work on developing a standards framework for "people, programmes and places" in the fitness industry. "We've started with people, because this is key in a service industry such as ours – we need to professionalise the industry," says Jiménez.

The Sector Qualifications Framework maps out 22 occupations in the fitness industry, spread across five domains: those working with the general population; those working with special populations; management; education; and external professionals – such as physiotherapists – who have qualified

► elsewhere. It identifies the skills, knowledge and competencies required of any professional in each of those 22 different occupations – ranging from fitness instructor to GM to clinical exercise professional – and at the eight different levels established in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), from the existing Levels 1–4 right up to future Levels 5–8.

The idea is that the framework will be acknowledged across Europe, allowing exercise professionals' qualifications and skillsets to be automatically recognised in all countries.

Alongside this, says Jiménez, is a need to reassess the way training is delivered. "The focus for training providers tends to be focused mainly on the economic benefits, which leads to conflicting agendas. As a result, the training being delivered isn't always what the operators need.

"The SPELG initiative in the UK (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 11, p40) is fantastic and could be mirrored across Europe. In 2012, we're also going to create a working group with higher education to create a more fit-for-purpose BSc-level degree; at the moment, higher education isn't delivering suitable qualifications for the industry.

"Overall we want total transparency, and we're working to achieve effective standards for qualifications in which all stakeholders – not just the training providers – dictate what education is needed. We're also aiming to change the way training providers are accredited, with a new set of standards. The application process will be online, in six

“THE INDUSTRY HAS BEEN MUCH TOO PATERNALISTIC SO FAR – WE TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO DO BUT DON'T TELL THEM WHY”

different languages, and will be much cheaper than the current process – it's about improving education across Europe, not about money.

"In addition, we're looking for ways – through the EHFA Lifelong Learning Programme – to be able to recognise non-formal as well as formal learning. If someone volunteers in a community scheme, for example, and they gain new skills in doing so, then we should acknowledge that."

need for evidence

The recurring message from Jiménez, however, is the vital importance of providing evidence to gain recognition from partners and government – and, he says, "the fitness industry just isn't doing this at the moment". This is, however, starting to be addressed by the FIA Research Institute, which aims to build a body of evidence for the industry's product: structured exercise.

A 12-week dose-response pilot study is being carried out with Impulse Leisure (see *HCM* Aug 11, p24) – and "it's already looking as though our hypothesis will be proved correct, with the structured exercise group getting the best results," says Jiménez. The institute is also undertaking a thorough review of existing studies, looking at the value of exercise as opposed to physical

activity and breaking down the evidence by type of exercise. The result will be five major review papers and a research database, available to FIA members, with a comprehensive narrative.

"We want to be able to provide evidence that exercise as delivered in gyms is better than other forms of activity," says Jiménez, who is ensuring rigorous standards are applied throughout. Indeed, the Impulse pilot project is based on measurement across more than 25 markers to ensure the evidence gathered is scientifically robust. Initial pilot results will be published in March, with a multi-site study – to last six months to a year – starting in 2012 to further cement the evidence.

"But we need many more such studies to prove the role we can play in the health agenda," says Jiménez. Fingers are therefore crossed that a recent submission to the EU to conduct a €3m, three-year research study through the EU Seventh Framework Programme will prove successful. If so, the project – led by Greenwich University and supported by five other academic institutions across Europe – will take "a 360-degree approach to investigating the impact of structured exercise, delivered at health clubs, on healthy ageing among adults over the age of 65 years".

Jiménez continues: "The aim will be to prove that we can deliver two more years of healthy, active life, meaning less of a drain on public health funds. We'll turn gyms into community hubs and we'll look at implementation, physical and mental benefits, and cost-effectiveness. We can then take this data to governments to make the case for the fitness industry."

There's also a need for more evidence in the area of behavioural change which, says Jiménez, is currently lagging behind the level of physiological evidence available. This is also on the radar of both EHFA and the FIA Research Institute.

Providing gym members with more evidence about exercise benefits should help motivate them



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/JOBERT KNESECHKE

Providing scientific evidence of fitness benefits is vital for gaining the support of government and other partners, says Jiménez

public readiness

And evidence is not only key for potential partners but also for the public, says Jiménez. "If we're going to tell someone to change their behaviour, we need to do three things. First of all, we need to offer them evidence – why should they change? I do believe the public is ready to hear our message, provided we treat them as intelligent people.

"The industry has been much too paternalistic so far – we tell people what to do in our programming, but we don't tell them why. Helping them understand why they should do something is key to genuine behaviour change.

"Secondly, we need to create opportunities to practise, and at the moment we're not appealing to enough people. Not everyone wants to work out in a gym, so we need to think out of the box and change the whole paradigm of the industry. There are currently 450 million people across Europe who aren't attending our facilities, with at least 65 per cent of them totally inactive; what we're delivering now isn't meeting the needs of the population.

"We need a multi-disciplinary approach, we need to think beyond our four walls, and we need to work in partnership with other sectors. It may take years for us to change, but it's worth making that effort and starting the process now. Very possibly we also need to pay higher salaries: we'll need talented people if we're going to deliver a truly innovative agenda.

"Thirdly, people need to enjoy it, wherever and however they choose to exercise. A big part of that is getting the

intensity right – that's the key driver, ensuring that people are working out at the right level for them. But how are you able to do that if you don't even measure where they're at when they first come to you, if you don't know their VO₂ max?"

a trusted partner

Jiménez concludes: "Ultimately, we need a strategic shift in our main area of interest, innovating and moving towards delivering programmes for the public

health agenda – obesity, diabetes and so on – in co-operation with other sectors. How clubs play a community-based role will be very important. If it's done correctly, it will lead to lifelong engagement, as well as recognition and credibility: the club will begin to be perceived by both individuals and organisations as a trusted partner for everyone in the community."



kate cracknell
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Functional training zones are springing up in a growing number of gyms – but how can operators ensure they make the most of them? Our panel of industry experts share their thoughts with Kate Cracknell



A good personal trainer can bring the space alive, but a wide range of kit aids results

FULLY FUNCTIONAL

STEVE BARRETT, PROGRAMME DEVELOPER & PRESENTER

Every functional training zone needs to reflect the type of clients who are most likely to use it. That sounds obvious, but 'functional' doesn't necessarily mean high intensity – think carefully about matching the design with the aspirations, wants and needs of the clients, rather than just creating a playground for the super fit.

Space: You can never have too much space, but a small, well-designed area can be highly productive. Crucially, you should be able to take four big strides in each direction; to train for functionality, members must be able to move off the spot.

Floor: In a functional zone, the surface needs to be tactile, with good grip for hands and feet. Ideally incorporate some design into the floor by adding lines, squares or circles.

Walls: You can get into dead-end arguments about whether mirrors are a good thing or bad, but I think it helps people during certain

exercises to see how they are moving. But don't cover the entire area. A solid wall is useful for throwing medicine balls at, for example, and if you have enough height I love old-style wall bars like in the gym at school. You can hang and climb on them, as well as attach items like the TRX and the Rip Trainer.

Equipment: A good PT could bring this space alive with no equipment, but with the right gear, results will be faster and easier to achieve. I have a huge selection of equipment, but the items in constant use are the TRX, Reebok Deck, Reebok Core Board and Olympic bar with around 50kg of discs. In addition to those essentials, to give the space energy, I'd go for a medicine ball rebounder and 'soft weights' such as Steel Bells or Powerbags – you can throw them around and it isn't a problem if they're dropped.

Décor: This is key to bringing it all together. Aim to create a space that's vibrant and energising, as this will make it less intimidating and a more enjoyable, productive place to be.



For a functional training space to work, members must be able to take four big strides in each direction



STEVE JACK, CONSULTANT

Design with the end in mind: is your functional zone meant to be for members to use on their own, for trainers only, for free classes, for a higher-tiered results-based membership? Each of these purposes would require a different design rubric.

Educate staff on getting the best use out of the zone, otherwise it will be a white elephant. But train them for concept, not equipment – focus on programming in the zone, not just how to use certain pieces of kit. Indeed, your members want solutions, and you should offer programming to solve their problems. Develop 'plug and play' group programmes covering everything from weight loss to athletic conditioning and rejuvenation.

Locate your functional zone in a place where members feel comfortable exercising on it. I've travelled to 20 countries in the last couple of years and have never seen a functional zone with high use located as the centrepiece of a gym – members don't like to feel they're in a goldfish bowl. Put your zone in a low transit area that still has visibility, but that's not the centrepiece of the gym.

Choose your equipment carefully. Functional training equipment is relatively inexpensive to buy, but the real art is in the design and layout so it may have multiple applications. The finish should also add visual appeal to your gym floor.



Functional areas: Best situated in visible but low transit areas – not as a centrepiece – says Jack



GAVIN ATTORE, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & PROGRAMMING, FITNESS RETREAT

Functional training tools, exercises and programmes have started to become a big part of the industry. However, how these tools and systems should be used can be confusing.

Let's take a look at tools such as TRX, ViPR, BOSU, stability balls, kettlebells, the CoreStick, CoreTex... the list could go on and on. The point is, there are so many tools – with a plethora of associated exercises – that it can be overwhelming to work out what to use, at what time, for what client. So what ends up as the

chosen exercise? The sexiest, toughest exercise, as it makes everyone take notice and provides entertainment.

This isn't a bad thing all the time, as clients can have lots of fun doing these exercises, but I've found that creating groups with similar goals, integrating tools using specific programming, is the best approach. I create eight- to 12-week group training packages – semi-private (three or four people) or small group training (six to eight people) – where the training is more outcome-focused.

For example, they might want to lose weight or body fat – two completely

different goals. Once I know this, I can select the right tools and create a progressive programme to help them reach their goal, realistically and within a given timeframe. By setting realistic goals that members/clients are able to achieve, motivation stays high.

Every tool can be used, but taking this strategic approach ensures that not only are the sessions fun, but more importantly, the customer is also happy and satisfied.



PETE BANBURY, MD, FASTER FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION

The rise and rise of the functional training zone in clubs signals a couple of things – a great opportunity for members to enjoy themselves, and an invitation for PTs to make a skills leap. Attend to both of these and operators could be onto something special.

Most people spend money in order to have fun – be that eating out with friends or going on holiday. What I'm seeing in the best functional areas taps into this sense of innocent enjoyment and community. They are colourful areas offering the

opportunity for members to interact – small clusters of three or four people exercising in a social way.

I've seen more smiles on faces than ever before where trainers are engaging and motivated by the member's enjoyment, rather than by the latest equipment and techniques. Trainer skills are the cornerstone here: operators will get unlimited mileage out of these zones if they populate them with personal trainers who are driven by helping others – who leave the old-school PT ego behind and operate with a high level of technical knowledge and capability.

