

health club management

JUNE 2012

INTERVIEW

HUGH CHAMBERS

of the BOA on using the Olympics
to inspire a nation to activity

GAME CHANGER

USING GAMING STRATEGIES TO
ENCOURAGE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

SOCIAL MEDIA

Building trust by
building communities

FITNESS FOR EVERY-BODY

Embracing the Body
Confidence campaign



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publication

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Cover image: Tom Daley at the Plymouth Life Centre, courtesy of SLM (p38). Credit: Sam Johnson

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where's the fun?

"We've done a very good job of sucking the fun out of fitness. It's all so serious now – we need to put the fun back into it." That was the verdict of Scott Hopson, VP of business development at PTA Global, when he spoke at the PTA Global launch in April.

It's a fair point. Understandably we're all being challenged to measure outcomes, not least to help secure funding and drive sector credibility. Meanwhile the gym floor is becoming a hotbed of learned discussion: "we're now training the most educated member of all time," added Hopson. Indeed, the internet and a whole plethora of training apps are equipping members with a vocabulary that was formerly the exclusive domain of elite trainers: VO₂ max, watt output, heart rate training... it's all becoming standard gym speak and is taking gym floor chat to a new level of complexity and earnestness.

But while this increased focus on measurable results is absolutely to be welcomed – in itself, it plays a significant role in member retention – is it coming at the expense of other equally important, if less quantifiable, drivers of member satisfaction? After all, members aren't only coming to us for results;

particularly in this day and age of fitness apps and readily accessible science, they could feasibly get fit on their own. Those who choose to come to gyms are doing so for the broader experience: the motivation, the interaction, the social sense of 'club', the fun.

But are they getting this? 'Fitness for fun' certainly hasn't been abandoned in principle – witness Zumba, group exercise innovation from the likes of Crunch and Gymbox, investment in AV systems to rival nightclubs, small group training led by motivational instructors... Nevertheless, across the sector as a whole, fun is arguably being overshadowed by a growing

In this day and age of fitness apps and readily accessible science, people could feasibly get fit on their own. Those who choose to come to gyms do so for the motivation, the social aspect, the fun

focus on data and hi-tech gadgets. We risk losing a vital contributor to member engagement in the process.

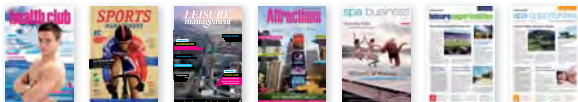
Step forward gamification. A nascent trend in the fitness sector (see p46), nevertheless it is clearly one which – by turning the forging of good fitness habits into a highly sociable, even addictive, reward-based game – holds huge potential for engaging more people in physical activity.

And there are number of initiatives already carving out this niche. Bodybook, for example, encourages people to join its online community and take part in challenges, from completing 100 sit-ups to logging 500 PT sessions. Bodybookers can invite friends to compete, with a Facebook-style wall for feedback, encouragement, progress updates and leader boards; updates can also be posted to other social media pages. A sticker book shows challenges completed, with participants also setting FitRewards – something to which they'll treat themselves on completion – at the outset of each challenge. Website Challengemore adopts a similar approach; other options already on the market include apps such as re:route, plus MapMyRun and Nexercise in conjunction with Kiip, where points equal rewards from local businesses.

It's easy to see how gyms could tap into this technology – creating branded challenges and offering their own FitRewards via Bodybook, for example. But even if they choose to remain offline, 'gamifying' their offering – creating member challenges with points and rewards – would go a long way towards making maintaining an exercise regime more fun, and therefore something to which members are more likely to adhere.

Kate Cracknell, editor – katecracknell@leisuremedia.com

To share your thoughts on this topic, visit www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/blog



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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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Load-bearing exercise in your early 20s can help prevent men from developing osteoporosis later in life, says new research

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



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Nuffield Health wants to help local sports people realise their potential

towards an olympic legacy of improved fitness for all

In response to your recent article (HCM May 12, p53), the Olympics will undoubtedly leave a legacy for UK sport – but how we in the fitness industry can benefit from this remains to be seen.

At Nuffield Health we are excited about the Olympics. We have themed our Summer Fitness Challenge in June to encourage our members to compete against our fitness experts across a range of physical tests based on flexibility, strength, balance and endurance.

We have also launched our first Athlete in Residence programme, offering support to sporting people to help them achieve their goals. We recognise the positive benefits of sport and fitness on people's health and wellbeing. However, we also see that the right support is not always accessible.

We want to help local sports people, from rising stars to medal winners, in each of our 65 locations to boost their sporting performance and be the best they can be.

Low fitness levels are one of the biggest challenges to the general health and life expectancy of people in the UK. Even those who work out regularly, but who sit all day at work and most of the evening watching television, are at risk. Therefore we feel an extra incentive to encourage people to get active and become fitter is very important. We hope the Olympics will inspire a new generation of sporting hopefuls, as well as encouraging all people to get fitter and take an interest in sport and exercise.

rick crawford
fitness & wellbeing programme
manager, nuffield health

success of boxing in dir's barcelona clubs

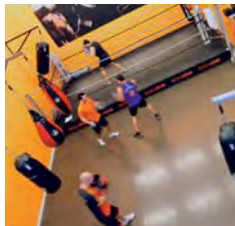
In response to your recent article (HCM May 12, p44), Olympic Boxing was launched in DiR clubs in 2009 and is already present in eight of our 18 sites.

The sport offers not only great physical advantages – toning most of the muscles in the body and improving strength, for example – but also psychological advantages, driving self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as reducing and combating stress.

DiR as a fitness operator focuses on the health benefits of this sport, so we base our sessions on the physical and technical aspects of boxing, without any aggressive contact between students. Punches are always marked and knocking out the partner is never the objective.

In the clubs where boxing is practised, DiR offers two services. The first consists of group sessions, open to all members, which focus on technique work on the punchbag, speed ball or doing exercises in pairs. The second is personal training. Similar to the open sessions, these PT sessions are offered by specialists from the Catalan Federation of Boxing. This activity has been well received by members and the effectiveness of the training has led to great improvements in CV performance, muscle tone and body composition in a short period of time.

robert herráez
head of fitness, dir group



DiR's Olympic Boxing emphasises the health benefits of the sport

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With dozens of innovative features and attention to detail, the ClimbMill does not disappoint. Once again, we believed in better, and in doing so, have changed mindsets, standards and expectations.

Galpharm Stadium gym re-opens after revamp

Stadium Health and Fitness Complex, close to Huddersfield's Galpharm Stadium, has re-opened after a £500,000 refurbishment.

The scheme included the installation of Technogym equipment, including CV stations with integrated HD screens and in-built iPod docks, new plate-loaded weights equipment and a Kinesis machine to improve the functional training offer.

Stadium Health and Fitness Complex is one of 11 facilities run by Kirklees Active Leisure on behalf of Kirklees Council.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Dipoo>



Technogym has provided equipment for the gym

New-look fitness facility opens in Houghton Regis

A 60-station gym with CV, strength and resistance equipment has opened at Houghton Regis Leisure Centre, Bedfordshire, following a £100,000 overhaul.

Technogym supplied equipment as part of the Central Bedfordshire Council-led overhaul, along with Life Fitness. A free weights area and racquet sports are also on offer at the new-look facility.

Stevenage Leisure (SLL) has taken over operation of the leisure centre as part of a recently signed management contract.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=R3z4u>

Charnwood's £2m revamp programme to commence

Charnwood Borough Council has approved plans to undertake a £2m programme of renovation work at local venues this summer in partnership with Fusion Lifestyle.

From mid-June, Loughborough Leisure Centre will undergo a four-month revamp to feature a revamped and extended gym and a new children's soft play area.

Soar Valley Leisure Centre will benefit from work between mid-July and mid-November to include a new health suite, a refurbished gym and a new reception.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N2N3q>

Three new sites for Gym Group

The Gym Group unveiled three new locations last month – in Ashford, Bournemouth and Luton – in a move which has expanded the budget operator's UK estate to 23 fitness clubs.

Matrix has provided more than 200 pieces of resistance and CV equipment at each of the new sites, which span between 836sq m (9,000sq ft) and 1,394sq m (15,000sq ft).

The new sites will also offer members virtual classes, with the chain already trialling 24-hour virtual pilates and yoga at four other clubs.

John Treharne, the group's CEO, says: "Over the next few years, the fitness sector will experience more segmentation. Brands will have to work harder to establish themselves in the market and attract new members."



Treharne predicts further fitness market segmentation going forward

To read the opinions of industry experts on the arrival of virtual yoga and pilates classes in the UK from a panel of industry experts, see HCM March 12, p43.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e3i6x>

British Land in Virgin Active clubs sale

British Land has sold five of the 17 Virgin Active health clubs it acquired in July 2011 for a combined £33m.

Colliers Capital has bought clubs in Gloucester and Poole, while the new owners of the Virgin Active sites in Neath, Manchester and Oxford – also institutional buyers – have declined to be named.

Following the deal, British Land now holds a core portfolio of 12 premium racquet clubs. The majority of the 12 clubs left in the portfolio are located in the south-east, with more than half within the M25. The disposal price of £33m represents an average net initial yield of 6.5 per cent.

Charles Maudsley, head of retail for British Land, says: "This reflects the high quality of



British Land now holds a core estate of 12 premium Virgin Active sites

the assets and demonstrates our ability to work successfully with banks and other sellers to unlock opportunities and create incremental value for our shareholders."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=bo18g>

£800,000 investment for Forest of Dean facilities

The Forest of Dean District Council (FDDC) is planning to invest £800,000 in a number of local leisure centres to improve the quality and range of services for local residents.

Cabinet members met on 10 May to approve its leisure management strategy, with £300,000

of funding already ring-fenced for investment in facilities at Forest Leisure Cinderford.

However, FDDC has also identified a potential £500,000 for invest-to-save projects, such as the expansion of the fitness suite at Lydney. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y8Z9l>

DLL to open £8m Worcester club

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has unveiled plans to open a new £8m sports, health and leisure facility near Worcester's Sixways Stadium later this year – the group's 81st site in the UK.

The 5,600sq m (60,278sq ft) development will open on 1 December and will accommodate a wide range of leisure activities, including three indoor and five outdoor tennis courts. A 900sq m (9,688sq ft) fitness suite will comprise resistance and CV equipment, free weights and Power Plates, while three studios are planned – one dedicated to group cycling classes.

Elsewhere, the new DLL club will offer a 25m indoor pool, a 20m outdoor pool and two physiotherapy rooms, along with a wet spa area to include a sauna and steamroom. An "exclusive area" for adults is also being



The new DLL venue will be located next to Worcester's Sixways Stadium

proposed by DLL, which will accommodate a salt steamroom, a saunarium, a sauna, an ice machine and a large spa pool.

DLL regional director Jason Andrews says: "We are very excited about providing the community with what will be a fantastic club offering excellent facilities, classes, programmes and expertise."

London council outlines plans for new £18m centre

Westminster City Council has outlined its proposals for a new £18m leisure centre in Queen's Park, London, as part of an ongoing programme to upgrade local facilities.

The development, which will be funded at no cost to taxpayers, will involve the merger of the Moberly and Jubilee sites to provide one single, larger centre at Moberly. Facilities will include an eight-court sports hall, a swimming pool, a learner pool and a health and fitness suite. The new facility is due to open in 2014.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=A0J2Y>



The gym was designed and fitted out by motive8

motive8 unveils new corporate gym in Leeds

Health and fitness consultancy motive8 has opened a new corporate gym at a Leeds-based financial services company.

The new facility was designed and fitted out by motive8. It includes equipment supplied by Star Trac, as well as space for core exercises and stretching.

Training services at the gym are provided by motive8 North, the Leeds-based sister company of motive8, which offers personal training, exercise classes and gym membership throughout the city.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=P2b7t>

Fit4less open new health club in Bromley

Fit4less, the low-cost fitness franchise owned by the énergie Group, remains 'on course' to operate 27 gyms by the end of the year after the opening of its latest site in London.

The 604sq m (6,500sq ft) club in Bromley is the chain's 17th in the UK and includes a cardio room and a free weights area, with equipment supplied by Precor.

It is the second franchise unveiled by owner Tom Burke, who previously opened a Fit4less club in Milton Keynes and attracted more than 1,000 pre-sales for the latest facility. The énergie Group aims to operate 45 Fit4less gyms by the end of next year and already has sites across the UK, including a commercial venture with a college in Stevenage.