Functional training is hugely accessible to the member. However, bearing in mind that much of it involves moving equipment through big ranges and with significant momentum, the trainer has to be pretty hot on movement biomechanics to avoid injuring them.

So, functional training zones – a great trend. Now it's over to trainers with both the technical and social skills to make them fly.





TOMMY MATTHEWS, MD, OPTIMAL LIFE FITNESS

It's happening across the UK – all the big chains are looking to find space for functional training zones. This is great news, as they're not only excellent for offering effective training routines, but also fantastic for member experience.

It's very easy for a club to make the decision to install one of these zones. Based on the shift in popularity and the equipment being very cost-effective, clubs are very keen to get with the times and go for it.

However, it's not that simple. Club owners need to realise that this type of equipment is generally very new for the member and not particularly intuitive. For this reason, the success of these zones is heavily based on the club training team: it's vital to have a knowledgeable team that can

educate the members in functional training methods. Without this, the zone will become a space for stretching and doing Swiss ball exercises.

This zone is all about activity and fun. It should be the centrepiece of the gym floor and draw members in. To do this successfully, we need to have a product: a structured training programme that introduces members to the kit, continually challenges them and keeps them coming back. Well-structured small group programmes are essential to create the buzz – for example Move IT, by Optimal Life Fitness and Escape Fitness, that helps clubs to launch, promote, sell and run small group training (image above).



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functional FITNESS

We round up some of the recent launches in the area of functional training products

PRODUCT
ROUND-UP

ESCAPE FITNESS – NEW LAUNCHES

A new addition to the Reebok family, the EasyTone Step (see image) has integrated balance pods below the step platform to create instability, encouraging toning by forcing muscles to compensate and adapt. The intensity of the instability is adjusted using the airflow valve on the underside of the platform. The step has reversible usage: work out on the step surface, or turn over and use the balance pods.

Meanwhile Battle Ropes offer a fun, dynamic and versatile strength and conditioning programme – a complete body workout in a matter of minutes for

everyone from athletes to fitness novices. The 15m-long ropes – which come in two widths – allow for a range of exercises including tug of war, rhythmic resistance exercise and jumping.

And Escape's new SteelBell is a highly versatile functional weight training tool that can be used to add resistance to almost any exercise. Its outer shell – made of tough, stretchy neoprene – contains a steel shot-filled core that can be easily emptied and filled.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: escape



VICORE'S UNSTABLE BENCHES

US company Vicore Fitness has launched a new line of commercial grade functional workout benches following four years of research and development.

The Core Bench and Core Chair enable users to fire their core muscles while performing traditional free weights exercises, forcing better technique.

The products' unique BodyLink™ Air Surface system, an incredibly strong membrane filled with air, simultaneously creates both superior ergonomics and instability, causing total engagement of the body's core muscle groups – the benches are said to engage three to four more muscle groups than traditional

weight benches, and cause the average person to reach total muscle fatigue almost 35 per cent faster.

As well as building strength and engaging core muscles, the products enhance balance and co-ordination. The bench surface matches and supports the body's natural shape, shifting as the user moves, to reduce the risk of injury.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: vicore



GHD FROM YORK

The Glute Ham Developer (GHD) may look like a traditional hyper-extension bench, but working the body in a horizontal position recruits more muscle groups and fibres. Favoured by the UK & US Crossfit community and Olympic Lifting Gyms, the GHD trains all of the muscles in the posterior chain – erector spinae, glutes and hamstrings – which are key both for improving sports performance and, often, for reducing sciatica problems. To add another group of muscles, simply sit on the front rollers with your feet in the holding pads, and lower yourself so your upper body is fully suspended, then contract your abs to finish upright once more.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS: york barbell



NEW TKO SYSTEM

Concept Fitness International's new TKO Functional Training System is a dual-adjustable training machine with a dual-roller mechanism for ultra smooth and quiet movement. There are 22 positions from which to work out, including two different positions for



pull-ups, and the machine comes with six accessories – stored on hooks for convenient access – to provide everything you need for a complete functional training session.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS: concept fitness

TECHNOGYM GETS FUNCTIONAL

Technogym's Arke functional range activates the whole body in 360-degree movement, improving co-ordination, stability, balance, flexibility, strength, speed, agility, reaction time, cardiovascular and respiratory capacity.

Arke consists of a complete range of innovative, easy to use tools. These include the Water 8 Ball: two semi spheres joined together and filled with water – great for core and sport-specific work. Pendulum is a pole with weighted ball, ideal for power and rotation work. And the Twin Clubs are weighted clubs that can be used separately or together by means of the locking system – ideal for power and shoulder rehab.

Meanwhile, Kinesis Stations use a system of free cables for unrestricted body movements in three dimensions, using full gravity technology. With the double weight stack, each cable weight can be adjusted to suit the user's strength, or for rehabilitation.

Consisting of six products, Kinesis Stations use 'push and pull' movements. The positioning of the cables – different on each station – allows the user to train all muscle groups progressively and in a circuit, for a total workout. It offers the stability of a station with the versatility of movement offered by cables.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD: technogym



FREESTYLE FROM BODYCORE

New from Dynamic Activity is the affordable bodycore Freestyle PT Functional Training Platform, with a compact and efficient design that means it's suitable for a wide range of facilities, from personal training studios to large multi-use sites.



The Freestyle's mid-range vertical movement enables anyone from beginners to performance athletes to work out, and because bodycore platforms never exceed 0.9G – the recommended maximum speed for vibration training – users are not restricted on their exercise time.

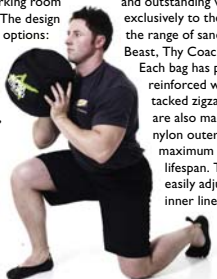
Bodycore's versatile, open design, with no control bar or handles, means it can be integrated in virtually all functional training exercises and used with fixed equipment and free weights without interference. In fact, the French Rugby Federation uses the platforms for pliometric training with Olympic Bars.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS: dynamic activity

NEW JORDAN RACK & SANDBAG

The new Jordan Power Rack provides users with increased functionality, versatility and more working room than comparable racks. The design ensures endless training options: the upper bars can support suspension training systems, and there are also 11 bar rack height adjustments, eight integrated weight storage bars, and both narrow and wide non-slip grip chin bars.

New to the UK market, Alpha Strong sandbags (see image) have been extensively tested in the US



Crossfit arena and are known for their extreme durability, superior quality and outstanding versatility. Supplied exclusively to the UK by Jordan Fitness, the range of sandbags includes Thy Beast, Thy Coach and Thy Sandbag.

Each bag has padded handles, reinforced with triple stitch bar-tacked zigzag stitching. The bags are also made using a high-count nylon outer shell, to ensure maximum durability and product lifespan. The weight can also be easily adjusted via a non-leak inner liner, to provide a full body workout for all users.

fitness-kit.net
KEYWORD: jordan

EXP'S TRAINING STATION

The X-Cube, from EXF Fitness, is a compact, space-efficient training solution combining 40+ exercise elements. Suitable for elite performance conditioning or general exercise, with the option to deliver one-to-one or group training sessions, the X-Cube offers an integrated suspension training system, as well as multiple options for traditional bodyweight exercises such as pull-ups, push-ups, monkey bars, inverted rows, step-ups and dips.

Designed to be fully adaptable to your requirements, each unit is 100 per cent bespoke and designed in consultation with clients. Want to add a half rack and lifting platform? A climbing rope or gymnastic rings? Need to extend the monkey bars? Want to add some punchbags? All these options and more are possible.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS: exf / d2f



MAPPING THE JOURNEY

In the second part of his series, Stuart Dyson offers practical tips on how businesses can put member experience at the heart of what they do



In my previous article (*HCM* Nov/Dec 11, p44), I examined the current tendency to focus on 'rational' retention analysis, with little consideration for the emotional aspects of member satisfaction and loyalty. I suggested the need to counterbalance this with 'right brain' creativity to drive member-focused retention activities based on the delivery and measurement of great experiences. This is because the largely subconscious aspects of an experience that stimulate emotions, thoughts and feelings play a key role in customer satisfaction and subsequent behaviour.

What's more, creating great experiences is also good for business, often resulting in increased revenue and retention. Experience consultants The Temkin Group analysed 12 different industries and found that customer experience leaders enjoy a double-digit advantage in customers willing to buy more from them, as well as customers

showing a greater reluctance to switch and an increased likelihood of recommending them to others. In 2009, Forrester Research noted that customer experience leaders enjoyed a loyalty advantage of more than 14 per cent.

To achieve similar gains for your company, there's a need to focus much more on the collective experiences that make up the customer interactions and touchpoints of what you offer, far beyond product and service. Pine and Gilmore, in their influential book *The Experience Economy*, state clearly why it isn't enough to think in terms of service or business process: "Experiences are as distinct from services as services are from goods."

If you want to move from being a retention business to become an experience business, here's how to do it.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

It's self-evident that few people working in a service industry such as ours would

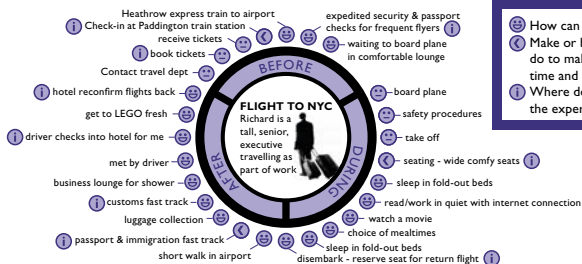
set out to upset as many of their members as possible. Yet every day, from front-line staff to top managers and owners, decisions are made that frustrate, annoy and upset the very people we're supposed to be making happy. It's often not one big thing, but rather a collection of niggles across various channels or departments that add up to negative feelings such as 'irritated', 'neglected', 'hurried' and so on.

Much of the time it's simply driven by the fact that no-one in the organisation has ever had the same experience viewpoint as the member. Experiences, then, are completely in the eye of the beholder. The same experience can be good for one person and bad for another. In fact, the same experience can be good for a person at one time and bad for that same person at a different point in time.

What's needed is a way to personalise experiences for different people. While creating segments of just one

DESIGNING THE EXPERIENCE

Source: LEGO



USE THE EXPERIENCE ICONS:

- How can this be a positive experience?
- Make or break moment - what can we do to make sure consumers come back time and time again?
- Where do we need data to help deliver the experience?

The right strategy can help you move from being a retention business to an experience business (right); involve all stakeholders in the design phase (left)

“WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR STAFF, BASIC COMPLIANCE ISN'T ENOUGH – YOU NEED THEIR ACTIVE COMMITMENT”

individual isn't practical, you can usually identify fairly specific groups with similar characteristics (young mums, older couples, working singles etc) that have similar needs, interactions and 'moments of truth'. This can best be achieved by creating 'personas' (see Experience Design Toolbox, p48) that describe the characteristics for each segment. The difference with personas over other forms of segmentation is that you need to humanise the persona, so you view the people in the segment as 'real' rather than just some marketing exercise – this is key.

Since experiences must be designed and optimised around certain member personas, you need a clear idea of who your important – and not so important – member segments are. Prioritise your experience design by starting where most people will be positively affected.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

Making a commitment to great experiences starts with the design process itself. A fun, engaging and interactive process will usually produce better results than a dry, academic exercise. In order to achieve this, there are a number of well established design tools available for you to use that are quick, effective and don't cost the earth (see Experience Design Toolbox, p48).

It's important to include the key stakeholders in the process – and yes, that includes your members. This concept, known as co-creation, makes those “I think this and that” conversations redundant: ask some members instead. Also, inside staff are often the worst people to lead the design process, as their point of view is skewed by knowledge of your organisation that members don't have: members may not know (or care) about the special names, acronyms

and the vagaries of your organisation chart, or the many information silos and departments it contains.

In order to build co-creation into the fabric of what you do, you'll need to initiate a Voice of the Customer programme (VoC). The good news is there are many cost-effective tools available that turn customer feedback into a community activity via social media. Sites such as getsatisfaction.com and uservoice.com enable you to quickly create a member community that will help you to track complaints, praise and feedback, as well as enabling you to vote the best ideas to the top of the pile for a complete feedback loop. This is a much more efficient method of collecting member information and feedback than the more traditional lengthy questionnaires and email campaigns.

Once your experience journey is designed, it's important to prototype,

test and refine numerous times before releasing it 'into the wild'. Toolbox items (p48) will help you to obtain feedback in a way that it can be rapidly fed into the next version of the customer journey. The testing process would then be repeated until all member expectations are met as a minimum – or even better, exceeded. However, before introducing your new experience journey, you will need to engage your staff first.

POWER UP YOUR PEOPLE

When it comes to your staff and their role in the member experience, basic compliance isn't going to be enough. If you don't have their active commitment, your efforts are doomed to failure even before you start, as this quote from the 1994 *Harvard Business Review* explains: “Value is created by satisfied, loyal and productive employees.” Properly paid and incentivised staff with the right training ▶

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/YURI ACURS

► and enough power to 'do the right thing' can achieve some amazing things.

However, don't expect your staff to automatically do what's required. You need to spend as much time and effort on your staff engagement programme as you do on your members. Be clear and specific about what you expect them to do at each of the service touchpoints.

Don't wait for your organisational alignment to change – put member experience first and the organisation can catch up later.

The three levers of staff performance – measurements, incentives and recognition – need to be applied clearly and consistently throughout your member experience stages and channels.

MAKE HAPPINESS YOUR METRIC

Even though experience involves thoughts and feelings, metrics are still required. While metrics like attrition and retention may provide a sense of member movement, they don't provide any insight into member experience and its effect on loyalty.

EXPERIENCE DESIGN TOOLBOX

For each stage of your experience research, design and measurement project, choose a tool that will help you obtain the best possible outcome:

A. PERSONAS

Personas are fictional profiles of typical characters at your gym, representing shared needs and interests around which personalised experiences can be created. By collecting the various insights gained from member feedback and your own research, you can then create fictional members with photographs and 'back stories', highlighting the various common elements for each segment. Creating no more than 10 different personas will keep your project manageable. Well-designed personas move the focus of the service team from demographics and statistics to thinking about the needs of real people.

B. STORYTELLING

The aim is to create a 'Day in the Life' for a particular member segment or persona which describes, in story form, a typical day where the member might use your service (or not). You can write a short text-based story or use photos organised into a comic strip-style storyboard. Try to collect as many insights as possible about their typical day, bearing in mind that you should collect information about what the member is thinking and doing outside of your service interactions. A Day in the Life is used to put some context into where your service fits into their life, rather than simply looking at your touchpoints in isolation. This will help you to understand the everyday problems, and possible solutions, that are integral to tailoring your services for each persona.

C. EXPECTATION MAP

An expectation map lists all the key touchpoints in a particular service experience and records what a member expects to find when interacting with the service. Existing member feedback can be combined with face-to-face interviews to create a list of expectations for each stage. Expectation mapping helps to highlight the standards expected by the member versus what's currently provided. This is particularly useful for consistent problem areas.

D. CUSTOMER JOURNEY CANVAS

Once your investigation and design ideas are settled, you can pull everything together and create a more formal 'Experience Blueprint' using the Customer Journey Canvas. This provides a detailed and structured visualisation of the experience, highlighting the touchpoints and channels (in person, email, website etc) involved. The Canvas provides space for detailed visualisation for the pre-, during and post-service periods (see chart, p46). You can download a copy for free at <http://thisisservice.designthinking.com/>

E. DESKTOP WALKTHROUGH

Before launching your new experience, you'll need to try it out without too much disruption to existing operations. You can achieve this using a desktop walkthrough – a 3D model of the service environment (in this case, your facility) in which you play out the flow of events. You will need some simple Lego pieces to create the environment (the 'stage') and Lego characters to represent members and staff (the 'actors'). Desired scenarios can then be acted out by moving the characters around the stage to simulate interactions. Walkthroughs allow for quick, interactive iterations of ideas, particularly when you want to look into the effectiveness of a proposed change in member experience. This will bring to life your prototype and allow key stakeholders to review and comment early in the change process – plus it's great fun!



PHOTO: STOCKPHOTO.COM/ISTILL



Incentivised, empowered staff with the right training can do amazing things

Your VoC system needs to be efficient enough to provide the necessary member input to drive priorities, decisions and investments that will measurably improve their experiences, but be simple enough to implement and maintain. Also bear in mind that the loudest complainers often get the most attention, particularly from owners and managers. Recent research by the Temkin Group found that 34 per cent of US consumers gave feedback after a bad experience, but only 21 per cent did the same after a good one. In other words, the usual customer listening mechanisms skew reality to the vocal detractors.

Rather than using these feedback system to put out fires, think of it as a way to highlight and promote your raving fans.

The well-known Net Promoter Score is a good example of how a simple metric can be used to measure the effectiveness of a particular experience – it's even simple enough to measure specific touchpoints inside an experience.

However, focusing too much on a net score can lead back to the initial problem of viewing members in an undifferentiated, aggregated way. If you're committed to using NPS, it's best to track detractors and promoters separately so you can implement a different engagement programme for each group.

CONCLUSION

This new discipline of Customer Experience Management can be applied to every customer touchpoint across every channel in your entire organisation. Done well, your members will feel acknowledged and valued, and the resulting increase in loyalty will be recognised through an improvement in retention and an increase in bottom-line profit.

In the race to reduce costs as times become increasingly tough, businesses must avoid compromising the customer experience through the use of impersonal tools and methods. That

A study showed that 34 per cent of US consumers gave feedback after a bad experience, but only 21 per cent did so after a good one

approach cannot be sustained, and will ultimately result in the loss of customers and the depreciation of brand values that you've worked so hard to build – values that will take even longer to restore.

While the terminology of customer experience management might be new, the aim to bring back the values and standards of "good old fashioned service" could be the start of an exciting new chapter for the fitness industry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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TAPPING INTO TRIATHLON

WITH THE GROWTH OF TRIATHLON AT AMATEUR AS WELL AS ELITE LEVEL, THERE'S A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY FOR OPERATORS TO INTRODUCE TRIATHLON TRAINING AND EVENTS IN THEIR FACILITIES. NICOLA JOYCE REPORTS

Official figures from British Triathlon – the sport's NGB – suggest that a large proportion of a health club or leisure centre's members will train for at least one triathlon this year. The fastest-growing sport in Britain, triathlon's popularity shows no sign of waning, with London 2012 predicted to boost interest at amateur level.

In 2010/2011, British Triathlon recorded a 15.7 per cent increase in membership numbers, with a surprisingly equal split across genders (59 per cent male, 41 per cent female). The largest age group represented is the cash-rich, goal-focused 35- to 44-year-old category.

Outdoor sport, training lends itself well to a club setting. Triathletes need to train in indoor pools, and can benefit from indoor cycling sessions and running training on a track. Outdoor bike and run groups also need a base, as do existing local triathlon clubs, who are often keen to partner with facilities that have an indoor pool.

Says Mark Barfield, director of development at British Triathlon and director of operations at Triathlon England: "Operators can offer their facility as a meeting point for bike and run sessions and, if they have a pool, that's an obvious benefit" – access to pool time is, he says, always an issue for triathletes.



Outdoor bike and run groups need a base, as do existing triathlon clubs who are often keen to partner up



Not all clubs are able to offer a pool as part of a triathlon training programme, but those who can stand to benefit



Although triathlon is an outdoor sport, athletes need indoor training facilities

DRIVING LOYALTY

Although triathlon is an

"Offering sessions across any combination of the swim/bike/run trio will attract those interested in triathlons. Additionally, operators could use strength and conditioning sessions, group cycling and pilates as a draw.

"Triathletes are a very dynamic group of people – typically ABCs – who are willing to embrace any new idea which will help them perform better."

And for those not yet involved in triathlon, to whom it can be a daunting prospect, offering a first step within the familiar surroundings of their existing health club or leisure centre removes the pressure of committing to an event or joining a triathlon club as a newcomer. This can help build confidence and a sense of community – key to the success of an in-club triathlon club.

"ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT CLIENTS WILL USE THE GYM MORE OFTEN, AND RENEW THEIR MEMBERSHIP, IF THEY TAKE PART IN OTHER ACTIVITIES OFFERED AT THE CLUB"

Club operators across the country are already grasping the opportunities presented by the public's passion for triathlon. Barfield has spearheaded a triathlon partnership with David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) and is keen to partner with any operators who want to tap into triathlon. "By supporting the development of in-club triathlon clubs, we can generate new training environments and the operators can attract new participants," he explains. "The initiative with DLL is still in its infancy, but anecdotal evidence suggests that clients will use the gym more often, and are more likely to renew their membership, if they take part in other activities offered within the club."

Not only that, but members of in-club clubs also take part in social activities, building a sense of community and buy-in and further boosting retention.

"Triathlon gives people the chance to be part of something which then becomes their lifestyle. This can only be a good thing for club operators," says Julian Nagi, the British Triathlon Federation Level 3 coach who heads up the in-club triathlon club at The Park Club, part of The Hogarth Group. "Our triathlon set-up helps with club loyalty. There's no question that it keeps members coming back for more, renewing their membership fees each year and passing on positive word-of-mouth recommendations."

TRAINING & EVENTS

Andrew Taylor is sports manager at DLL Hampton. His club offers a weekly swimming session, plus another session

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Triathlon gives people chance to be part of something that then becomes a lifestyle

in the week that covers either running or cycling on a fortnightly rotation. There is no additional charge to members. "We see the triathlon club as another benefit to DLL members who are looking for more intensive group training," he says. "As we do not charge, we receive no direct extra revenue. However, we believe that the extra sense of achievement will encourage participants to keep their membership."