The Bromley club forms part of énergie's expansion strategy for Fit4less

Other new Fit4less gyms set to open in the coming months include Bracknell, Maidstone, Northampton, Wembley and Portsmouth. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V7pgd>

Pure Gym to open second Wolverhampton location

Pure Gym, the low-cost health club chain founded in 2009, has continued its UK expansion with the opening of its second site in Wolverhampton last month.

Stephen Clarke, who oversaw the launch of the first Pure Gym site in the city more

than two years ago, has been appointed gym manager of the new facility.

The new Wolverhampton club joins other clubs to open in the West Midlands in the next two months, with West Bromwich and Walsall also set to host Pure Gyms.

£14.7m Newham leisure centre plans approved

Newham Council has approved plans for the construction of a new £14.7m leisure centre on the site of the existing Atherton Leisure Centre in Stratford, east London.

The council hopes work will start on-site in July 2013, with the complex to open in early 2015. It will offer swimming facilities, a gym and space for fitness classes.

According to the council, a factor in its decision to pursue plans for the new-build option was the presence of asbestos-containing materials at the existing facility. Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=F3K8M>

PE lessons 'put girls off exercise'

A report from the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) has found that school PE lessons are "putting off" young females from taking part in physical activity.

The findings are based on research carried out by the Institute of Youth Sport at Loughborough University, which includes the views of 1,500 youths about their attitude to sport and exercise.

More than half of all girls (51 per cent) said their experiences of school sport and PE lessons had deterred them from taking part in sport, while 45 per cent believe that sport is "too competitive". Other findings show that more than half of all boys and girls agree that "there are more opportunities for boys to succeed in sport than girls".

The report also contains recommendations to help girls enjoy sport and to maintain a



Girls are put off sport, even though most would like to exercise more

healthy lifestyle, with just 12 per cent of 14-year-old girls currently getting enough exercise.

WSFF chief executive Sue Tibballs says: "Our research shows that PE and school sport is actually putting the majority of girls off being active, even though three-quarters of girls are keen to do more exercise."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n2U5G>

£15m revamp planned for Heston centre

The London Borough of Hounslow has launched a public consultation to gather views from local residents and user groups on its plans for a £15m revamp of Heston Pool.

At the centre of the plans is the provision of an improved leisure centre with a wider range of activities, while the proposed new Heston Leisure Centre will also be more energy-efficient.

Facilities will comprise a 25m main pool and a learner pool, as well as new single sex health suites with a steamroom and sauna, a 100-station fitness suite and two dance studios.

Heston Pool was first opened during the 1930s. Hounslow Council cabinet member for leisure Pritam Grewal says the scheme was



Plans include a 100-station health and fitness suite

"hugely important" to the area. "The current leisure centre is in need of new equipment and redevelopment, as it is no longer cost-effective and is unable to compete with more modern centres," adds Grewal.

Serco lines up new leisure management contracts

Serco has been confirmed as the new operator of Mansfield District Council-owned leisure facilities, following the signing of a 10-year contract commencing 1 May.

The agreement includes all five local authority-owned centres, including the Rebecca Adlington Swimming Centre.

In addition to the Mansfield deal, Serco has also been named as preferred bidder for a 10-year contract to manage five leisure centres owned by Shropshire Council.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=O7m2g> (Mansfield)

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=l7wuu> (Shropshire)



The campaign looks to promote 'all body sizes'

Body Confidence Award winners announced

The winners of the UK's first ever Body Confidence Awards have been announced at the House of Commons in London.

A total of 10 award winners were chosen across a diverse range of categories, which ranged from education and advertising to fitness and broadcasting.

Virgin Active's 'Oomph' marketing campaign won the Sport, Health and Fitness Award – sponsored by Central YMCA – for its use of a range of shapes, ages, sizes and ethnic diversity in its advertising (see p50).

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=liz2w>

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New obesity campaign launches

Healthcare professionals have come together under the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges (AoRMC) to launch a new campaign to combat increasing levels of child and adult obesity.

The UK medical profession – including surgeons, psychiatrists, paediatricians and GPs – is aiming to tackle what it describes as the “single greatest public health threat”.

A three-month evidence-gathering inquiry has marked the launch of the campaign, to gather research and experience of actions that help reduce obesity.

Among the five main areas being investigated by AoRMC are the actions that can be taken by individuals, including exercise, diet and “positive parenting”.

Fiscal incentives – including minimum pricing, personal incentives and taxation – is



The scheme aims to unite the medical profession to fight obesity

also an area that will be investigated as part of the campaign's inquiry.

AoRMC chair Professor Sir Neil Douglas says: “This won't be just another report that sits on the shelf and gathers dust; it will form the bedrock of our ongoing activity.”

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=X5l2M>

37,000 vote in 2012 Health Club Awards

Voting is now closed in the second annual Members Choice Health Club Awards – in partnership with *Health Club Management* – which has seen 37,000 members rate their fitness facility.

This year's awards – sponsored by Centrum Performance – have attracted more than double the number of votes compared with last year. The voting process closed on 30 April.

An audit of the votes cast in the 2012 Members Choice Health Club Awards has now taken place; clubs in 14 UK regions will be told this month if they have made the shortlist.

Individual categories have also been introduced this year to recognise the efforts of fitness employees. The full shortlist will be



The awards enable members to rate their facilities in a range of criteria

published in July's *Health Club Management* magazine and winners will be announced at a ceremony at the Hilton Birmingham on 18 September – during Leisure Industry Week. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=doP2e>

Horley Leisure Centre wins Green Apple Award

Horley Leisure Centre – a £9m facility in Surrey designed by S&P Architects that opened earlier this year – has won a Green Apple Award in recognition of its green credentials.

The Green Apple Awards for the Built Environment and Architectural Heritage

recognise projects across the country that “demonstrate environmental endeavour”.

Horley Leisure Centre incorporates a range of features such as a biomass heating system, and has already received an A energy rating. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=F8l6m>

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Fit24 to open second UK club

Fit24, the independent health club operator which opened its first UK site in Hull two years ago, is planning to open a new 2,137sq m (23,000sq ft) gym in Wakefield, West Yorkshire.

The Patrick Dudding-owned group has secured a 15-year lease for the unit at Trinity Walk shopping centre, with work now underway to fit out the gym ahead of its summer opening.

Facilities at the new health club will include more than 100 pieces of Technogym equipment and two purpose-built exercise studios, as well as a sauna, steamroom and relaxation area. Fit24 will be open and staffed 24 hours a day.

The new Wakefield site forms part of the company's plans to expand the brand to a number of key locations across Yorkshire over the coming years.

Dudding says: "Our gyms are flexible, good value and accessible to a broad range of customers. Our business concept combines the



Budget operator Fit24 will open its second UK site in Wakefield

quality and service of premium gym with an affordable £12.99 a month fee – which even includes the classes.

"Combining this formula, together with a high footfall shopping centre location, has proved very successful in Hull and the stunning unit at Trinity Walk – with views out over Grammar Square – provide us with the opportunity to improve the format further."

Former school turned into functional club

A husband and wife team has transformed a former junior school in Great Torrington, North Devon, into the area's first health and fitness facility with a special focus on functional fitness.

Louise and Paul Banfield had already run a successful pilates studio, and were keen to put that experience to use by bringing urban-style facilities to Louise's home town. Function Fitness opened its doors in March this year, offering cardio and strength areas, a fitness studio where group cycling classes are held, and a mind-body studio.

The couple decided to purchase all the equipment from Star Trac. Strength pieces were chosen from the Inspiration Strength and HumanSport ranges.

In addition to the strength and cardio areas, and the two studio spaces, Function Fitness also offers rehabilitation services and functional movement assessments, to help create customised fitness programmes.



The club has been kitted out by Star Trac, including HumanSport

Cardio equipment was chosen from Star Trac's E-series, while the cycling classes will be performed on Spinner Pro bikes.

Louise Banfield says: "We're really pleased with the facilities and the equipment, and feedback from members has also been positive.

We had more than 400 people through the door at our open day in March, so we're confident that the club is going to be a big success and help put Great Torrington on the fitness map."

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Power Plate deal for Active IQ Academy



The Power Plate course will be delivered online

Active IQ Academy has entered into a new partnership with Power Plate International to deliver the training provider's online Fundamentals Academy course.

It is the first time a course has been offered directly to instructors through a purpose-built eLearning platform. The Active IQ Academy eLearning platform is designed to give students the chance to learn at their own convenience, with coursework submitted online.

PTI: More people turning to fitness careers

A new study carried out by Premier Training International (PTI) has found that more people are opting to pursue a career in the UK health and fitness industry.

The sector is increasingly seen to offer a "more dynamic" career. PTI polled nearly 700 recent graduates as part of its survey, with more than three-quarters (78 per cent) saying they had entered the industry as the result of a career change.

More than 85 per cent of participants plan to follow their new fitness career for at least six years, while more than 60 per cent of PTI graduates operate a personal training business. The survey also revealed that the wide range of CPD courses contributes to the length of a career, with 98 per cent advocating ongoing training.

BeaverFit supplies Navy ship with strength kit

Strength conditioning equipment provider BeaverFit is helping to build the strength of the British Navy, supplying its Warrior FTR rigs to HMS Temeraire.

According to Wayne Okell MBE, PT specialisation advisor at HMS Temeraire, the equipment is versatile, strong and easy to dismantle and transport, making it perfect for the Navy's demands. "The rigs from BeaverFit captured our imagination from the offshoot and we are now using them to conduct a series of trials on land and sea."

CYQ/Youth Sport Trust join forces

Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ) has formed a strategic partnership with the Youth Sport Trust (YST) as part of efforts to offer support to young people who have chosen a career in the active leisure sector.

The partnership has identified as its goal developing and providing information, advice and guidance for young people working in the industry. It will also look to expand CYQ's current work with schools across the UK.

CYQ and YST have teamed up partly in response to the "severe cuts" faced by careers guidance services in schools and community settings, which include the proposed closure of Connexions and the Next Steps service.

According to trade union UNISON, there are concerns over the future for careers guidance, with potential job losses in the sector.



The new partnership will assist young people working in active leisure

Lori Randall, CYQ's director of business development, says: "CYQ is committed to providing information to young learners looking to forge a career in the active leisure sector, as well as offering qualifications and resources that provide knowledge to give them a foothold when entering the industry."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=yiF3Y>

Keiser secures new David Lloyd Leisure contract



Keiser is installing 1,200 of its M3 studio bikes at more than 40 David Lloyd Leisure sites across the UK

Fitness equipment supplier Keiser UK has announced that it is to install 1,200 M3 bikes at more than 40 David Lloyd Leisure (DLL)-operated sites across the country.

The installation programme has already commenced and is to continue over the next two years, following the signing of a new deal between the two companies.

Keiser's studio cycles have been installed at DLL's UK clubs for the last 14 years, with the new M3 product designed to provide better functionality through its optional computer. The M3 bike also enables instructors to create tailored classes for gym users

of all abilities, by providing feedback such as heart rate monitoring and resistance level awareness.

David Lloyd Leisure's head of sports, health and fitness Rob Beale says: "Indoor cycling is one of our most popular classes, so it's vital that we can offer our members and instructors a well-designed, high quality bike."

"The M3 Bikes are heavily used in our clubs, so it's important that they are not only durable but also well maintained. Keiser ensures that our bikes stay in use, with supplier support that goes above and beyond the contractual requirements."



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in brief...

Just Fit Academy opens

German operator Just Fit launched a new training arm – Just Fit Academy – in April, at its new headquarters in Northrhine-Westfalia.

The academy will initially be open only to Just Fit staff, in a bid to ensure it has the highest calibre of trainers in the market – plans are to train around 80 staff in year one, and 150 in year two. Ultimately, however, the academy will be opened out to the rest of the fitness sector across Germany.

The new academy prides itself on its high standards and rapid reaction to new trends, with training available in areas such as movement analysis, triggerpoint therapy, manual resistance training, core training, passive stretching, functional training, TRX and Variosling.

Australian office for Precor

Precor launched an Australian office on 23 April to sell its commercial and consumer equipment to the country's health and fitness sector.

The Precor Australia business sits within the Melbourne-based office of parent company, Amer Sports.

Precor has agreed with Avanti, which previously distributed Precor's commercial and home market equipment within Australia, a smooth transfer of all supply, service and support of existing commercial customers to Precor Australia.

Refurb for US club Shula's

Independently owned Miami-based Shula's Athletic Club completed a US\$300,000 refurb in March.

The 4,180sq m club undertook a complete overhaul of its lobby, lounge, locker rooms, group exercise rooms and workout areas, with work carried out by Optimald Design Systems International. As part of the project, a new teen video game area was introduced.

Italian 'Club of the Year'

The sixth annual Club Awards: Fitness, Wellness & Aquatic took place at FORUMCLUB in Bologna in February. Centro Benessere Eden in Reggio, Emilia, was named Club of the Year.

Pan-Nordic investment for SATS

SATS – the leading full-service gym chain in the Nordics with 280,000 members and more than 110 clubs – is continuing to invest in growth across its estate.

Two new clubs, in Stockholm and Helsinki, opened earlier this year, with



SATS is upgrading a number of clubs in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark

a further six new clubs due to open in Sweden and Norway this autumn/winter. In addition, four clubs will relocate to new premises.

A number of clubs across SATS' four markets – Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark – will be upgraded throughout the autumn, including new design and equipment aimed at improving customer service and experience. Large functional training areas, PT zones and a new retail concept form part of the new club concept.

SATS is also introducing a number of new group exercise classes: the new Stockholm club is the first to offer a Hot Yoga studio, for example, while a new ViPR class offering has currently been rolled out to around 40 per cent of clubs. A new website also offers features including booking, rating and reviews of classes.

INJOY Station launches in Germany

INJOY, the Germany-based fitness franchise, has introduced a new standalone concept: INJOY Station.

INJOY Station is a 400–500sq m studio concept that focuses on strength training in an 'old school' environment – gymnastics boxes forming the coffee bar and pommel horses acting as bar stools and changing room benches, for example.

However, this vintage look is combined with the latest equipment – including an internet-connected, fully automated circuit from supplier eGym – and high level support from staff.

The first INJOY Station site opened in Dortmund, Germany, in May, with a second location already planned for Essen.



INJOY Station combines an 'old school' look with the latest gym equipment

Aspria unveils club number eight

Aspria's newest club – the operator's eighth – opened on 4 March on the site of the historic Klipper Tennis and Hockey Club in Uhlenhorst, Hamburg, Germany.

The 4.5-acre site houses a 6,500sq m clubhouse. The gym is equipped by Technogym, with a dedicated stretching area, indoor cycling and group exercise studios. There are indoor and outdoor pools with aqua classes, and an extensive spa area: indoor and outdoor saunas, outdoor hydrotherapy pool, spa gardens, steamroom and salt relaxation room.

Six outdoor tennis courts and a multi-purpose sports field mean that tennis and hockey will continue to have their place, with a kids' play area also on offer.

The sporting/fitness and wellbeing facilities are complemented by two restaurants/bars, 48 guest rooms for overnight stays, a club lounge, crèche and meeting room facilities. The lounge, bar, restaurant and terrace are at the heart of the club, offering members a place to meet, conduct business and take part in cultural and social events.



Each Fitness First Community club will offer a different design and range of facilities

New Dubai clubs for Fitness First

Fitness First Middle East has taken over a chain of community health clubs in Dubai.

The deal, which went through on 1 March, sees the four full-service clubs – formerly operating under the Hayya brand – incorporated into the Fitness First estate. However, the clubs will maintain their unique family and community focus, and will be grouped under the Fitness First Community clubs umbrella.

Each Community club is unique, with a different design and range of facilities. For example, the gym and group exercise studios at Fitness First Lakes are complemented by a lawn area overlooking the lake, with a leisure and kids' pool, volleyball area, outdoor tennis courts and

a kids' play area. At Fitness First Meadows, there's a multi-purpose, 1,384sq m indoor sports hall with seating for 500 people.

The chain also opened its 29th club in the region last month, located in the business park at Dubai Motor City.

The 2,220sq m mixed club offers the chain's usual combination of extensive gym area, group exercise studios and personal training. There's also a members' lounge with wireless internet and DVD library, plus sauna facilities.

Two further clubs were scheduled to open at the end of May – a 900sq m site in Dubai and a 2,000sq m club in Abu Dhabi – with a further Abu Dhabi site on pre-sale, due to open in August.

Expansion for Portugal's Fitness Hut

Low-cost operator Fitness Hut has opened its second and third clubs in Portugal. The new openings, in Porto in April and Cascais in May, follow the launch of the inaugural site in Lisbon in October 2011.

The clubs range from 1,600–1,800sq m. All three offer large gyms split into seven activity zones: CV, resistance, free weights, functional training, fight, stretch and sprint. Equipment is supplied by Star Trac, Jacobs Ladder, Concept 2, York, TRX, Bosu, PurMotion and Dynamax. Audiovisual elements include live DJ sets and extreme sports movies showing on big screens.

Classes are offered across three studios and are bookable online. There are also changing rooms and a rest area with snacks.

Fitness Hut adopts a 'FIT' philosophy: Focus, Innovation and Transparency. "Our focus is exclusively on fitness," says CEO Nick Coutts. "We won't diversify into spas or pools, or chase secondary revenue by opening a shop in each club. We're also committed to transparency: no aggressive selling or contractual commitment." Membership starts at €4.40 a week.

Four more clubs, all in the Greater Lisbon area, will start construction in Q3.



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Ian Taylor: Olympic gold in Seoul in 1988

Former Olympian steps in as new CEO of SkillsActive

Ian Taylor, a two-time Olympic field hockey medalist for Great Britain, has been appointed chief executive officer of the sector skills council for sport and active leisure, SkillsActive.

A former chief executive of sportscotland, Taylor was part of the gold medal-winning Great Britain hockey team at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea. He also won a bronze medal in the same event at the Games in Los Angeles, US, four years previously. Other roles held by Taylor include CEO of London Irish Holdings.

Interim chief executive officer Suki Kalirai has been leading the council after Stephen Studd announced his decision to step down from the post with immediate effect in October 2011. During his tenure, Kalirai – chair of the Spa Business Association – guided SkillsActive through a restructuring process and oversaw a new single qualification framework.

Kalirai says: "In this year of the London Olympics, it is especially noteworthy that Ian not only has great credentials as a CEO, but also as an Olympian who has won gold and bronze."

Prince Harry named as School Games president

HRH Prince Harry has been named as the president of the Sainsbury's School Games, a major multi-sport event designed for young athletes across the UK. In his role as president, Prince Harry will support youngsters involved at all four levels of the competition – a year-round initiative designed to transform competitive school sport.

The Prince has also sent a message to participants in the 2012 Sainsbury's School Games, in which he underlined his belief in the positive impact of competitive sport on young people.

Cosslett to lead Fitness First

Andrew Cosslett, the former chief executive of Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG), has been named as the new chief executive officer of health club chain Fitness First. Cosslett, who left IHG in June last year, will take up the new role on 1 June and has been brought in as part of the large-scale restructuring of the troubled chain.

He will replace current CEO Chris Stone, who steps down having broadly completed the financial restructuring of the company.

Cosslett led IHG since February 2005, and during his time relaunched Holiday Inn as a mid-market chain.

He is also currently the chair of the Rugby World Cup 2015 organising committee.



Cosslett was previously CEO of International Hotels Group (IHG)

In April, Fitness First – led by Chris Stone – signed an agreement with its key creditors to allow a comprehensive debt write-off.

Commenting on the appointment, Stone says: "Andrew is a highly experienced individual with strong brand development experience. He's the right person to drive Fitness First and grow the brand."

Sean Holt is new CIMSPA CEO

Sean Holt has been appointed CEO of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) with immediate effect, heading up its central team. Holt has led the institute in an interim capacity since its launch last year, following a merger between the Institute for Sport, Parks and Leisure (ISPAL) and the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM) – the latter of which he was CEO.

During his tenure as interim CEO of CIMSPA, Holt helped secure chartership for the institute from the Royal Privy Council and oversaw the appointment of its regional and national management boards.

Holt has more than 20 years of experience within the leisure sector. Former roles have seen him play a key part in iconic projects, such as the new Wembley Stadium.

CIMSPA chair Miles Templeman says: "Sean has considerable knowledge of the sector, and his wide-ranging experience means that he can appreciate the challenges professionals working in these areas face."



Holt has led the institute in an interim capacity

"Sean has already successfully achieved a number of significant milestones in his first year as interim CEO, in what was always going to be a challenging period following a merger and taking into account the challenging economic climate."

Trixter appoints Minter as new CEO

Indoor interactive bike specialist Trixter Developments has appointed Mark Minter as interim CEO with immediate effect, to lead a growth plan for the brand.

Prior to joining Trixter, Minter led Power Plate International until 2010, in the role of Power Plate group president.

He is tasked with expanding the Trixter brand in the UK and gaining a stronger presence in international markets, while continuing to lead by product innovation.

Minter says: "I'm confident the product and brand fundamentals provide a solid platform for leading this sector."

PEOPLE PROFILE



john greenway

Greenway, a former Conservative MP, was appointed REPs chair when the register was established in 2002. Here he charts the first 10 years of REPs – and offers a glimpse of what the future may hold.

How long have you been involved with REPs, and in what capacity?

I joined as chair in 2002, when I was shadow sports minister. I'm now REPs president.

Why did you first want to become involved with REPs?

I quickly realised that the register – a publicly available endorsement of the professionalism of fitness industry personnel – was essential. People were sceptical about going to the gym and the keep fit/physical activity message.

Registration and independent endorsement of qualifications is vital in convincing the public that instructors and personal trainers are up to the job. That's why our key mission has always been 'protecting the public'.

Have you been involved in the development of EREPs?

REPs has given a lot of help to EREPs, especially with technology and systems support. As REPs chair, I spoke at several EREPs events to promote the concept.

I think the key challenge for registration in Europe remains convincing the fitness industry that registers will help deliver public recognition of high professionalism within fitness facilities.

The EHFA business plan seeks to persuade operators to see the value and benefits of registers. EREPs also provides a registration opportunity for instructors in countries without a national register, with around 3,000 members.

REPs had its 10th birthday in March. What have been the key milestones in that time?

Ten years ago, we set ourselves a target of between 12,000 and 15,000 REPs members. We never thought that we would in fact more than double that figure.

REPs has helped create a qualifications structure that recognises the value and importance of specialism – such as back

pain, cardiac rehab and older people – and which also embraces the immense variety of physical activity opportunities.

We have also helped to build confidence within government and in the medical profession that properly qualified fitness professionals have an important role to play in delivering a healthier nation.

How is REPs' working relationship with SkillsActive?

REPs is owned by SkillsActive. As with the FIA, SkillsActive support for REPs has been vital, especially given SkillsActive's role in developing standards and the qualifications framework for the industry.

Recent structural changes at SkillsActive have brought REPs into the centre of its operations, with the aim of keeping cost down and delivering greater efficiency through new technology and the provision of Active Passports to all REPs members.

How would you summarise REPs' position and reputation now?

REPs is recognised as the leading brand in the fitness industry, which is some achievement. Having started out in a precarious financial position 10 years ago, we are now financially secure, and this must be the platform from which we deliver better value for members and operators. REPs is the body through which the fitness industry's reputation can be improved and enhanced, particularly with other stakeholders. The Royal Medical Colleges have endorsed REPs and we have strong government and political support.

REPs – a benefit for instructors, operators or consumers?

Ideally, the triangle of instructor, operator and consumer interest should come together as a common interest. But we're not there yet, as too many operators fail to support and recognise REPs.

Our essential mission is to protect the public through professional standards. I fail

to see how either the instructor or operator interest can be improved if the public lacks confidence in our professionalism.

How much awareness is there of REPs among consumers?

We do need to increase public awareness of REPs. Our budget for public awareness campaigns is too small (£40,000 a year). If we can attract new members through the REPs growth plan, I would like to think we can increase this in the future.

Our public awareness materials are aimed primarily at fitness club members and we lack the resource for the kind of follow-up that I would like to see. Operators who support REPs have been brilliant, but we still need to convince the rest.

How can our sector benefit from the rise of preventative healthcare?

Preventive healthcare is now the preferred option to curative healthcare, as it's better value for money. Interestingly, this same message is now well understood at the European Commission and will influence EU Social Policy initiatives.