Taylor believes the main considerations for operators wanting to set up an in-club triathlon group are time, space and credible trainers. "As long as you have cycles or studio bikes and treadmills, you can do this," he says. "I'd advise operators to look at peak and off-peak membership and consider

whether to offer sessions for both. We have no specific zones as we do the training at a time that won't affect other gym users. Outdoor sessions can also be done if the trainer and members are happy to do so.

"Having a pool is a big help, although you can just offer training for run and bike. Staff don't have to have specialist training for that, although it helps if they have some experience as members will have more belief in the trainer."

"Clubs could offer specific running or group cycling sessions, or recruit triathlon coaches for outdoor group bike and run sessions," adds Nagi.

"Duathlon (run/bike/run) is a way to encourage multi-sport. Some may then want to move onto triathlon." ▶

TECHNIQUE FOR RESULTS

Triathlon training has far-reaching benefits for your more goal- and performance-orientated members. Eddie Fletcher is the resident sport scientist at Wattbike, the indoor bike endorsed by British Cycling. "Cycling improvement comes through a combination of better technique and consistent, sustained training," he says. "As pedalling technique improves, the physiological effort required to maintain a particular cadence and power output reduces, and the triathlete becomes faster. When we transfer this to road cycling, improvements tend to be in multiples of minutes, and that's significant."

Fletcher's findings have also shown that indoor training on the Wattbike translates into faster run times, which he attributes to better use of the leg muscles with improved pedalling technique and more efficient, economical physiological effort. "I would advise clubs to engage a cycling expert who can coach pedalling technique, structure training and run individual indoor training sessions," says Fletcher. "A knowledge of how to test cyclists and calculate training zones is important. Ideally, they will have a feel for how to look at the relationship between cadence, power, heart rate and leg speed."

Barfield suggests that facilities can also run triathlon events themselves or in partnership with local triathlon clubs, providing an opportunity to better drive revenue as well as retention. "The multi-sport nature of triathlon lends itself to many opportunities: a dry triathlon challenge in the gym, an aquathlon (swim/run), a full triathlon or any combination of the three sports," he says.

"British Triathlon is keen to work with any venue wishing to run multi-sport activities. And we're happy to help any club operator to generate a triathlon club. Our partnership with DLL is non-exclusive, and we've seen the in-club club model work across diverse locations. We can offer training for coaches and best practice guidance."

Nagi suggests that operators begin by working with triathlon coaches in their area, who will be full of ideas and contacts. "You need someone with vision to get things moving," he comments. "We have an amazing facility here, with an outdoor and an indoor pool, huge gym and beautiful grounds with a running trail. We have all the ingredients to make it work. We now run three triathlons, a duathlon and two children's aquathlons every year."

REVENUE DRIVER

Everyone Active (SLM) is the first leisure management group to work with Triathlon England on a national level, cross-promoting its in-house triathlon initiative with the NGB. Group exercise development manager Michelle Bletso pioneered the relationship, and feels that working in partnership with an NGB allows the group to offer more to members. "Everyone Active has started to train staff to run official triathlon training sessions at our centres with a



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**"AS TRIATHLON CLUBS
GROW IN SIZE, THERE WILL
BE FURTHER COMMERCIAL
OPPORTUNITIES... IT'S A GREAT
REVENUE-GENERATION TOOL**

Representatives from British Triathlon say they are keen to work with any venue wishing to run multi-sport activities



Forming an in-club triathlon club creates a sense of community and aids retention

view to rolling this out across the group," she explains. "We'll also have an interactive online programme with downloadable triathlon training plans.

"In addition, Everyone Active provides local triathlon groups with pool and studio training space, so they can grow the number of training sessions. This is a great way of generating income for the sites during downtime, while offering a winter training service. We've also been asked to host the county Aquathlon Championships in 2012, which will have a number of schools taking part. All the children's activities work we do makes us perfectly placed to introduce further activities to school groups."

Meanwhile Leisure Connection partners with existing local triathlon clubs by offering venue facilities for training and events. The Lord Butler Centre in Essex has run the Walden Triathlon for 11 years. "The centres get revenue from the triathlon clubs when they hire the pool and sports hall," says Kevin Grant, contract manager. "Some of the triathlon club members are also members of the centre and use the facilities in addition to their club nights. Good relationships with such clubs is fundamental for our success and integral to our values as a PFI site."

Grant says relationships with successful external triathlon clubs are easy to maintain. "They are serious about their training. As long as excellent customer service is always present, there is no reason for the relationship to falter. As triathlon clubs grow in size, there will be further commercial

opportunities, increasing the amount of pool space they use and the frequency with which they visit the centre. It's a great revenue-generation tool."

CLEAR BENEFITS

With around 350 triathlon clubs affiliated to British Triathlon, and 14,298 NGB members recorded in 2010/2011, it's clear that triathlon represents exciting opportunities for member retention and revenue, not to mention less measurable – but no less valuable – benefits: customer loyalty, improved club visibility and strong links with the community. With the 2012 Games almost upon us, there's never been a better time to get involved in triathlon.

"The London Olympic Games is predicted to generate a 10 per cent rise in the numbers of people wanting to get involved in triathlon and multi-sport, whether mass-participation races or amateur training," says John Lunt, triathlon manager for the London 2012 Olympics. "This represents a huge opportunity for club and gym operators who have time and space that could be used for multi-sport sessions.

"Triathletes tend to be affluent, group-focused, sociable people who are highly committed to their training and to the sport in the long-term. Any gym offering in-house triathlon club sessions will not only benefit in terms of revenue and retention, but will also deliver an important bonus to its membership."



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MENTAL FIRST AID

Debbie Lawrence reports on the issue of eating disorders, and how fitness operators can play their part in addressing the problem

classified eating disorders

The main eating disorders classified in the American Psychological

Association (APA) *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* include:

- Anorexia nervosa, affecting approximately one in 250 females and one in 2,000 males
- Bulimia nervosa, affecting five times this number
- Binge eating disorder (BED)
- Eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS)

These figures report only people presenting to the NHS, and may not account for those who: are not yet receiving treatment (denial of problem or fear of stigma); are undiagnosed because they are outside the stereotypical age or gender grouping (ie they are not adolescent or female); are being treated for other conditions that shadow diagnosis of the eating disorder (depression, gynaecological or gastro-intestinal problems); or are receiving treatment privately.

Eating disorders may be caused by a combination of biological, behavioural, psychological and social factors. They

Anorexia. Bulimia. Binge eating. These are conditions that are surrounded, for many, by confusion and misunderstanding. And yet, for those working in health and fitness, insight into the causes and symptoms – as well as a working knowledge of how to approach those suffering from these conditions – could be vital.

A transient phase of disordered eating – fad diets or comfort eating – is something many people experience during their life. However, when individuals become pre-occupied with their appearance, severely restrict their food intake or use vomiting, laxatives or over-exercise to control their weight, then it's time for concern.

Eating disorders are mental health conditions affecting 1.6 million people in the UK. They usually begin in adolescence, but there are cases reported in children as young as six and women in their 70s. They also affect men.

As with all mental health conditions, you cannot tell if someone has an eating disorder simply by looking at them. Some people with anorexia may look emaciated, but others may not. Individuals with bulimia are usually of normal weight, or may even be slightly overweight, and persons with binge eating disorder are usually overweight or obese. Bingeing and purging are secretive behaviours and may remain unnoticed, even by close friends and family.

Early intervention is the key to recovery, and the fitness industry should be equipped to offer mental health 'first aid' to promote recovery, preserve life and prevent deterioration.

Some potential warning signs that exercise professionals may be able to recognise include rapid weight loss or weight gain, over-exercising, exercising when ill or feeling anxious when missing a training session. Awareness of these signs offers an opportunity to intervene.

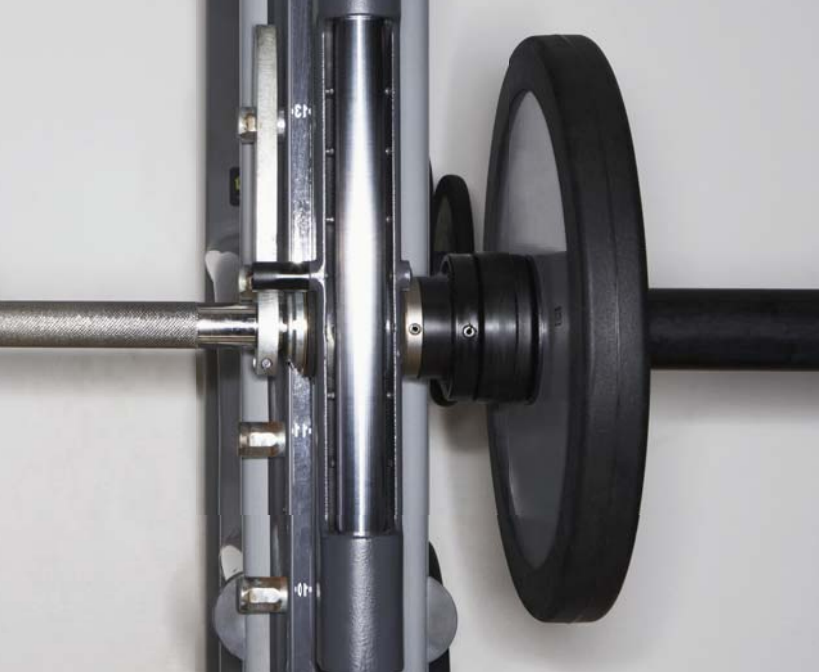


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may be triggered by a stressful event, usually related to close relationships, and are linked with other emotional and mental health issues including low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, body dysmorphism and so on.

Anorexia and bulimia start with food restriction to control weight, which becomes stricter and generates feelings of euphoria at being in control. Persons with anorexia may become obsessed with calorie counting, weighing, measuring and mirror checking; they develop an intense fear of gaining weight and severely restrict their food intake and may use laxatives and vomiting.

People with bulimia move between food restriction and bingeing and use purging behaviours to compensate for binges, leading to spiralling feelings of self-loathing and disgust, which triggers the repetitive cycle of behaviour. There may also be risk of self-harm and substance misuse.

Men with eating disorders may have a desire for either 'thinness', or to 'bulk up', which may lead to steroid misuse.

These behaviours have severe health consequences and contribute to numerous health problems (loss of menstruation/erection, infertility,

gastro-intestinal problems) and sometimes death. Of all psychiatric conditions, anorexia has the highest mortality rate from medical complications (cardiac collapse) and suicide.

advice for operators

So what can fitness operators do?

Be aware: Recognise that eating disorders affect both men and women and people of all ages – including staff. There is evidence that eating disorders are prevalent in aerobics instructors and some professional athletes, dancers and gymnasts.