Within REPs, SkillsActive, the FIA, EHFA and EREPs, we all believe in the health dividend of physical activity. This very largely drives what we do.

The industry can only succeed, however, if it employs well- and suitably qualified professionals. There is no other way.

What is your favourite life motto?

When something I am doing appears not to work (DIY for one), I often say 'when all else fails, read the instructions'. There was no instruction manual for REPs, but a large number of stakeholders who all needed to be kept onboard. That has been a challenge at times, but ultimately it is only through partnership that we can achieve our goals.



Consumer awareness of REPs is not high enough



Touching lives

• patricia amend • executive editor, club business international

It's safe to say that we all wonder, at least at some point, what our legacy will be once we're gone.

It's also not a stretch to assume that Francois Henri "Jack" LaLanne, who passed away in January 2011 at the age of 96, made sure that he'd be remembered.

He was, after all, a pioneer in fitness and nutrition who had a groundbreaking TV show. He also loaned his name to health clubs and touched the lives of millions with his motivational speaking and well-known fitness antics.

But I doubt that LaLanne would ever have imagined that, nearly 20 years later, he would influence a young woman named Carole Paques, a 23-year-old college student from Liège, Belgium.

This semester, Paques is completing a marketing internship with Karen Jashinsky, the founder and CEO of O2 MAX in Santa Monica, California, US – a company that combines online tools, social media and real world fitness to create personalised fitness programmes for busy students.

Recently, Jashinsky took Paques on a road trip up the coast of California. One stop along the way was LaLanne's home, where Elaine, his wife of 50 years, still resides.



Fitness guru Jack LaLanne, who died last year, and his wife Elaine continue to inspire young people

Jashinsky met Elaine last autumn when the two were involved in a global attempt to set a new Guinness world record for the number of jumping jacks completed during a 24-hour period. Accompanied by a variety of organisations and US First Lady Michelle Obama, Jashinsky and LaLanne helped inspire 300,265 individuals to participate in the event last October.

Here's what Paques has to say about her visit to the LaLanne home: "The house

is full of incredible memories, each one more astonishing than the last. All the pictures, awards and prizes meant that Jack is still there. All of his work and his accomplishments will last forever.

"I really wasn't into fitness before coming to the US – I never stuck with my workouts – and I knew even less about healthy eating habits. That visit inspired me to take more care of my body."

Clearly, Jack and Elaine LaLanne continue to change lives.

Ask the experts..... Engaging youth

Bill Parisi, founder and CEO of Parisi Speed School, shares his thoughts on this topic:

Youth fitness is all about motivation and engagement. Kids are not thinking health and longevity – they want to have fun, be competitive and, most importantly, be accepted by their peers.

The most powerful way to engage kids in fitness is to show them how they can improve their sports performance: speed, agility, strength. Research shows that over 70 per cent of kids aged seven to 14 participate in at least one organised sport. Many who do not play organised sports wish they had more ability to do so, and your club can show them how.

Offer a sports performance programme for kids of all fitness



Kids' programmes require child-friendly staff

levels aged seven to 14. Make your programme inviting to the non-athlete by hiring staff who truly love kids. The programme itself does not have to be overly complicated, but it should be

professional. You need a respected youth performance brand, credible staff and an environment that's motivating and professional.

The flooring surface is vital to creating this environment. I recommend installing turf flooring in your club, similar to the surface most youth sports events are played on. This looks and feels athletic – a very important aspect of creating that culture of sports performance in your club.

Also, you can run many adult boot camp-style classes in this area as well, to maximise the use of the space when it is not being used by the youth market.

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



This year's IHRS European Congress will take place in the elegant city of Vienna, Austria

European Congress line-up announced

The speaker line-up for the 12th Annual IHRS European Congress will include:

Budget Clubs Panel: moderated by Ray Algar, MD, Oxygen Consulting, UK

Mid-Range Clubs – Finding Your Niche: Henrik Gockel, president, Prime Time Fitness, Germany

Member Service Strategies: Brent Darden, owner/GM, TELOS Fitness Center, US

Leadership: Bill McBride, president/COO, Club One, Inc, US

Sales Management: Casey Conrad, president, Communication Consultants WBS, Inc, US

Retention Management: Brian Morris, CEO, Aspria Group, UK

Marketing Strategies Panel: moderated by Rasmus Ingerslev, CEO, Fresh Fitness, Denmark

Case Studies on Successful Club Turnarounds: Art Curtis, president, Curtis Club Advisors LLC, US

Social Media Strategies: Gottfried Wurpes, CEO, Fitness Company AT, Austria

Marketing to Women: Jasmin Kirstein, owner and CEO, My Sportlady, Germany

Group Fitness Management: Jutta Schuhn, Keep in Motion, Germany

Personal Training Management Panel: moderated by Jennifer Wilson, director of fitness, HealthCity, Netherlands

Events diary

Visit www.ihrs.org/calendar

14 June 2012

The Four Disciplines of a Healthy Organisation (Webinar)

30 August – 1 September 2012

13th Annual IHRS / FITNESS BRASIL Latin American Conference & Trade Show – São Paulo, Brazil

1–4 November 2012

12th Annual IHRS European Congress – Vienna, Austria
www.ihrs.org/congress

19–22 March 2013

IHRS's 32nd Annual International Convention & Trade Show – Las Vegas, Nevada, US

Activity versus Alzheimer's

Daily physical activity might provide a person's best chances of staving off Alzheimer's – even if they're over 80 years old – says a new study.

The study by Dr Aron S Buchman et al, published in the journal *Neurology*, monitored 716 adults – average age 82 – with a device called an actigraph for 10 days. An actigraph is worn on a person's non-dominant wrist and measures levels of daily activity. Participants were also asked to self-report physical and social activities.

Over a follow-up period that averaged 3.5 years, 71 of the adults developed Alzheimer's. Participants in the bottom 10 percentile of daily physical activity were 2.3 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's than older adults in the top 10 percentile of physical activity.

10 minutes with.....

Dr Sandra Thoma

Exersuisse owner Dr Sandra Thoma advocates the therapeutic benefits of strength training for the masses, including the elderly.

Headquartered in Zurich, Exersuisse began on 1 January 2011 with 18 clubs, which were previously Kieser Training franchises in Switzerland. When Kieser Training decided not to renew the franchise contract, Dr Thoma invented a new brand. "From the customer's perspective, continuity was maintained," she says. "The same staff served the customers, but additional equipment was purchased, including X-Force."

Dr Thoma says the transition from Kieser Training to Exersuisse was a "logistical challenge", but that it opened up many opportunities. She explains that her time working in an emergency department helped her to distinguish between urgent and important (but not urgent) decisions. "This benefits me as a busy CEO and mother," she adds.



Dr Thoma created the new brand, Exersuisse

About IHRS

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 IHRS can help your business thrive, visit www.ihrs.org
Locate a quality IHRS club at www.healthclubs.com

Budget-friendly insights

Kristen A Walsh outlines the extensive range of reports currently available to purchase from IHRSA

One of IHRSA's mandates as an association is to produce affordable, high-quality research, training and management information for its members. So, each year, IHRSA produces a wide range of reports, recordings and webinars. This month, many of these items are available at discounted prices from the IHRSA Store (www.ihrsa.org/store).

bestsellers

Popular items available through the IHRSA Store (all prices listed are the discounted IHRSA member rate, quoted in US dollars) include:

IHRSA 2012 Convention MP3

Recordings: These audio recordings from IHRSA's March convention are now available for download. Titles include: Managing by Numbers, Key Performance Indicators for Successful Club Management; Referral Mania!; Principles to Survive & Thrive in Difficult Times... and dozens more (US\$15 each, US\$499 for the full set; recordings from 2009 and earlier are free).



The 2012 IHRSA Global Report: This is the most up-to-date and comprehensive publication on the global fitness business. The report consists of an industry overview,

including input from several industry leaders from independent clubs, large club chains, club associations and federations. The Industry Research section details the market size and scope of the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific markets. The Company Profiles section highlights more than 230 leading club companies from around the world, including financial and

membership information. The last section of the report includes supplier profiles, which provides useful information about industry-leading products and services (US\$49.95).

Get Active! magazine.

This exciting, motivational, digital magazine is written for health club members, prospective members and guests. You can customise the cover and up to four pages of the new Spring 2012 edition with your club's information (US\$50).



The 2011 IHRSA International Report – Size & Scope of Key Health Club Markets:

This comprehensive report, sponsored by Life Fitness, focuses on the industry in the Asia-Pacific region and provides a snapshot of mature markets in Europe. Highlights include: prevalent club operating models; competitive analysis; individual country market reports; and industry prospects and trends (US\$995 for the full report, US\$49.95 for the condensed Club Operator Edition).



2011 Profiles of Success: This annual overview provides detailed information about club benchmarks and other aspects of performance, including membership traffic and growth, facility re-investment, expense management, and more (US\$199.95).

IHRSA's Guide to Personal Training, 2nd Edition:

Sponsored by the American Council on Exercise (ACE), this guide offers statistics on personal trainer usage, fees per session, clients who purchase personal training frequently, the latest compensation data for trainers, advice from industry experts and case studies (US\$9.95).



Webinars: Use these IHRSA web-based seminars to share information with your entire staff. Recent titles include: Personal Training Management; Maximising Your Team's Effectiveness & Profitability; Successful Youth Programming for Your Club; and Effective Solutions to Increase Membership Sales (US\$39 each).

Sales & marketing training videos: Use these eight informative videos to train your staff on all facets of club sales and member service. Titles include: Increasing Membership Retention in the Health and Fitness Industry; Creating and Sustaining a Member-Service Culture; Engaging New Members in the Club; Managing the Sales Team and Process; Selling Club Memberships; and The Non-Sales Professional's Guide to Selling Club Services and Products (prices range from US\$52.46 to US\$59.95, depending upon the format).

June special offers

From now until 30 June, you can save 15 per cent when you spend US\$50 or more at the IHRSA Store (www.ihrsa.org/store) during the annual Spring Sale. Simply use the promotional code Spring2012FS when you check out.

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Let's Get Moving – one year on

David Stalker reflects on the impact of the FIA's Let's Get Moving pilot and the potential for placing a community exercise practitioner (CEP) in every GP practice across the country

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



vanguard

In 2011, the FIA was invited by Scintillate Ltd to be part of a small group of providers putting exercise professionals into GP surgeries in Essex.

Let's Get Moving is an evidence-based programme used to promote physical activity in primary care by bringing sport and physical activity promotion into the heart of GP surgeries. It's fully evaluated by the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and has been endorsed by the Department of Health.

the pilot

Seven GP surgeries and eight community exercise practitioners (CEPs) were secured to target the most deprived quintiles of the population. Clients had to be aged between 18 and 64 years, with a BMI between 30 and 35, and had to be receiving medication for hypertension, diabetes or weight management. The offering comprised a 30- to 40-minute session of motivational interviewing and support to become more active.

the process

The FIA, along with delivery partners Scintillate and database specialist company Maracis, began the initial steps of drawing in intrigued participants, leading to fully booked schedules for the year. Dr Tim Anstiss from The Academy for Health Coaching provided motivational interviewing training to the selected eight CEPs.

"The training was great as it was so centred on understanding the client. I now have motivational interviewing techniques that I can use in this programme, with my personal training clients and in everyday life to encourage people to initiate an active lifestyle and continue with it," commented one CEP after completing the training course in February 2011.

The intervention itself made two routes available to the participants: a heavy

intervention or a light intervention, both of which provided the participant with support throughout this long-term behaviour change process. If the participant felt they could implement changes independently of further support, they were left to their own devices with the option to call and book again.

By providing each patient with a sense of autonomy, allowing them to lead the session with only slight guidance and questioning from a CEP, results proved very effective.

"The CEP I saw was very helpful. He listened, encouraged me, didn't make me feel guilty, and provided contact numbers for me to enquire about badminton. Please would you let him know that I am still going to badminton and aquazone – it's tiring but I intend to keep both going," said one participant.

Physical activity options were also offered to participants who were keen to change their lifestyles. FIA operators based in Essex provided incentivised offers to help support the programme. These offers were presented in resource sheets to promote local activities and facilities.

FitLinx also provided Actipeds, which were distributed to participants keen to get moving. By using these Actipeds (which monitor walking steps, distance and fitness activities), results from daily activities could be uploaded and monitored.

results

The results were phenomenal: assuming all participants were as active as those with Actipeds, these 504 people will have logged almost 150,000,000 steps, 45,000 active hours, 10 million calories burnt and 63,000 miles walked – plus a considerable volume of tears shed by clients who had changed their lives for the better.



Practitioners were trained in motivational interviewing techniques

The initiative was also extremely cost-effective, delivering benefits in Quality Adjusted Life Years for less than £440, compared to a typical £20,000 benchmark.

next steps

This pilot is highly relevant to the future of a healthcare system which needs to focus more on prevention in order to manage demand on healthcare services and the need to reduce overall healthcare costs.

The FIA team took a commercial operational approach to managing this pilot's success. This included a relentless focus on the entire customer journey, from identification of target audience to engagement, management through service and follow-up, with the ambition being to minimise attrition throughout.

In light of these results, the FIA has entered into discussions with Sport England and Essex County Council to roll out the programme to more GP surgeries and serve more clients. This next stage of the programme works towards our vision to have a CEP in every GP practice, prescribing physical activity to improve quality of life.

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JUNE–OCTOBER 2012 white water rafting

Make a splash for a worthwhile cause by taking part in white water rafting for UK charity Breast Cancer Care (BCC).

Organisers can arrange such events for BCC at one of six white water rafting centres across the UK at a date convenient to participants. Each raft can carry between six and eight people – ideal for friends, family or work teams. The minimum sponsorship is £1,000 for a whole team of up to eight people. Details: www.breastcancercare.org



Gather a team and take part on a date of your choosing

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14 & 15 JULY 2012 tough mudder scotland

The infamous US Tough Mudder event has arrived in the UK with a series running across the country in 2012: the next one takes place at the Drumlanrig Castle and Country Estate in Scotland.

Tough Mudder events are hardcore 10- to 12-mile courses designed by the British Special Forces, with up to 25 obstacles to test your strength, stamina and mental grit. Miss one and you face a 50ft swim in freezing cold water! Open to teams or individuals, funds go towards the Help for Heroes charity.

Details: www.toughmudder.co.uk



Iwan Thomas completed May's event

13 JULY 2012 first ever pedalo world championship

UK businesses are being offered the opportunity to get involved in the first ever Pedalo World Championships at the famous Leander Club, Henley-on-Thames, on 13 July. The event is being endorsed by former Olympic rower James Cracknell.

Muscle Help Foundation, the charity behind the event, is looking for 16 corporate teams of four people to power the pedalos, plus 10 extra places for clients and supporters. Teams will race against each other in a knock-out competition and the day will also include a champagne reception and three-course lunch.

Participation costs £8,500 (plus VAT) per team. Details: www.musclehelp.com



Do you have enough pedal power?

DAVID WOODS / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Raise funds to fight cancer



15–24 JUNE 2013 women v cancer cycle kenya

In this challenge, participants will cycle 400km through the Rift Valley – starting at the majestic slopes of Mount Kenya and finishing at the magnificent shores of Lake Victoria. Along the way, they'll also stop off at an elephant orphanage.

This is a great opportunity to get fit, lose weight and raise funds to help in the fight against breast, ovarian and cervical cancers for three UK charities. Registration is £250 and minimum sponsorship is £2,900.

Details: www.actionforcharity.co.uk

Technogym, the Official Equipment Supplier to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, pledges to support the 'Our Greatest Team' campaign for a healthier and more active lifestyle.

Make a Pledge.
Join the
Movement.



"I PLEDGE
TO GO TO
THE GYM
AT LEAST
TWICE A WEEK"



OUR
GREATEST
TEAM
OFFICIAL SUPPLIER



"I PLEDGE
TO TRY
A NEW SPORT
IN 2012"



900 athletes
60 million strong

"I PLEDGE TO
EXERCISE
REGULARLY"



"I PLEDGE
TO BE
POSITIVE
AND SMILE"



"I PLEDGE
TO BE
STRONGER
AS I AGE"



Creating a Digital Legacy

London 2012 will be the first Wellness Olympics, inspiring the British Public to become more active. This is our one opportunity as an industry to create a lasting legacy.

The campaign

Technogym have launched a digital social platform to inspire the nation to get more physically active and make a pledge. www.movergy.com is the website behind the campaign, which gives you 'Location' the opportunity to become a 'Community Hub' to help inspire people to set and complete their pledges. It can be a great way to open your doors to the British public and get as many people as active as possible.

Movergy brings together end users, locations and trainers to share their passions. Over 1000 locations and 550 personal trainers across the UK have already joined the campaign!

What's in it for the Operator?

- A complimentary marketing pack for the location that includes Olympic branding
- A free public page on the fastest growing social platform for physical activity and sport
- Online visibility of your brand
- Ability to advertise your products and services
- Enhanced prospect generation through a 'money can't buy campaign'

USE THE MYWELLNESS KEY TO ENHANCE YOUR CAMPAIGN



Technogym have created a unique link between Movergy and the mywellness portal, to allow your members to charge up their batteries using the mywellness key. This can enhance your campaign by allowing you to monitor your member's lifestyle and physical activity levels and support their efforts.

WHAT IS THE MYWELLNESS KEY?

A device worn on the hip to assess, monitor and encourage daily movement

- Measure activity both indoors and outdoors

- Provides the member with a simple daily movement goal
- Web portal for monitoring and motivating members
- Create communities

Technogym have a limited number of MyWellness key Olympic packages to enhance your campaign. To find out more about this fantastic offer, call us on **01344 300 236** or email UK_info@Technogym.com quoting 'MWK Movergy Offer'

What's in it for members?

The opportunity to join the fastest growing social platform, developed to spread the PASSION for sports and physical activity whilst supporting Our Greatest Team. Discover all the activities that suit THEIR aspirations in THEIR local area, connect with like-minded people with common interests.

When an end user registers on Movergy.com, they complete an 'Aspiration Finder' that takes less than

100 seconds to find out 'what makes them move' and their true aspirations. They can share their map on Movergy and also via Facebook and Twitter to share results with friends and encourage them to join too!

As part of the campaign, end users are guided to your location to make their pledge

Track pledges at your centre and measure activity

Once members have made their online pledge, they will be able to manually log their activities to help them fill their battery! The battery will fill up throughout the week as more activity is logged!

Record
activity to
charge your
battery



DIARY

JUNE

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, the event also includes networking opportunities and free workshops.
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, biomechanics, sports medicine, training methods, nutrition and physical education.
Web www.atiner.gr

26 FIA Golf Day

Venue Tankersley Manor
& Golf Course, Sheffield, UK
Summary

Networking opportunities with more than 150 representatives in the leisure industry, followed by the annual FLAME conference and awards the next day.
Web www.fia.org.uk



The FLAME Awards recognise the best clubs across the UK



The UK's Leisure Industry Week takes place from 18-20 September

27 FIA FLAME Conference

Venue Magna Centre, Sheffield, UK
Summary

The annual FIA FLAME Conference offers a range of seminars and motivational discussions, with thought-provoking keynote speakers and presentations from thought leaders from within and outside of the fitness industry. The FLAME Awards, celebrating the best clubs and leisure centres across the country, take place in the evening.
Web www.fia.org.uk

JULY

5-8 IDEA World Fitness Convention

Venue San Diego, California, US
Summary

More than 5,000 fitness professionals from around the world attend this event, with hundreds of sessions taught by renowned presenters and guest speakers. More than 200 companies attend the 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 Olympic and Paralympic Games. 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

2-5 DCAC Washington

Venue: Washington DC, US
Summary

DCAC's goal for its fitness conventions is to 'reignite your passion for fitness'. It strives to offer the highest quality fitness education sessions and certifications taught by some of the world's leading fitness experts.
Web www.dcacfitness.com

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

SEPTEMBER

13-16 SIBEC North America

Venue The Ritz-Carlton Orlando
Grande Lakes, Florida, US
Summary

A forum for America's leading owners, operators, CEOs and COOs of health, recreation, sports and fitness organisations to meet face-to-face with executives from key suppliers. The event also offers networking opportunities.
Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

18-20 Leisure Industry Week

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK
Summary

The UK's largest exhibition for the leisure industry, catering for all sectors of out-of-home leisure and attracting thousands of leisure professionals. Last year's event also saw the launch of a new Education Village, hosting seminars and the IOU independent operators' forum. The Health Club Awards take place alongside LIW – the second year of these members' choice awards.
Web www.liw.co.uk

26-28 European Fitness Summit

Venue Barcelona, Spain
Summary

Face-to-face meetings between fitness suppliers and leading operators from selected markets across Europe.
Web www.european-fitness-summit.com

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everyone's talking about . . .

investor relations

A double dip recession, a major operator in trouble and contracts under consumer media scrutiny. What can the industry do to ensure it keeps the faith of the investment community?

The health and fitness industry has received some negative PR over the last few months. Combined with the challenging economic climate, how might this impact the way in which the sector is viewed by the investment community?

Consumer TV programme *Watchdog* has investigated underhand sales practices yet again. The subject gets picked over by the consumer media with monotonous regularity, so is it time to dump the contract? Do they make the industry look shifty, or suggest a lack of confidence in the product? Customers have voted with their feet in favour of flexible contracts

at budget gyms, so is it time for everyone else to take the hint?

Certainly Anne-Marie Harris of Bridges Ventures LLP (see below), which invests in The Gym Group, believes flexible contracts are one of the key reasons why the budget sector is so popular. And even at the premium end of the scale, BOOM! Cycle has opted for no contracts as it feels this drives them to keep offering exactly what consumers want (see *HCM* May 12, p28).

But it's not just the perennial question of contracts at issue here. Fitness First has run into well documented financial difficulties this year. New management has been brought in, with investment

companies Oaktree and Marathon buying up 77 per cent of the company's debt in April. But with one-third of Fitness First's 142 UK gyms said to be unprofitable, job losses and closures could result from any restructuring. Will this have a wider impact on the industry?

On the positive side, the fitness sector has held up fairly well throughout the recession, and none of our columnists – investors and operators alike – think there will be a mass exodus of investors from the industry.

But when banks are being increasingly discerning with their lending, what can operators do to make sure they tick all the boxes? We ask the experts....

HOW CAN THE SECTOR KEEP THE FAITH OF INVESTORS? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

tony de leede

fit 'n' fast australia • ceo



Generally I think there is still a good appetite for the health and fitness industry, especially the budget sector, because investors know the margins are good when you get it right. We're currently looking at selling 25 per cent of our Fit 'n' Fast business and initial interest has been strong. However, like everything else, the industry has been

affected by the recession and it's not as easy to borrow money as it was 10 years ago, when the industry was flying high.

In terms of keeping the faith of the investment community, health clubs do receive a disproportionate amount of scrutiny regarding sales tactics, so transparency here is important. We're very clear and upfront about our cancellation policy: you can cancel a contract, but there will be a cancellation fee.

Innovations are also pleasing to the investment community: anything which can alter the landscape and attract more people. I think we might start to see more 24-hour operators, as well as more smaller, specialist facilities.

Going forward, I think the investment community will continue to show an interest, but will drive a hard bargain – unless it's in an area which is exploding, like Asia.”

mike saul

barclays corporate • head of hospitality and leisure



As a lender to all sectors of this market, Barclays expects operators to have completed their commercial, financial and legal due diligence, and to have considered all risk angles when presenting to us. We also want to understand growth potential and the local operating environment.

Strong management is vital, and when assessing a proposal the strength of the team is a key consideration. We want to see an indication that operators could react quickly to adapt their business strategy if necessary. Barclays wants to understand the five-year plan, where the business hopes to be, and what the management is doing to achieve this. We work to a 'no surprise' mentality, and want to be kept abreast of developments.

In the current climate, with job uncertainty and confidence low, some consumers are reluctant to be tied into contracts, so offering flexibility can be advantageous. As a bank, however, we will always view each business on a case-by-case basis and will want to understand how operators are keeping membership numbers steady, as well as appreciating the cost of acquisition and churn rate.”



Harris: Budget operators with experienced management and compelling financials should be attractive to investors

anne-marie harris

bridges ventures llp • partner sustainable growth funds



“The majority of investors and banks now have a mixed view of the fitness sector. There was significant investment made in the late 90s/early noughties which meant operators expanded quickly, resulting in over-capacity. The necessary consolidation hasn’t materialised, growth has stagnated and investment returns have been hit.