Access information: Connect with mental health and eating disorder charities such as B-eat or MIND and invite them to give talks or host a display stand for a day. Ask them to write articles for members' newsletters and advertise their services on notice boards. Many people with eating disorders may be in denial (pre-contemplation), so the best strategy is to just provide access to information.

In-house training: MIND, a leading UK mental health charity, provides training courses for mental health

Men who suffer from eating disorders may have a desire to 'bulk up'

and youth mental health first aid. The programmes explain how to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health distress (eating disorders, depression, substance misuse, self harm, suicide etc), and teach the 'mental health first aider' how to intervene respectfully and empathically and guide the person towards appropriate sources of help and support that may assist their recovery.

These courses are the mental health equivalent of the compulsory first aid at work training used to train staff to intervene in the event of an accident or medical emergency. This valuable training could be provided to all staff, as well as to members.

Intervene: Rather than ignoring someone who may be showing signs of distress, speak to them and listen to what they say without judgement. Never make accusations or form a diagnosis – diagnosis is a GP's responsibility. Exercise professionals can enquire about exercise goals and ask the person ▶

help services

Mental Health First Aid Training and Youth Mental Health First Aid Training resources include:

- **England:**

<http://www.mhfaengland.org>

- **Scotland:**

<http://www.smhfa.com/index.aspx>

- **Northern Ireland:**

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net>

- **Wales:**

<http://www.mhfa-wales.org.uk>

B-eat: www.b-eat.co.uk

Time to Change:

<http://www.time-to-change.org.uk>

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► if they would like their programme reviewed. They can tentatively explore if the person exercises when ill or to compensate for eating, if they feel anxious if they miss a session, if they exercise in secret – all potential signs of exercise misuse. Similar questions could be added within standard health screening procedures.

Simply asking someone how they are may well be the invitation they need to open up. Eating disorders offer a source of comfort, control, and keep the person safe within their self-made consistent, dependable comfort zone. However, they may recognise the problem and want to recover (contemplating change) but may be scared or ambivalent.

Exercise professionals and managers could be trained to use motivational interviewing techniques to gently challenge ambivalence. Learning these skills will help them to provide more effective interventions for all members looking to make lifestyle changes.

Referral and support: The first port of call for referral is the person's GP, who will diagnose and then refer on to other support services. In the UK, eating disorders are treated by a combination of psychotherapy, nutritional counselling and medication (anti-depressants). Adults with anorexia may be referred to specialist eating disorder services, while children/adolescents are referred into child and adolescent mental health services.

Challenge stigma: Help to remove the fear, ignorance and shame attached to all mental health conditions by connecting with national campaigns (such as Time to Change) and even organising fundraising events to support allied charities. Promote annual mental health events (World Mental Health Week, Stress Awareness

Day) by organising a range of mind-body programmes (Nia, ChiBall, pilates, yoga, relaxation, mindfulness) to celebrate mental, and physical, health.

Promote body confidence: Use realistic body images to advertise and promote services. A primary target for exercise is improving health, and there is no single image of a perfect body.

Promote healthy behaviours: Provide leaflets or talks on the risks of over-exercising and steroid misuse, as well as more positive topics such as healthy exercise, healthy eating and the energy balance required for exercise (food is fuel). People may not be aware that a behaviour is problematic, or that it may place them (or someone else) on the pathway to developing a problem.

Exercise – a double-edged sword: Exercise offers numerous benefits to combat the debilitating effects of eating disorders, both physically (improving bone density, decreasing risk of CHD etc) and psychologically (improving mood, self-esteem, confidence, body image and reducing anxiety). There is also evidence to suggest that exercise reduces binge eating.

However, exercise may be over-used by individuals with eating disorders to control weight, and a medical assessment may identify exercise as a risk factor for maintaining the problem. Yet refusing or restricting access to the gym may not be the solution: they will find other ways. Exercise professionals should consult with GPs and other professionals to find an appropriate way forward. There is currently insufficient evidence from which they can prescribe exercise specifically for eating disorders, so any advice provided should be in accordance with recommendations from other professionals involved in the person's treatment plan.

Need for vigilance: Eating disorders affect 1.6 million people in the UK

conclusion

Mental health is a societal issue and is everyone's business. No-one develops an eating disorder overnight – they develop over time, and must be acknowledged and treated appropriately to promote recovery.

Currently, just 50 per cent of those diagnosed with eating disorders recover fully. No-one can be held responsible if a person ignores advice or denies there is a problem, and sometimes caring support is rejected and fuels the denial.

However, we are accountable for the information that we offer or do not offer. Ignoring or dismissing a person who is experiencing mental health distress is the equivalent to walking past someone who has been involved in an accident or medical emergency. We need to ensure we have the knowledge and confidence to play our part in addressing the issue.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debbie Lawrence, MA, is co-author of the recently published *Complete Guide to Physical Activity for Mental Health* (Bloomsbury Publishing). She is a qualified counsellor and trained with Mind Cymru to deliver youth mental health first aid. She has developed and delivers the Level 4 Physical Activity for Mental Health qualification for Moving Minds Training and Fitness Wales.

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a timely investment

FIA CEO David Stalker reports on the recent UN meeting on non-communicable diseases, the focus on physical activity, and the next steps towards encouraging higher levels of activity across Europe



In the UK, we have long been aware of the evidence that physical activity can reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – often referred to in the UK as chronic conditions and including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, mental health conditions, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases and musculoskeletal conditions.

It is certainly the case that physical inactivity has contributed to a staggering increase in the rates of NCDs on a global basis. NCDs now kill three in five people worldwide, and cause great socio-economic harm within all countries, particularly developing nations. The overall toll of NCDs is estimated at 36 million, representing 63 per cent of total deaths. These statistics alone indicate both the severity and global epidemic status of NCDs.

Then there's the economic cost. Professor David Bloom of the Harvard School of Public Health estimates that the loss in economic output due to the four major NCDs will be around US\$30 trillion between 2011 and 2030 (calculated using the World Health Organisation's 'EPIC' tool to relate

projected NCD mortality rates to current and future economic output). The cost-benefit analysis within his report also found that the benefits of taking action now outweigh the costs of inaction three-fold. It is obvious that we need to act now.

preventative healthcare

The battle against these conditions is now being fought by 34 countries worldwide, and the decision by the United Nations General Assembly to convene a High Level Meeting (HLM) on NCDs on 19–20 September 2011 presented a unique opportunity for the international community to take action against the growing epidemic, save millions of lives and enhance development initiatives.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, president of the General Assembly, said the occasion marked "a historic opportunity to set a new global agenda and to advance the protection of the world's vulnerable populations".

The two-day meeting – attended by 34 heads of state and government and at least 100 other senior ministers

and experts – adopted a declaration calling for a multi-pronged campaign by governments, industry and civil society to set up, by 2013, the plans needed to curb the risk factors behind the four groups of NCDs: cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes.

As with many healthcare issues, prevention is usually cheaper than the cost of treatment, but in the EU less than 3 per cent of the health budget is currently spent on prevention programmes. This now looks set to be addressed, as delegates at the UN HLM placed prevention as a cornerstone of future action. Identified as of particular importance was the need to address the four major risk factors: tobacco, poor diet, lack of physical activity and the harmful use of alcohol.

Steps proposed range from price/tax measures aimed at reducing tobacco consumption through to curbing the extensive marketing to children – particularly on television – of foods and beverages that are high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, sugars or salt. Other proposed measures seek to cut the harmful consumption of alcohol, promote overall healthy diets and increase physical activity.

leading by example

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is a new permanent observer of the United Nations and an active member of civil society. Its president, Jacques Rogge, spoke at the UN summit to confirm the committee's commitment to combating NCDs through the promotion of physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

Rogge talked about the role of sport and physical activity in preventing NCDs. He called for governments, educational institutions, businesses and non-governmental organisations to work together, and urged support for several

**Inactivity kills:
NCDs now account
for three out of five
deaths worldwide**





**Changing focus:
Preventative
healthcare, including
physical activity, is
moving up the agenda**

steps that have the potential to make a significant difference.

He encouraged the development of safe places for exercise, for example, as well as the creation of new partnerships with sectors beyond sport – including transportation, finance and urban planning – to expand the impact of sport in urban areas. These sectors could work with governments and educators to increase the time students devote to physical education, and encourage the development of both sport infrastructure and sport organisations.

There are other examples of best practice from around the world, all of which are designed to get people active and change behaviours. In particular the group at the UN summit reviewed:

- **US:** Working to solve childhood obesity through the Safe Routes to School programme, and improving outdoor play areas.
- **Brazil:** US\$100m invested in local physical activity promotion projects, using the World Cup 2014 and the 2016 Olympics as a catalyst.
- **Aruba:** Sports for All programme combining education, physical activity and sport, and offering more sport in schools by extending the school day.
- **Barbados:** A National Exercise Taskforce has been established to tell people about the importance of getting active.

future plans

For next steps, the group: confirmed the need for physical activity to be worked into urban planning; outlined the importance of a focus on youth and rights of the child; and stressed the importance of private sector partnerships.

Indeed, partnership working was a consistent theme throughout the main meeting. To effectively combat NCDs, we need cross-sector working and greater involvement from the private sector in finding solutions. Both government and business must take a strong role in health issues.

The problem of the price of healthy lifestyles in some countries was also raised. In Nauru, for example, the cost of a lettuce is the same as a packet of cigarettes, making bad habits more affordable than healthy living.

It was felt that consumers and citizens cannot always make the healthy choice on their own, and that governments and the corporate sector must make it easier for them to do so – i.e. that we should aim to change the physical and social environment rather than trying to change individual behaviour.

Government policies should, it was said, be re-orientated towards public health in order to change mindsets among the public, while the corporate sector needs to recognise that investing in prevention and healthcare is worthwhile.

Action on NCDs must be taken by all public sectors, not health alone, and the private sector: food companies through to pharmaceutical firms must all play their role in reducing the threat people face.

fitness perspective

What can we take away from this event, or what new examples of best practice have we come across? As I said at the start, in the UK we consider ourselves very aware of the worrying increase in NCDs, and the association of this increase with physical inactivity. The UN HLM re-affirmed much of our work.

Through the Responsibility Deal and our efforts to be Legacy-ready, we're already developing partnerships with other professions and sectors – from the medical community to commercial partners – and are making great headway as a government delivery partner.

We will therefore be building on solid foundations in the UK. However, the data speaks for itself – it's clear we all need to do more if we are to increase activity levels and reduce the number of people diagnosed with NCDs. We must continue to build powerful partnerships and drive innovation if we are to bring about the necessary societal changes that will really make a difference.