In addition, many businesses were over-leveraged, such that cashflow was increasingly used to service high debt levels, rather than on capex to ensure the customer proposition was kept fresh and relevant to today’s gym users.

However, while the macro environment remains challenging for consumer-facing businesses, trading overall has held up – fitting exercise into a healthy lifestyle is seen as important. But customers are demanding value for money and the OFT enquiry into unfair contracts has threatened the traditional model. The emergence of the low-cost sector is a natural consequence, as customers receive a high quality product without high membership fees and restrictive contracts. Companies in this sub-sector, with experienced management and compelling financials, should be attractive to investors.”

ross chester

la fitness • cfo



“As ever, any investment decision is premised in three key areas: the quality of the existing business/brand, the strategy and the management. It cannot be overestimated how important it is to have a credible management who the funders believe can deliver the strategy.

Banks fundamentally want a good asset – and one that is improving, not a business which is weighted down by a burden of legacy debt. Banks appear to have two polar extreme views: stay in the good and improving, at least for the short term, and exit the stagnating. As a consequence, accessing new finance or amending existing finance is challenging and typically comes with a punitive cost, whether through increased margin or fees, tighter covenants, equity dilution, or a combination of all these.

The first part of securing investment is understanding the key metrics of your own business which will meet any banks’ expectations. Make sure your funders understand the business, the opportunities and the challenges. Keep up the dialogue well in advance of any financing need: banks don’t like surprises, so try not to give them one.”



HUGH CHAMBERS

How can the Olympics be used to inspire a nation to be active?
The chief commercial officer of the British Olympic Association shares his thoughts with Kate Cracknell

When I meet Hugh Chambers, chief commercial officer of the British Olympic Association (BOA), at its central London offices in April, there are 98 days to go until the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Games. There's also been, in the past few days, some fairly scathing commentary in the media about the lack of public engagement with the Olympics so far, as well as the relative lack of progress towards a lasting participation legacy – something that was so key to London winning the bid in the first place.

So how does Chambers feel things are going on that front? "It's already wall-to-wall in the media – there's no-one in the country who isn't aware of what's about to happen. But I think we're probably no more than 10 per cent of the way towards national euphoria," he says.

"That's an unscientific guess of course, but to me it's a bit like the Royal Wedding last year. We all knew it was coming and most people were looking forward to it – not least because it was

a public holiday – but I think it was only when it was upon us that the nation really, truly, fully got behind it to a level that probably surprised most of us. I can't remember the last time there was that degree of unified joy, excitement and collectivism around one event.

"So it is, I believe, with the public's emotional engagement with the Games. Obviously the central purpose is somewhat different, but I believe you will see the same sort of effect this summer. I expect there to be an earlier build-up, though, thanks to things like the Olympic torch relay, which runs from 18 May right through to the opening ceremony on 27 July, and which will no doubt generate local and regional media coverage of ways in which people are getting involved.

"Overlaid across that, you have the Diamond Jubilee at the beginning of June, followed by the European football championships. We have a surge of public excitement and national focus ahead of us this summer, whether it's the Queen, the football team or the growing excitement around the Olympics.

"In terms of engagement with the Games, we're anticipating that things will really start to take off at the beginning of May, with an upsurge early/middle of July, peaking during the Games themselves."

Our Greatest Team

He continues: "Probably our biggest challenge as the BOA is that we're a very small organisation: around 85 people. We're also privately funded – we don't get governmental Lottery funding – so for us to build a true campaign of engagement with the nation is tough. We're not sitting here with a multi-million pound marketing budget, so we've had to be very creative in the way we've approached it.

"We realised a couple of years ago that we needed to crystallise exactly what our engagement plan should look like in the form of a brand campaign, and we arrived at the notion of 'Our Greatest Team'. The strapline – '900 athletes, 60 million strong' – has been the focal point of everything we've done, but to communicate that



Lawrence Okoye, discus



Greg Rutherford, long jump

Team GB athletes and contenders 'work out in local gyms and clubs', helping inspire grassroots participation



Dan Keatings, gymnastics



Anthony Ogogo, boxing (middleweight)

PHOTOS / COPYRIGHT JON SUMBY/MAPIUSCLE

and engage with the nation, we needed to form partnerships with lots of other stakeholders."

Those stakeholders are, of course, LOCOG and the 52 official partners of the London 2012 Games. Chambers continues: "Our Greatest Team is an organic campaign that's designed to have its own life – it's not rigid or prescriptive. We at the BOA have, if you like, the DNA and the blueprint of a campaign, but we're inviting our partners to develop it, grow it, move it on."

A participation legacy

Of course, driving public awareness of Our Greatest Team – even stimulating enthusiasm for the Games themselves – is one thing. Growing participation off the back of this is quite another: it's something that no host nation has yet achieved. And indeed, although participation is still very much on the agenda, the UK government scrapped the original goals – a million more adults playing sport at least three times a week by 2013 – at the end

of last year, leaving a watered-down aspiration in its place.

So what does Chambers believe is achievable, and how can this be delivered? "I think it has to happen at a grassroots level – participation literally happens one by one. It's an individual decision to go out and do something about getting fitter, participating in sport or just getting moving.

"I think perhaps, not just in this country but historically around the world, government initiatives have not been completely successful because they haven't necessarily triggered that personal, human, emotional response.

"Equally importantly, there probably haven't been the facilities that aligned with people's aspirations of what they wanted to do."

Chambers is, however, the first to put up his hand and acknowledge that others may be better placed to comment on this: "The BOA is the guardian of the Olympic movement in this country, but we're not in a position to make any promises individually about changes in participation behaviour.

What we do intend to be, however, is a clarion call for a great many aspects of the positive legacy of the London 2012 Games. But this is not a task that we alone are going to achieve – it needs to happen in partnership with others.

"The 'I Pledge' campaign that's come from Technogym and the FIA has therefore been a godsend for us. It's initiatives such as these, from our various Olympic partners, which hold the greatest potential to make a systemic change in people's attitude towards fitness and health in this country."

Inspiring movement

The question remains, however, whether the fitness industry legacy should focus on 'people more active' or 'more people active' – to date, I venture, many of the operators' own initiatives seem to be more suited to engaging with existing members than to attracting new exercisers.

"I think it should be both, to be honest – although I must reiterate that the BOA is not in a position to have ▶



(left) The BOA, British Paralympic Association and LOCOC CEOs join Technogym president Nerio Alessandri, Technogym Olympic Ambassador Christine Ohuruogu and Sophia Warner, Technogym Paralympic Ambassador, at the launch of 'I Pledge'; (above) Ohuruogu and Warner with Denise Lewis

- some sort of macro-policy around this. We see ourselves as playing our part in a tapestry of different stakeholders to achieve these goals.

"What we can bring to the table is the inspiration of the Olympic movement. With over £11bn having been invested in the Games, and estimates of some £2bn being spent by sponsors on marketing activation, we'll be going into 2013 against a backdrop of massive investment in the Olympic movement. We hope to capitalise on that through careful alignment of our resources and brand marks with organisations that can make participation happen – and I think you have to start with the fitness industry, because it's absolutely at the epicentre of this.

"I also think you have to rely on the fact that these are commercial organisations that want and need to recruit new people into their clubs – if all they do is get their existing members to work out more regularly, it's not a very compelling commercial strategy.

"We therefore have to give them the tools and the touch-points of inspiration they can use to attract new members."

Sustainable impact

So what shape might this inspiration take – how can operators tap into the momentum around the Games to draw

people into their facilities? How and why would someone be encouraged to get off the sofa just because they've watched a man who can run 100 metres in 9.58 seconds?

"I think the answer to that is the Wimbledon Effect – everyone goes out and picks up a tennis racket in June and July. But the real question is: how do you sustain the Wimbledon Effect throughout the whole year? So too with the Olympics: how can we take the inspiration of the most talented elite athletes in the world and translate that for people who are currently sedentary or not very active, getting them to do something that's more active? And I think the answer uniquely lies in the



Olympic values, which are actually about competition – about being the best you can be.

"The Olympic movement, while it celebrates victory, celebrates competition and participation in equal measure. So what I hope will come out of these Games, as much as anything, is not necessarily the achievements of Jess Ennis or Phillips Idowu or Bradley Wiggins. Those will, we hope, be extraordinary and inspirational, but even if we end up with several dozen medals – I'm not trying to make a prediction by the way! – by definition the majority of Team GB athletes won't be medallists. But they will have been the best they can be.

"Those people are drawn from all over the country, they all work out in local gyms and clubs, they have friends and family who are inspired by what they do. I think that's actually the way in which Team GB will provide real traction and real inspiration across the country."

Nevertheless, I suggest, the route from sofa to action is more obvious for sport than for fitness – if people do respond to the Games, aren't they more likely to try out a new sport than head for the gym?

"That's where we come back to our work with Technogym on the Our Greatest Team campaign. Set against the backdrop of the Olympics, Technogym's pledge campaign provides a tool, a narrative, for trainers and instructors to connect both with gym members and with other people in their lives who aren't very active. To say: 'The

Olympic legacy: The fitness industry should be at the epicentre of change

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From sofa to action – the underlying message of London 2012 is ‘Be the best you can be’

- ▶ Olympians are out there, pushing themselves to their personal best – why don't you get involved in this and pledge to do something, whether that's an extreme physical challenge or just watching less TV and going for a jog? It gives a framework for them to have those conversations.

“But as with my comment earlier about being 10 per cent of the way in terms of the profile of the Games, so too with this campaign. Our Greatest Team, in all its facets, has only really gone live in the last couple of months. We're going to need to fast-forward nine months to see what sustainable impact it's had.”

Inspiring individuals

Chambers continues: “Ultimately, though, inspiration starts at an individual level. It's about really understanding human emotions. I hold another role – chair of the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation – and in that role I've gained great insight into the barriers preventing women and teenage girls from taking more exercise or getting actively involved in sport. A lot of it comes down to the fitness industry not providing the right sort of facilities or the right sort of environment to attract those people.

“All these challenges are well documented, and they represent opportunities for fitness operators to respond, but historically the sector has been populated by people who just loved working out. They therefore didn't spend much time thinking about the mentality of someone who found it a challenge to go into a gym.

“Some of the more innovative operators are recognising that, with big changes over the last 10 years in the type of facilities they provide, the type of environment. But there's still a lot to do – to some extent, thankfully. I mean, if all of those problems had been fixed and still people weren't working out, I would feel more desperate, but actually an awful lot of it can be fixed relatively easily. There probably is the challenge of capital investment for the fitness industry, and it's well documented that a number of the groups face real financial challenges – it's not an easy industry to make it work commercially. But just as an observer, I think you can see that those groups that are succeeding are the ones that have made the investment in facilities, in responding to consumer needs. They're not stuck in a traditional format assuming that something is going to change, because it won't.

“To draw a parallel, eating out in Britain 25 or 30 years ago was a fairly grim experience, whereas now pretty much every pub is a gastro-pub. You go to Westfield and the whole shopping

experience is completely different from how it used to be. In the same way, the user experience has to be re-invented within the fitness industry, with the same high standards of presentation as in other leisure sectors.”

Be your best

Returning then to the Olympics specifically, what is it about his job that most excites Chambers? “It's the thought that we can connect with the entire nation through the power of the Olympics. The thought that we can talk to people on a mass level and engage them in something inspirational.

“The obvious objective for any Olympic team is to win lots of medals, but I think everyone at the BOA recognises this is actually a means to an end. We're not elite athletes at the BOA – we're broadly representative of the nation and I think we have a great empathy with the challenges people face in going out and getting fit. We therefore recognise the important role we have to play in helping people to be inspired by the Olympics.

“For us, Olympic success will be measured by the effect it has on ordinary people across the country and the local inspiration it provides. It's all about harnessing the power of the Olympic rings to act as a catalyst for people to become the best they can be.”



kate cracknell
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

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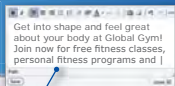
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LEASE OF LIFE

THE £46.5M PLYMOUTH LIFE CENTRE FINALLY OPENED ITS DOORS TO THE PUBLIC IN APRIL. DAWN TUCKWELL DROPS IN TO EXPLORE THE NEW COMPLEX

The Plymouth Life Centre – operated by SLM under its Everyone Active brand – sets out to take community provision to the next level thanks to the sheer scope and quality of its offering. Nevertheless, inclusion and participation were at the heart of the centre's philosophy from the outset, with a wide range of facilities and activities available at affordable prices.

Council leader Vivien Pengelly explains: "Our main goal was to create a community hub that will cater for all ages and abilities, and inspire people in

Plymouth and the surrounding area to achieve life-long participation in sport and physical activity."

aquatics offering

Outside of the Olympic village, the aquatics centre is the largest of its kind in southern England. It has the only 10-lane, 50-metre competition pool in the south-west, as well as a family pool with beach entry and flumes.

The diving facilities are some of the best in the UK with boards at 3, 5, 7.5 and 10 metres in the 25-metre, six-lane diving pool. Bubble release and water spray agitate the surface of the water to lessen the impact forces and video playback allows athletes and coaches to review each dive, increasing the effectiveness of training. A dry dive training facility – with trampolines, springboards, harnesses, crash-mats and other specialist equipment – allows athletes to practise out of the water.

Aside from the quality and quantity of facilities, the flexibility of the space



The Plymouth Life Centre features a 16-metre high climbing wall

sets Plymouth Life Centre apart from its contemporaries. Starting blocks and timing pads have been added to the moveable boom in the main pool, for example, so the pool size can be reduced from 50 metres to 25 metres for long- and short-course competitions.

The aquatics centre is accredited to hold international swimming and diving competitions, meaning that the world's top athletes can compete one day, and the next day the space can be transformed to accommodate six community groups, each with their own separate pool.

fitness focus

But the aquatics centre is not the only draw. "The 160-station fitness suite includes the latest cardiovascular and strength lines and provides members and guests with the ultimate workout experience. The centre will no doubt become a hub for fitness excellence in the UK and has already been dubbed the best leisure centre in the country," says Miles Rimell, director of marketing EMEA and APAC at Precor, which supplied equipment to the gym.

Catering for athletes, fitness enthusiasts and casual gym users alike, the 925sq m fitness suite offers an extensive range of Precor's Icarian

INFO PANEL 1: THE LIFE STORY

The 18,200sq m, £46.5m Plymouth Life Centre is the result of partnerships between private enterprise, government and NGBs.

The need for a new centre was highlighted by a council and Sport England investigation that revealed an under-investment in the public sport and recreation infrastructure over a 20-year period. As a result of this, only 18.6 per cent of Plymouth residents aged 16 and over were meeting the government guidelines for physical activity.

Work on building a new centre began with consultation with local community groups, schools, the Disabled Access Network, the Environment Agency, Plymouth University and various sporting NGBs. This consultation continued at various stages of the build to ensure the Life Centre met the needs of Plymouth residents and people in the surrounding area.

The new centre sits next to the facilities it replaces: the current Mayflower Leisure Centre and Central Park pools. These older facilities will be demolished and the space returned to parkland as part of the wider Central Park regeneration. "The Plymouth Life Centre is key to wider regeneration plans for Central Park. It has helped to create and sustain local jobs and will ensure the city remains competitive and well-placed to attract further investment in the future," says council leader Vivien Pengelly.



Drop-in sessions are available for a range of sports



The aquatics centre can transform into six separate community swim spaces

Strength and S-Line equipment, with 84 pieces of CV equipment including treadmills, AMTs, bikes and cross-trainers from Precor's Experience Series.

"The range also showcases Precor's Networked Fitness Preva, which gives managers access to data and allows them to make informed decisions, increasing the efficiency of the gym," adds Rimell.

There's a free weights area and a functional training zone equipped with TRX suspension trainers, ViPR and kettlebells. The Life Centre has also invested in a range of interactive fitness equipment, with two ZigZag Sportwall Performance-PT wall panels and eight Trixter Xdream bikes.

A 530sq m, 16-metre high climbing wall provides a challenge for adrenaline seekers, alongside one of the country's top bouldering zones and an aerial assault course. Other facilities include a 12-court multi-use sports hall suitable for badminton, five-a-side football, basketball, netball and trampolining; two squash courts with a moveable wall to create a multi-purpose area; two group exercise studios; a dance and drama studio with full theatrical sound and lighting and seating for up to 150 people; and an eight-rink indoor bowls area (see info panel 2, p40).

"PLYMOUTH RESIDENTS MAY FIND THEMSELVES SWIMMING ALONGSIDE A FUTURE OLYMPIC MEDALLIST"

access for all

The range of competition-standard facilities and the strong links with NGBs has meant the centre is a natural choice for many elite championships. It will host the Lithuanian swimming and Canadian diving Olympic teams during their pre-Games preparation, while Team GB divers and Plymouth residents Tom Daley and Tonia Couch use the aquatics centre for all their training.

The public will continue to enjoy use of the centre during these times, however, meaning that Plymouth residents may just find themselves swimming alongside a future Olympic medallist.

"With the exception of major competitions, one of our main goals is to allow uninterrupted public access to the facilities even when competitions are taking place. Having such a vast

array of multi-functional facilities should allow us to achieve this," says David Greenwood, Plymouth contract manager for SLM.

Disabled users are able to take full advantage of all facilities. For example, access to the pool will be provided via a scissor lift that drops down 1.5 metres, allowing users to swim straight in the water – the first UK site to use this lift. Removable manual hoists will also be used in the pools.

The fitness suite is registered with the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI), with much of the gym equipment accessible to disabled people. And a platform lift in the climbing zone allows disabled climbers to access the high-level aerial experience.

There are also three 'changing places' rooms for disabled users, with hoists and changing beds. Accessible shower and changing facilities are also available. ▶



There is a bouldering area and aerial assault course

PHOTO: JAM JOHNSON



Team GB divers Tonia Couch and Tom Daley train at the centre

► oiling the wheels

As with any build on this scale, construction of the Life Centre was not entirely plain sailing and there were some delays. However, as Greenwood explains: "Balfour Beatty kept us fully informed on progress and allowed us access before they were finished, which enabled us to reduce delays in installing equipment and training staff. They've been on-site and on-call with the building since we've opened, so we've been able to quickly iron out any issues."

To ensure the smooth running of the centre going forward, SLM has appointed a full-time health and wellbeing manager – responsible for council priorities such as health inequalities and social inclusion – and an activities manager to oversee NGB partnerships, as well as relationships with groups and coaching organisations.

public demand

Public interest in the centre has exceeded expectations, with 20,000

"NOT HAVING A PARTNER SHOULDN'T STOP ANYONE FROM PLAYING BADMINTON – WE OFFER 'NO STRINGS' BADMINTON SESSIONS"

visitors attending during the opening weekend. There are currently 2,500 members, plus 2,500 children signed up to the swimming lesson scheme, and the centre has seen an average of 1,000 public swims every day. In addition to membership, over 30,000 people have signed up for Everyone Active cards, which allow access to the centre on a 'pay as you go' basis.

SLM has also worked closely with various sporting NGBs and local clubs to develop a more cohesive approach to breaking down barriers to participation. Instead of only allowing members of the public to book courts to play, regular drop-in sessions are available in a range of sports, enabling individuals of all abilities to receive guidance from

an accredited coach or co-ordinator. Access to these sessions, as well as all activities and facilities in the centre, is available to members and non-members.

"Now, not having a partner to play with shouldn't stop anyone from playing a game of badminton," says Emma Austin, regional officer for Badminton England. "As well as offering the 'No Strings Badminton' sessions, we're also working with the Life Centre to run a regular Parabadminton session for players with a disability, alongside 50-plus sessions, junior coaching and competitive leagues."

"We've increased the number of receptionists to deal with public enquiries and put an additional three staff in place just to answer phones. We now have 30 reception assistants on-hand each day and an additional four cleaners on-staff," says Greenwood. "It's a great position to be in, not only creating more jobs for the local area but being part of a facility that will make a real difference to activity and participation in sport in the area."

Plymouth now has a facility to rival any other in the UK, focused on the ethos of all stakeholders: to address inactivity. Greenwood adds: "With so many people through the doors already, and activity programmes filling up, we're in no doubt this success will continue."



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INFO PANEL 2: FACILITIES

Aquatics

- 10-lane Olympic pool with moveable floors and booms
- 25-metre, six-lane diving pool with moveable floor
- Dry dive training area
- Family leisure pool, including two water flumes
- Pool area seating for up to 594 spectators

Physical activity

- 160-station gym
- Two multi-purpose studios

- Wet area which includes a sauna, steam room and whirlpool
- Dance-drama hall
- 12-court sports hall
- Two squash courts
- 16-, 12- and 8-metre climbing walls, plus bouldering area and an aerial assault course
- Eight-rink bowling venue

Hospitality

- Conference room
- Crèche
- Two cafés



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CHANGE FOR THE BETTER



Caroline Casey is the founder of Kanchi, a social enterprise working with businesses to create change around disability. Legally blind from birth – with a condition she likens to ‘having Vaseline over her eyes’ – she talks to Julie Cramer about her life challenges, the importance of health and fitness, and taking her business ambitions out of her native Ireland and onto a global stage

Is it true you didn't realise you were blind until your late teens?

It may seem incomprehensible, but I didn't find out I was legally blind until my 17th birthday. The same day I received a much longed-for gift of a driving lesson, I also visited the doctor with my younger sister – who also has the condition known as ocular albinism – and it was then I was told.

My parents made the decision to bring me up as sighted from birth – not to put a label on me and create a drama around my vision. It was easily reinforced because people with my condition often look quite normal – there's nothing distinctive about our eyes. Also, as a child, if you're made to feel that you can do anything, it's very easy to believe.

You've had an eclectic career path. Where do you get your drive?

That's true – I've worked as an archaeologist, a sports masseuse, a

horticulturist, a management consultant and, for over a decade, a social entrepreneur in the disability arena.

My parents brought me up to be very resilient and not to be limited in what I felt I could do. I always knew that I wanted to work for myself and be free. I'm a bit of a dreamer – I wanted to be a biker chick or a racing car driver. When I realised I wasn't going to be able to do that for a living, I looked for the next big adventurous thing.

After years of travelling the world, you ended up working in a corporate environment in your late 20s – why did you choose that?

Landing a job at a global consulting firm like Accenture is one of those great jobs everyone is supposed to want, and I had a fantastic few years there, receiving brilliant training for what I do now. But after two years, my whole vision temporarily went

and I wasn't managing well or asking for help. Eventually I had to tumble out of the disability closet – I couldn't have sustained being in that environment for much longer.

But from that very low point in my life I embarked on an exciting new chapter.

And that chapter involved an elephant and a charity trek around India in 2001...

Yes. She was called Kanchi and I rode her solo and bareback for three months in extreme humidity around southern India. You have a lot of time to think on an elephant – and a lot of things came out of that trip.

When you're confronted with disability in your life and work, you realise there's a huge amount of discrimination around it – a lack of opportunity and a high level of unemployment. I didn't have the answers for why that was, but I knew I wanted to be part of the solution.



Setting the standards: Aura Sports and Leisure Management won the overall private sector Ability Award in 2007

Is that why you created Kanchi?

Yes. I realised there was a business model around disability that I hadn't seen until that point. If we're to change thinking and behaviour around disability, we should start by changing the mindset of the most prolific force on earth: business.

It doesn't matter if you're a hairdresser or Microsoft – business is everywhere. If we can create an inclusive business community, then we can create an inclusive society.

Where do you start with such a big task?

I started with conferences, simple awareness and education, and went on to create a quality assurance scheme – similar to ISO 9000 – offering tools, methodologies and standards that companies could work towards. Things that would really benefit their bottom line.

We also created a competition to incentivise businesses and reward best practice: The Ability Awards launched in 2005. It's a year-long, nine-stage process with seven categories [recruitment, customer service, etc], open to all sizes of business. We select 75 to visit and work with, and from there we create 50 Ability companies each year.

We gained sponsorship from O2, and within three cycles in Ireland they became the most sought-after business award schemes, giving winners a real competitive advantage.

Can you cite a success story?

Aura Sports and Leisure Management won the overall private sector award in 2007, beating massive multi-national companies. What happened then was that other medium-sized Irish companies became interested.

Aura also started to have managers from other leisure companies wanting to work with them because of the



Casey named her company, Kanchi, after the elephant she rode solo for three months around southern India

value they placed on individuality and difference. So it started a ripple effect.

So where do you take Kanchi from here?