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Product Update



KLAFS' variation on a sauna theme

The Lounge Q sauna from KLAFS is a variation on the company's Sauna Lounge, with a new interior design. Perpendicular hemlock panels are designed to give the sauna a sophisticated appearance, while Canadian pinewood gives an impression of high quality. With options to vary both width and depth, Lounge Q is a solution which KLAFS says can fit the most difficult space.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

klafs



New gloves from York

York Barbell has launched a new range of boxing 'Fight Gloves' – Viper, Cobra and Raptor – designed to suit boxers of all levels. Viper offers a variable rubber content for soft to firm glove combinations. Cobra is designed for high-impact, shorter-term performance. And Raptor comprises padded layers for an efficient memory. Available in three sizes – 8oz, 10oz and 10oz XL – all gloves are designed for a comfort fit.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

york

fitness-kit.net

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APPI pilates products to enhance sessions

Newly available from the APPI (Australian Physiotherapy and Pilates Institute) Health Group is a range of equipment designed to enhance any pilates session. These include: the APPI Pilates Sock, with a non-slip sole and seamless toe; the APPI Theraband, 1m long and available in two colours; APPI Spike Balls, great for massaging the feet, self-massage and elongating and releasing tight muscles; and the APPI Pilates Magic Circle, for adding resistance and greater endurance to exercises.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

appi

Further, longer and harder with Swimtag

Swimtag has been designed as a tool for motivating swimmers to swim further, longer and harder than ever before. It's a training aid and monitoring system that tracks a swimmer's progress in the pool. Aimed at all levels of swimmers, Swimtag records lengths, split times, stroke rate and stroke type, allowing swimmers to share results with friends via Facebook, take part in personal or team challenges and join online competitions created by the pool facility operator.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

222 sports



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FINGER ON THE PULSE

Heart rate training improves the effectiveness of workouts, but are your members aware of this? And is your gym making the most of the technology? Kath Hudson reports on the latest innovations

With the holy grail of improved retention still elusive for many operators, step forward heart rate training. Not only can heart rate training improve the efficacy of workouts – thereby leading to improved results and with it member loyalty – but, as an added bonus for operators, selling heart rate monitors and belts can provide a solid secondary income stream.

However, with the recent boom in technology – including fitness apps – meaning people are increasingly able to bypass the gym and take their fitness into their own hands, health clubs and leisure centres need to create a role for themselves.

While heart rate monitors can be purchased reasonably cheaply, heart rate training in itself remains confusing to many – if members aren't offered guidance on which zones they should train in, and for how long, they're unlikely to get much more from their workouts. It's therefore vital that operators carve out a role for themselves in setting goals, providing encouragement and interpreting results.

We take a look at some of the technology that can bring heart rate training to life in clubs: new systems from MYZONE and Wattbike, as well as the latest enhancements to the Activo and Suunto software.

MYZONE

New to the market, MYZONE is able to accurately monitor both indoor and outdoor activity. It also allows for individual fitness levels to reward effort (see also project profile, p73).

The product is the latest passion of CFM's Dave Wright, who explains: "Heart rate monitoring is currently used predominantly by elite athletes or for cycle classes, accounting for a tiny proportion of the population. MYZONE is for 100 per cent of the population. The future for the club owner, and the industry, is information. It's about connecting people inside and outside of the four walls of the club, particularly those who don't want to join a gym."

"There are three aspects to physical activity: delivery, monitoring and outcomes. Health clubs and fitness professionals are fantastic at delivery, but MYZONE offers both accurate monitoring and outcomes."

The product went live in November and, within a couple of weeks, was being installed by gyms all over the world, including Fitness First Australia, Les Mills New Zealand, Good Life Gyms in Australia, Gold's Gym in Canada, Aspria in Europe and, in the UK, ZT Fitness in Brighton and H2 in London. Based on current demand, Wright expects to have 100 million users in the next 36 months.

So how does it work? Users wear the heart rate monitor belt, which contains a chip that records all their activity both in and outside of the gym – even including activities like gardening, which pedometers overlook. When users are within 20 metres of a MYZONE kiosk, the kiosk wirelessly draws down the data. The information then be discussed with a trainer at the gym, or else viewed

online as a member of the MYZONE community (www.myzonemoves.com).

"You can check the data wherever you are, but the only place you can download it is at the club. It's therefore a fantastic retention tool," says Wright. "Those who would never join a club can become a 'MYZONE at home member', paying perhaps £5 a month to come into the club to download the data."

The system encourages effort and behavioural change with MYZONE Effort Points (MEPs) – less fit people can be rewarded in the same way as fitter individuals if they push themselves to their own capacity. Someone walking at low intensity for 30 minutes earns 30 MEPs. However, if they push themselves a bit harder for 20 minutes – by walking faster, going uphill, or carrying something – they could earn 60 points.

For gym users wearing belts while they work out, MYZONE can be projected onto a screen, using five colours to show activity levels. Grey is the easiest at 50–60 per cent heart rate capacity; red is the hardest at 90

MYZONE users must download their data in the gym, making it a good retention tool





Activio users wear chest belts that wirelessly and anonymously transmit data to a screen at the front of the class

WATTBIKE

Another exciting new product is Wattbike's new Power Cycling software. To call it a heart rate monitor is something of an understatement, although this is one of its functions. Where the system differs from other heart rate monitors – other than being integral to the bike as opposed to something one wears – is that it combines heart rates with other metrics, such as power, to get maximum results in the shortest possible time.

"Heart rate training is more useful when combined with power. People then know when they are training at the right

intensity to bring about physiological changes in the least possible time," says Wattbike's managing director Ian Wilson. "Wattbike collects data 100 times a second, including heart rate, average heart rate and power. It's a very accurate and reliable training tool."

Launched at Leisure Industry Week in September 2011, Power Cycling offers a new approach to indoor group cycling, whereby an individual can exercise in a group at his/her own optimum fitness level, based on highly accurate real-time data: power, heart rate and cadence. Data from participating Wattbikes can be displayed on large screens in the gym.

Wattbike believes Power Cycling will open up a new market for the health and fitness sector, as it offers an authentic indoor cycle training concept for the competition cycling and triathlon sector – people who have previously always trained outdoors (see triathlon feature, p50).

Wilson says of the concept: "For the first time, gyms and personal trainers will be able to offer clients an individualised and structured path to fitness in a group environment."



Power Cycling offers users highly accurate real-time data

ACTIVIO

Launched in 2004, Activio is a group exercise solution. Participants wear chest belts that wirelessly transmit heart rate data, in real time, to a large screen at the front of the class. The dials are shown like a car speedometer, so are easy to understand, but are anonymous to save embarrassment. The system has been embraced by most of the UK Premier League football clubs and more than 400 health clubs.

"All of the health and fitness clubs report an increased number of participants during the Activio workout sessions, because the feedback is highly motivating and it's clear to members that they're getting a more qualitative workout," says Activio's founder and marketing director Tom Mägnegård.

He continues: "Heart rate is one of the most objective and reliable factors to indicate work intensity. A great value of heart rate training is to educate participants on how they should train to obtain different goals."

Software has also been introduced that allows instructors to highlight



Users of Polar's heart rate monitors are given access to a web-based diary where they can review their progress

► motivational information about the class on-screen, alongside the participants' individual heart rate dials – details of how much time is left in a particular interval, for example, or where they currently are in the overall workout. Meanwhile, a recent development to the system is the web application www.myaactivo.com, where members can get feedback after a session.

Magnergård says there are many ways in which the Activo system can help to boost a club's profitability. He explains: "Clubs can sell the accessories, such as the heart rate straps. But absolutely most of the income comes from the increased retention and attracting new members to the club."

POLAR

As the inventors of the first heart rate monitor over 30 years ago, Polar's training computers today are easy to use and provide accurate feedback based on the user's personal information – factors such as age, height and weight. A transmitter belt is worn around the chest: the electrodes in this belt pick up the electrical signals from the heart and relay these onto the wrist unit, so the user can see how hard they are working. Polar's range also features products that

work with GPS accessories to pick up your speed, distance and pace; its computers can therefore be used for training outside of the club environment.

Users are given access to a web-based diary – at www.polarpersonaltrainer.com – where they can review their activity. This gives clubs the opportunity for greater member engagement, as they can meet them to interpret the information and tweak training programmes to get enhanced results. Polar's online software also allows users to track progress, set goals and challenge friends through social media sites.

There's also a group exercise solution, as Liz Shenton, Polar's performance and training manager, explains: "A recent addition to the Polar product range is the Cardio GX system, for group cycling classes. Each person keys in their information and can see their effort displayed on a screen. The instructor can also see how they are getting on and can manage their workout to keep them in the correct training zone."

DRIVING SECONDARY SPEND: HR MONITORS

SIGMA sells a range of heart rate monitors, including one aimed at women with a feminine design. Ideal heart rate values are calculated automatically after entering personal details, but can also be set manually. It records current and average heart rate functions and counts calories.

Suunto has a range of wrist-mounted monitors starting at £60,

up to £370, as does Timex. The Timex Personal Trainer easy to use, helping users train at the right intensity and with an alarm to alert them if they are training too hard, or not hard enough. Key data can be reviewed, including average and peak heart rates, time in the zone and calories burned. For those wanting to progress to the next stage, there's the Timex Ironman Personal Trainer.



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KATE CRACKNELL REVIEWS THE RESEARCH
BEHIND SOME OF THE NUTRITIONAL
PRODUCTS ON THE MARKET TODAY

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There's wide range of nutritional products on the market, all of which provide operators with a valuable secondary revenue stream – and all making strong claims as regards the benefits to members of using the products. But what's the science behind these claims? We investigate.

In one study, beetroot juice was shown to increase VO₂ max in cycle time triallists

James White

Manufacturer James White has developed a concentrated beetroot shot called Beet It: a 7cl concentrated organic beetroot juice cut with lemon juice to reduce its natural sweetness – with nothing else added.

Beetroot juice is naturally high in dietary nitrate, which enzymes in saliva convert into nitric oxide (NO) in the blood system. It's thanks to this ability to immediately boost NO levels that the research world has become so excited by it – this NO boost provides the body with an alternative source of oxygen, drawing it from the blood rather than from the air you breathe.

James White now supplies research projects in the UK (nine universities), the US (three universities), Australia (two universities plus the Australian Institute of Sport), Sweden (two universities), as well as France, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and New Zealand.

In a paper published by the University of Exeter in March 2011, the increased oxygen usage efficiency (increase in VO₂ max) resulting from use of the beetroot juice was shown to benefit cycle time triallists with an improvement of around 2.7 per cent.

The most recent paper, published in September 2011, focused on benefits in ameliorating the effects of hypoxia – a condition in which the body (or a part of the body) is deprived of adequate oxygen supply. This is particularly relevant for those involved in high altitude training and activities such as mountaineering and diving. The study shows beetroot supplementation helps speed the recovery from hypoxia. All these papers demonstrate the benefit of increasing the oxygenation of the blood.

One 7cl shot of Beet It has a dose of about 4mmol of natural dietary nitrate – a sensible daily dose. The manufacturers say that, while there could be a marginal



The juice is said to help give the body an oxygen boost

- gain from taking a second shot, the law of diminishing returns applies – a third daily shot is entirely unnecessary.

Multipower Sportsfood

Multipower's Double Effect fat loss capsules are specifically designed to work with the body, increasing metabolic rate and the body's fat-burning abilities while inhibiting fat storage and supporting general health. The fat metabolising effect of green tea and the anti-inflammatory benefits of curcumin – two of the capsules' ingredients – have been well demonstrated, but of particular interest are the effects of Capsimax™ chilli extract and Clarinol™ CLA.

Clarinol CLA is an extract of two different forms of conjugated linoleic acid. The efficacy of CLA is disputed as not all forms (isomers) of CLA are active in the body. However, Clarinol contains the two isomers that have been shown to be active in reducing and controlling fat mass – in a study of over 100 people, participants receiving the CLA lost on average 2kg more body fat than the placebo group – without specific dietary or exercise interventions. Most of the fat was lost from 'problem areas': abdomen and hips in women, and the abdomen in men.

Capsimax capsicum (chilli) extract is a standardised preparation for the active ingredient capsaicin. Numerous studies demonstrate the effect of capsaicin on metabolic rate, appetite regulation and

body composition. In particular, a short-term investigation on capsaicin given in the same form and administration method as Double Effect showed significant results in reducing fat mass and promoting lean mass on volunteers in just eight days. Other studies showed a significant increase in fat oxidation, demonstrating an increased rate of fat being used for fuel; and an increase in free fatty acids and glycerol in the blood – a precursor to their use in exercise.

QNT

QNT's NO+ Elite Pre-Workout formula is the result of cutting-edge research from QNT's in-house R&D team. Available in powder form and as a convenient shot, the product contains a blend of arginine, creatine monohydrate and beta-alanine to increase explosive strength and power, delay muscle fatigue and improve recovery rates when training, stimulate larger muscle pumps and promote lean muscle tissue growth – significantly boosting the body's energy levels during workouts.

The amino acid L-arginine helps rid the body of ammonia, a waste product associated with muscle tissue breakdown. It also stimulates insulin, the body's carbohydrate storage molecule, helping to re-fuel muscles, and helps produce nitric oxide (NO). NO induces vasodilation (increased blood vessel size), which lowers blood pressure and heart rate and also helps deliver increased levels of oxygen and nutrients to active muscles.



NO+ Elite is said to promote lean muscle tissue growth

Creatine monohydrate – a phosphate-carrying molecule that helps re-synthesise the body's energy systems – is proven to decrease recovery time between sets and increase explosive strength and power. Meanwhile, beta-alanine has been shown in studies to delay muscle fatigue by increasing muscle carnosine levels, which helps to improve the integrity of muscle tissue when it is subjected to the stress of intense exercise.

The product also contains lactic acid buffering ingredients, which help prevent muscle tissue damage and increase creatine absorption.

Reflex

Reflex Instant Whey has native whey among its ingredients – a very different kind of whey protein with significant benefits to strenuous exercisers.



The capsules contain green tea, curcumin and chilli extract



High demands: Exercisers want products that may delay fatigue, boost energy and recovery rates, and build muscle



PHOTO: STOCKPHOTO.COM

Taking fitness to new heights: Can the many types of nutritional product on the market really make a difference?

Conventional whey protein is a by-product of cheese manufacture. As such, it is subjected to a rennet wash when the curd and whey are separated, and is also subjected to two stages of heat pasteurisation. Native whey is significantly different in that it is produced by taking fresh skimmed milk and processing it at low temperatures via complex ultra and membrane filtration. No rennet is used, and the product is subjected to only one stage of pasteurisation. This means that virtually every highly valuable and biologically active protein fraction is caught in its native form. Native whey is subsequently rich in the essential amino acid leucine, which helps to build and maintain muscle – it contains up to 166 per cent more leucine than whey protein concentrate or isolate.

Branched-chain amino acids (leucine, isoleucine and valine) account for 35 per cent of the essential amino acids employed in the formation of muscular protein. Among them, leucine has been identified as the essential key for protein synthesis, which is part of the repair and recovery process post exercise.

For those involved in strenuous activity where optimised performance is desired, another issue is the increased production of oxygenated compounds that are related to muscular damage, cramps, increase in fatigue (asthenia) and inefficient recovery. Native whey contains up to 16 per cent more cysteine than conventional whey protein. This cysteine plays a vital function in the body's production of glutathione, which in turn aids the destruction of the active oxygenated compounds and plays an important role in the defence against pollutants and immune system support.

Ultrabody

Ultrabody says that, due to ongoing and perhaps understandable scepticism from consumers – and in some cases operators – regarding nutritional products, it wanted to ensure its products were based on a robust formula that could be scrutinised to any level, therefore creating consumer confidence and tangible results to drive secondary sales and positive referral. This was at the heart of R&D when creating the Ultrabody Daily Wellness range.

However, the company also believes the formulae must not appear overly clinical – to drive sales, the packaging message needs to be captivating, non-intimidating and easy to understand.

This particularly applies to its best selling product, Detox. Ultrabody believes 'detoxing' has become an over-used phrase, used to mean as little as 'not drinking or eating unhealthily this week', but stresses that this is not detox. It wanted a product that had the ability to target something that creates toxins – in this case, the 2–3kg of undigested waste that the average adult holds in their body. This can increase lethargy, cause bloatedness and lessen energy levels; expelling it lessens these symptoms and leads to significant waste weight loss.

Its product is a type of non-intrusive colonic irrigation thanks to ingredients such as Bentonite Clay, a substance which is able to target undigested waste, break it down and make it 'passable'. Also, the addition of ingredients such as Milk Thistle aims to give the product more mass appeal – members who strength train may already be taking Milk Thistle as a separate supplement.



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ASK THE EXPERTS

KATIE START REPORTS ON DISCUSSIONS AT SIBEC EUROPE REGARDING THE ISSUES CURRENTLY FACING THE HEALTH AND FITNESS INDUSTRY



THE PANEL

- **David Stalker**, CEO, FIA
- **Rob Beale**, head of sports, health and fitness, David Lloyd Leisure
- **Sue Anstiss**, MD, Promote PR
- **Frank Gueguen**, chair and CEO, Club Med Gym
- **Malcolm McPhail**, managing director, Life Leisure

In November, Malta hosted 170 SIBEC Europe buyers and suppliers who – in a *Question Time* style session – debated what lies ahead for the sector. Delegates were invited to present questions to a panel of industry experts, who offered their thoughts on the issues facing the industry.

What will it take for the government to see the leisure, health and fitness industry as the proactive arm of the NHS? Ben

Beever, group quality manager, SLM
David Stalker: Firstly, we need to maintain constant dialogue with key government representatives across all

parties. The FIA has made some incredible inroads in this area. Secondly, operators need to gather data that proves the financial benefits our sector can deliver when it comes to tackling health issues. Without this evidence, we cannot expect the government to commit financial support.

Malcolm McPhail: It's unrealistic to expect government intervention on an industrial scale when we serve only 12 per cent of the population. Finding ways to increase penetration must be our priority.

What would you like the government to do to better support the leisure, health and fitness sector? Stephen

Baddeley, director of sport, Bath University

Rob Beale: Financial support from government would obviously be welcome, but we can't rely on this. Operators must find new ways to engage people, through innovation and enhancing the facilities on offer. Until more people want to use our facilities, we'll struggle to grow the sector, regardless of intervention.

SIBEC Europe took place on the island of Malta in November (left), with lively discussion in a *Question Time* style session (above)

David Stalker: There are three key ways the government could encourage more people to exercise. Firstly, through the introduction of a marketing strategy that promotes the benefits of controlled, structured exercise and highlights the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle. Secondly, through the abolition of tax on health club memberships. And thirdly, through recognition of our industry as a priority sector.

Malcolm McPhail: Only when GPs are financially rewarded by government will they start to prescribe physical activity as a serious alternative to drug treatments and surgery.

Frank Gueguen: We cannot wait for government. It is the responsibility of the sector to find ways to encourage a higher percentage of the population to use our facilities.

Sue Anstiss: We can't wait for the government to drive people to our facilities. We need to provide a product that meets the demands of our customers, many of whom clearly don't want to be tied into long-term contracts.





How can the market be segmented to avoid a price war where the outcomes could be a reduction in service levels? *Peter Rigg, sales director, Physique Sports*

David Stalker: The market has already started to segment. We're moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach, and this can only be a good thing. Offering more choice presents an opportunity to tempt more people into our sector.

Sue Anstiss: The market will naturally segment by service offering and price, as it has in other sectors such as airlines and hotels. Some people will pay a premium price for a premium product; others will accept a less comprehensive service for a cheaper price. Growing the sector is about offering the consumer more choice.

The advent of budget gyms will drive down the entry price for memberships, but a 'stripped down' service is reflected in this price. However, mid-range gyms offering a limited service may well feel pressure to reduce their price in order to compete; moving forward, brands will need to work harder to distinguish their place in a highly competitive market.

Given the economy, is there a temptation for operators to cut staffing levels where safety might be compromised? *Tara Dillon, IQL*

David Stalker: Let's hope not, but time will tell. I hope operators will take

While many operators welcome the idea of government intervention, they also feel the onus is on them to encourage more people to exercise

a long-term view rather than looking for quick wins. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is currently reviewing poolside safety recommendations in consultation with operators and the IQL. Together, the industry and the HSE will produce recommended standards that will balance public safety with commercial viability.

Rob Beale: Obviously, safety has to be the number one priority. It's in nobody's interests to compromise on this. The financial penalties imposed when rules are violated would make recovery almost impossible for many operators. I therefore believe that all operators, whether they offer a budget or a premium service, will not cut corners in the area of safety.

Our industry needs to change if we are to attract more members. Give one recommendation for making this change. *Ceri Smith, director, Eze Fitness*

Frank Gueguen: Innovation and quality. These are the two components that will define operators. The more choice we can offer, the more users we will attract.

David Stalker: Collaborative working with community partners is the key to better market penetration. Schools, County Sports Partnerships and PCTs are just some examples of organisations with a remit to improve the health of the community. The FIA is talking to the Department of Health, but operators can also drive this on a local level.

Malcolm McPhail: We need to better understand the needs of our communities. For example, GPs may be more open to the idea of exercise prescription as a solution to mental, rather than physical, health issues.

Rob Beale: Operators need to become more programme-led. Group exercise and one-to-one training is the way forward. We need to explore products like CrossFit and the delivery of small group functional training sessions.

Sue Anstiss: Clubs need to deliver results and help members get the most from every workout if our industry is to grow. This means moving away from the traditional over-prescription of cardiovascular exercise in gyms, and including more resistance and functional training in small groups with personal support. Ultimately, the better results consumers achieve, the more likely they are to continue exercising.

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Les Mills CXWORX has been the focus of a study by Dr. Vinger S. Geitshausen of Pennsylvania State University. The study focused on the type of core training that can improve core strength, improve stability, reduce injury and maintain mobility. The results showed that integrating training techniques used in Les Mills CXWORX, including plank, the standing techniques, very intense core training and functional training exercises, such as sit-ups,

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WE TAKE A LOOK AT RECENT PROJECTS FROM MYZONE,
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TRACKING RESULTS

Supplier: MYZONE

Client: Feelgood Fitness

Just weeks into the global launch of physical activity monitoring system MYZONE®, thousands of health club members in Australia, India, mainland Europe and the United States have already started to earn MYZONE Effort Points (MEPs). And in the UK, the corporate head offices of Nuffield Health, the FIA and CFM are partway through a competition that's using MEPs to see which group of employees will collectively move the most over a six-week period.

Meanwhile Matt Walker, UK operations manager at Feelgood Fitness – the health club chain under the CFM umbrella – has MYZONE live in his four clubs: Abingdon, Haverhill, Grantham and Peterborough.

"One of our focuses has been getting belts into the hands of new members," says Walker. "So far we have had 100 per cent uptake at Haverhill and only the odd one or two not taking up a belt when they join elsewhere."

Walker and the rest of the team, in a relatively short period of time, have found the consistency, simplicity and clarity of the data reports that members get from the MYZONE telemetry system have increased engagement with staff – members are now seeking advice on how to develop their sessions.

"The fact that every workout they do inside or outside of the club gets the same metrics analysed means that MYZONE users get a feel for what they are achieving very clearly and very quickly," says Walker. "They then want to know more about their heart rate numbers, what that means for



The simplicity and clarity of the data reports help to better engage members



fitness, how they can put in more effort, and general calorie management. This culminates in them understanding that earning MEPs is both motivating and healthy."

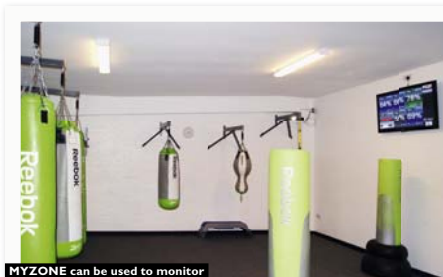
Educating members about MYZONE, rather than simply putting a belt in their hand, is certainly key to maximising engagement and take-up. Bringing the system into existing studio classes or onto the gym floor – within the existing timetables of the day – and taking time to explain what the data really means creates excitement and motivation right from the start.

So what tips would Walker pass onto clubs that have just bought, or are contemplating buying, the MYZONE system? "You should definitely nominate a MYZONE champion or key point of contact on the staff – someone who will both thoroughly understand the system itself and organise all the education requests that come in from staff and members," he says.

"To get our own staff familiar with the belts and get them motivated before we went live to members, we gave them belts and set a challenge to see who could get the most MEPs in a week. We also used this opportunity to roll out a programme of actual belt sales linked to a bonus scheme."

Feelgood Fitness is now running a monthly MEPs competition for its members, in which points add up to prizes.

For more information: www.myzone.org



MYZONE can be used to monitor activities inside the club and out



TOUCH-SCREEN TECHNOLOGY

Supplier: Precor by Inspirit

Client: The University of Edinburgh

Trials of the P80 have shown that 15 per cent fewer users opt for 'quick start'

One year on from a £4.8m extension, the University of Edinburgh continues its commitment to provide world-class facilities, recently completing the world's largest installation of Precor's 880 Line equipment, featuring the P80 console.

Edinburgh is home to The Pleasance Sports Complex at the University's Centre for Sport and Exercise (CSE). Built on the site of an 18th century brewery, and featuring a series of sub-basement arched vaults that form part of the fitness facilities, the Sports Complex offers one of the most respected multi-sport and exercise programmes in the country. The three-storey facility is the largest independent gym in Scotland, with over 6,000sq m of activity space and more than 16,000 members, from recreational participants to elite athlete.

The 100-station cardiovascular gym, redeveloped in consultation with Scotland's leading sports and fitness specialist Inspirit, features Precor 880 Line units, including treadmills, cross-trainers, Adaptive Motion Trainers (AMTs), recumbent and upright bikes, all with the new P80 touch-screen console, which allows users to interact using sweeping gesture motions.

"We're always looking to improve and pioneer, and as our students are extremely conversant with the latest interfacing technology, the P80 console met our needs perfectly, giving students the opportunity to use the best equipment around. The P80's technology will help take our member engagement to new levels," says the director of the university's CSE, Jim Aitken MBE.



The site's 100 cardiovascular stations all feature the new P80 console

Precor's latest innovation, the P80 touch-screen console, is already making an impact on the fitness industry. Independent research at the first two EMEA installations, the Wentworth Club and 37degrees, shows the console is leading exercisers to opt for a whole new workout routine, with 15 per cent fewer people reaching for the quick start button than the industry average.

As well as its capacitive touch-screen, the P80 console also offers a host of other benefits, including an upright viewing angle for correct posture, easy to use motion controls and high quality graphics to draw members deeper into their workout. There's also an ethernet connection, enabling networking.

Andy Mack, MD for Precor Scotland/Inspirit, says: "The P80 consoles allow students to use a premium interactive design, combined with a fully integrated media experience. From a long-term point of view, the consoles will also provide additional opportunities for the CSE as the P80's potential is realised."

Indeed, the university plans to develop a smaller scale, branded concept encapsulating the CSE's core aspects, which will be rolled out to satellite locations across the university campus.

'CSE Local' will reflect the same inspiring member philosophy, P80 equipment, layout, branding and visuals used successfully at the main complex, enabling students to continue their training regime away from the main site. Aitken concludes: "The technological edge of the P80 sets it apart from other equipment, opens up new horizons and allows us to meet the needs of members."

For more information:
www.precor.com



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The 8th edition of the Health Club Management Handbook is being distributed in January 2012. The handbook is a comprehensive guide and reference tool distributed to industry operators and suppliers, and at events such as LIW, SIBEC and IHRSA.

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SEEING STARS

Supplier: Skirmett Washrooms

Client: Stars Gym, London



The new installation gives a fresh and smart look to changing areas

Stars Gym, a state of the art facility at the Albion Riverside in Battersea, opened in June of this year (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 11, p36).

Independently owned Stars Gym aims to establish itself as one of London's premier gyms, with a strong focus on martial arts. Designed by architects Sanei Hopkins, the gym provides a range of excellent facilities and amenities.

Kemmlit Classic Cell cubicles were specified for the contract to further enhance the premium and contemporary feel of the project, while ensuring high quality services. Selected for both change and toilet areas, the cubicles feature obscured and unobtrusive polished aluminium head rails and supporting legs, producing a levitated effect, with dividing panels and doors surfaced in stainless steel in a highly distinctive linen texture. Amir Sanei, co founder at Sanei Hopkins, says the Cell cubicles are: "Extremely practical, robust and aesthetically head and shoulders above the competition."

Kemmlit Type R Lockers were also specified for the project. Manufactured at Kemmlit's factory in Stuttgart and selected for design, durability and ease of use, the locker construction features high quality, 100 per cent corrosion-resistant aluminium, innovative compression joint connecting techniques and smooth profiled solid grade laminate doors.

Completing the locker installation and providing the latest technology, design know-how and simplicity of use, Ojmar – a leading manufacturer of furniture locking solutions – supplied its new OCS Key Free Touch Lock. Available in a range of configurations, the Touch Lock functions using the member's choice of a four-digit code, offering problem-free operation with no need for keys or padlocks.

Richard Coates, director at Stars Gym, says: "The design of the lockers, with their key-free locks, has created a fresh and smart image which has impressed prospective members during tours of the gym. In particular, the key-free electronic locks have been an added selling point. The members find the lockers adequately sized and the locks easy to use. They find not having to carry keys or padlocks in the gym extremely convenient."

All Kemmlit lockers are suitable for the Ojmar range of locks, combining to provide premium design and quality for all projects. All products were supplied and installed by Skirmett Washrooms, the UK distributor of the German products.

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The lockers eliminate the need for members to carry keys in the gym

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lightweights

NHS TO USE 'TALKING PLATE' IN OBESITY TRIAL

A 'talking plate' which can measure the portion size of a meal and the speed at which people eat is to be used by the NHS in a trial focused on how the nation can tackle obesity.

The Mandometer®, which has been developed at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, has a scale underneath the plate and a screen displaying details of the food on the plate. The device monitors how fast people eat and will instruct users to "please eat more slowly" if they're gobbling down their meal down.

The Mandometer® is based on the theory that fast eating leads to obesity, as people don't have enough time to recognise when they're full.

The NHS study will be conducted by Bristol University, which has used the Mandometer in previous research. This trial will focus on 600 families each with an obese parent and obese child aged 5–11 years.



ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, I DECLARE A TOE WAR...

Who knew that toe wrestling was a sport? Apparently not the Olympic Committee, which turned it down as a potential Games event.

Yet the Bentley Inn in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, will still host the World Toe Wrestling Championships – which started in the 1970s – in June.

On the command 'toes away' players try to force their opponent's foot over, so the side touches the ground (known as a 'toe down'). Matches are best of three and include a left and right toe wrestle.

In 2011, the event was won by Alan 'Nasty' Nash for the seventh time. Details: www.bentleybrookinn.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



INFRA-RED DOME TO BE USED IN DETOX DIET

Iyashi Dome, a slimming bed incorporating infra-red rays, is included in a detox programme that launched in London late last year.

The bed emits infra-red rays, which are claimed to have anti-ageing benefits. The rays are also said to encourage sweating to help shed toxins and break down fat – it's claimed that a 30-minute session will burn up to 600 calories.

The Iyashi Dome sessions are used by MyDetoxDiet, a company that aims to "provide a clean, natural and easy way to clear the body of toxins and regain natural health, vitality and energy". It offers a range of four, eight and 20-day detox diet plans where the food needed is delivered to your doorstep. Details: www.iyashi-dome.co.uk

drink that's cherry good for you

Antioxidant-rich cherry juice can help to improve muscle recovery after intense exercise, according to scientists at the London South Bank University (LSBU).

The study looked at the effects of a cherry juice concentrate on 10 rugby, football and combat sports athletes.

In the first trial, the participants took 30ml of the concentrate twice a day for 10 days. After two weeks, they then took part in the second trial which

involved consuming 30ml of a placebo fruit concentrate. After a week of taking the juices, athletes completed sets of single-knee extensions at 80 per cent of their maximum lifting weight. Muscle recovery was checked over 48 hours.

Muscle recovery was significantly faster after the cherry juice, with muscle strength returning to 91 per cent of maximum strength within 24 hours of strenuous exercise.



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