I've recently stepped down as CEO, because I believe founders can be very limiting on a company. I've also pledged to shut Kanchi down in 2020, because putting a limit on our time and life ensures that we're urgent about what we do. We can't hope to fix the issue of inclusion and disability in eight years, but we shouldn't pretend we have a lifetime to do it either.

All our projects – domestic and international – have a revenue-generating aspect so that, as a not-for-profit organisation, we're not always putting our hands out for money.

We've also recently created Kanchi International, a licensed partnership model where we plan to work with different organisations around the world, promoting the disability business model.

What, in your opinion, is the greatest challenge around disability?

I believe it's the eight inches between people's ears: their attitude towards disability. But they shouldn't be blamed for that – it's the way that disability is portrayed in society.

For many businesses, disability is seen as a problem, not an opportunity, and that's what we have to change. Companies may be thinking 'do we really want these customers or do we want to employ such people – won't they always be sick or wanting to take me to court?'

What are the opportunities?

The number of disabled people globally equates roughly to the population of China, and the spending power in the UK alone is £80bn. In addition, because of an ageing population, 16 per cent of people in Europe now have a disability and that will grow to 20 per cent by 2020.



Casey (left) is now a sought-after public speaker. The idea for her enterprise was hatched during her trek in India (right)

- We should also remember that 85 per cent of the one billion disabled people worldwide acquire that disability during their working lifetime. Anyone can become temporarily disabled through an accident, through mental health or an acquired disease, for example. Businesses need to adapt and provide for that.

The economic crisis has also created a great opportunity for the disability business case. Companies have to find a way to distinguish themselves if they want a greater market share.

Are you optimistic about creating real change?

The only thing that makes us the same is that we're all different. If you go to a gym, for example, not everyone trains in the same way. People's bodies are different, they think differently, move differently and have different potential.

I believe we have the capacity as a society to understand that difference and value it, and that's going to emerge more in the next few years.

What importance do you attach to health and fitness?

We're increasingly finding from research that the extent to which you can cope with a disability and function better is down to how you much you exercise.

If I wasn't doing what I do now, I'm actually fascinated by health and fitness as a sector – it has the potential to have one of the most extraordinary influences on our lives. These businesses are constantly interacting with customers and their reach is hugely important. If they adopt an inclusive mindset, they have the potential to be real change-makers.

How physically active are you in your own life?

I enjoy keeping fit and train daily – at a gym or running outdoors. It's a huge part of my life. Partially-sighted people often have problems with core stability, so exercise is important for my sight and balance.

If I feel physically healthy, I feel mentally healthy. When travelling, I won't stay in a hotel that doesn't have a gym.

Can you offer any advice to health and fitness operators?

While gyms may market fitness and wellbeing for everyone – everyone does not mean everyone. It's about asking individuals what they need or want.

One club told me they discovered some people weren't taking up membership because they were dyslexic and couldn't read the forms. In such a case, facilities could think about how information is displayed on their website – could they use videos instead of text to convey information?

Gyms could also invite disabled people from the local community to give feedback. The disability market is one of the most loyal market spaces. It's an interesting dynamic: if you treat us well, our families will also support you.

How important is staff training in making a gym accessible?

Very. I was at a large basement gym in London and wasn't expecting it to be accessible. But the receptionist there had clearly been trained in disability awareness, from the way she helped me fill out the form to showing me around the gym floor and helping me exit the building.

It wasn't that the equipment was necessarily accessible – it was the way that things were laid out and her particular attitude.

So what's next for Kanchi?

We've become one of the first social franchises out of Ireland to go global. We've now licensed the rights to take the Ability Awards to Spain and then want to take them around the world: to begin with, two or three countries in Europe, two in Latin America and hopefully soon the UK.

And for Caroline Casey?

As I step away from the business operationally, I'll be involved more in developing strategic relationships. I do a lot of public speaking, am involved with the Clinton Global Initiative and am a fellow of Ashoka – a massive network of social entrepreneurs worldwide. I spend a lot of time seeking out the greatest points of influence so we can create change.

Personally, I'm also taking a four-month leave of absence this summer – to have an eye operation, take some rest, maybe start to think about writing a book.

I'd love to see a global campaign around disability and I have ideas around that. And after 12 years in business, it might be time to dust off my boots and start planning another adventure!



Julie Cramer
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

When you're confronted with disability in your life and work, you realise that there's a huge amount of discrimination around it. I didn't have the answers for why that was, but I knew I wanted to be part of the solution

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GAME CHANGER

Experts agree that gaming's addictive features – challenges, rewards and social pressure – may be some of the most powerful weapons ever invented to get people to jumpstart, and stick to, healthy lifestyle changes. Susie Ellis, president of SpaFinder Inc, reports

In our 2012 *SpaFinder Trend Report*, we named online wellness gaming as one of the most interesting, innovative trends to watch in the wellness industry. With medical experts now arguing that gaming's uniquely engaging core mechanisms – from reward systems to social dynamics – are key to getting people to sustain healthy regimes, the connection between online gaming and the fitness industry is both super logical and powerful.

While the trend remains largely predictive at this point, given that online gaming is hands-down the most explosive consumer media form and almost every industry is 'getting into gaming', it will inevitably evolve.

**"A STUDY OF US AND
UK GAMERS SHOWS
THE AVERAGE PLAYER
OF ONLINE SOCIAL
GAMES IS NOW A
43-YEAR-OLD WOMAN"**

USER ALIGNMENT

Let's start with a few facts about gaming: a staggering half a billion people worldwide play online games for at least an hour a day. And they're not all teenage boys down in the basement zapping villains in games like World

of Warcraft. While hardcore gamers are indeed more likely to be male and younger, the massively popular social, casual games category – think about Farmville, Bejeweled and Angry Birds – is actually now dominated by an older, female demographic.

A comprehensive study of US and UK gamers, *PopCap Social Gaming Research 2011*, shows that the average player of online social games is now a 43-year-old woman; female social gamers outnumber men by 55 per cent to 45 per cent. Another study, *Kabam Social Gamer 2011*, reveals that the average first-time new social gamer is actually a 50-plus-year-old woman.

This online social gaming demographic presents the fitness industry with an interesting opportunity to engage with the full spectrum of not only its members but also its prospects – including, surprisingly, the grey market.

FUN AND SERIOUS

But gaming is no longer limited to zapping virtual enemies or tending the virtual farm. Millions of people worldwide have already played dozens of fitness- and spa-focused games: Clarins, for example, has taken the spa-themed casual game to a new level with the launch of *Spa Life* on Facebook, where players compete to manage clients in search of treatments, and where they can redeem points for Clarins products.

But as noted in our trends report, the big, powerful and truly game-changing gaming and wellness connection lies ahead, and it involves 'serious games' – a new online social gaming category. Serious wellness gaming platforms are rapidly developing as more medical experts agree that gaming could be the key to changing the world's health.

If countless medical studies show that the old directives from doctor to patient

**Gaming could be
key to changing
the world's health**



YERO PHOTO STUDIO / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Clarins offers a spa-themed game



Nintendo's WiiFit is well established



Nike+ has an app that connects runners



Keas offers programmes for employees



OptimizeMe dishes out challenges

INFO PANEL 1: SUPERBETTER

Chelsea Howe – director of design, SuperBetter Labs



Chelsea Howe

"Game designer Jane McGonigal came up with the idea for SuperBetter as an alternate reality game when she found herself struggling to recover from severe concussion. It's about helping players to achieve health and wellness goals – most commonly weight loss, healthier eating, regular exercise, stress reduction and better sleep – in their real lives and not just on a games console or in a virtual world.

"It draws on core online gaming mechanisms – social involvement, overcoming obstacles, feedback and tracking progress – to give players a system to help them achieve their goals. Players recruit allies, complete quests (steps to help them achieve their goals), battle bad guys (things standing in their way), and activate power-ups (boosts to keep players motivated). It was designed to increase players' resilience – their ability to stay optimistic, curious and energised in the face of challenges.

"The game launched on 9 March 2012, with 20,000 users registered within the first two months. It was designed to help anyone, but currently has slightly more female players than male, predominately aged 20–50 years.

"Gyms could use SuperBetter as an additional resource for clients who are looking to achieve personal health or wellness goals. Operators could create their own package to complement their brand, product philosophy and approach to health and wellness. Alternatively, they could use the starter packages as a template that can be personalised. These blend in-game content, scientific research and expert advice – McGonigal received guidance from leading doctors, psychologists, scientists and medical researchers.

"In the past, a customer might leave a gym with recommendations to improve their daily lives. Games like SuperBetter ensure those recommendations won't get lost or forgotten, by providing a social structure of close friends and allies for long-term support and real change. By integrating games into their repertoire, gyms can integrate their programmes into clients' lives even after they leave the building. In addition, they could use elements of games – like tracking progress towards a bigger goal or giving clear feedback – to make clients feel like every visit is a step towards a serious and tangible improvement in their lives."

Howe has headed up the design of SuperBetter for the past 10 months and received the 2012 Rising Star Award for Women in Gaming. Details: www.superbetterlabs.com



SUPERBETTER LABS



SuperBetter was developed with advice from doctors and scientists

- ▶ dramatically fail to keep people on track, then the 'gamification' of getting people to adhere to regimens – whether fitness, diet, stress reduction or even beauty – seems to work far better.

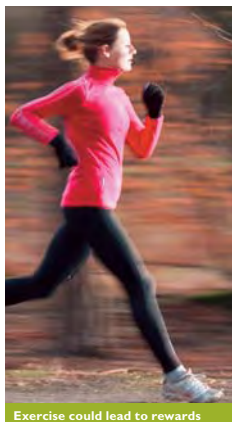
Gamification means putting into play elements like voluntary participation, rules, points, levels of achievement, challenges/goals, rewards and a social feedback system – all of which, say the experts, are uniquely powerful tools to keep people engaged in the health 'game'. Certainly, when you add this social gaming layer (peer/network pressure), research shows people are radically more likely to adhere.

Add into the mix all the new gadgets that make it easier to monitor bio-information and connect the results online – uploading every vital sign, calorie burned and step taken – and you can see how the online wellness game could get very precise and real.

WELLNESS GAME EVOLUTION

While fitness/health games such as Wii Fit and Nintendo's Let's Yoga! have been around for years, wellness gaming concepts are getting far more interesting and complex. Improving health behaviour is a US\$2.5 trillion opportunity, says digital marketing expert Shaun Quigley in the blog, *Can Games Fix American Healthcare?*

With stakeholders including hospitals, doctors, insurance and pharmaceutical companies worldwide, the medical



Exercise could lead to rewards

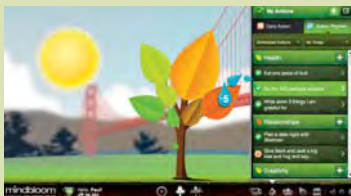
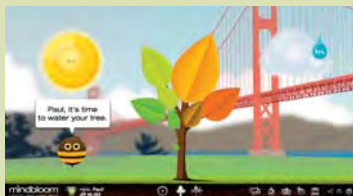
establishment is getting involved too. The leader in this movement is the US-based 'Games for Health' project, which brings medical professionals and game developers together to study how cutting-edge games – such as exergaming, physical therapy, bio-feedback, nutrition and emotional health games – can be an innovative force in improving people's health.

World-renowned medical institutions like the Mayo Clinic in the US are holding conferences such as 'Games as Life-Changers'. Elsewhere, insurance giant Aetna has partnered with wellness game developer MindBloom to launch Life Game, which is designed to make it fun, rewarding and social for members to achieve wellbeing goals.

Meanwhile SuperBetter (see info panel 1, p47) is a new game from SuperBetter Labs, a digital serious games company. Its goal is "to turn everyday folks into superheroes for health" – a mission which revolves around a social platform that allows people to recruit their friends, family and physicians as allies in their quest for wellbeing.

Meanwhile sites like the US-based HealthyWage.com allow dieters to bet their money (and profit nicely) if they lose weight. Nike+, FitBit and other GPS- and bio-based fitness tracking apps allow exercisers worldwide to archive their workouts and compete in online network challenges. Skimble, a mobile fitness platform that schedules short workouts into a busy day, shares people's progress socially on Facebook and Twitter. And OptimizeMe lets users dish out/accept physical challenges. Soon to launch, tween-focused Zamzee uses hip-worn sensors to reward kids for physical activity, awarding points they can redeem for shopping and so on.

Given their massive healthcare costs, corporations will also continue



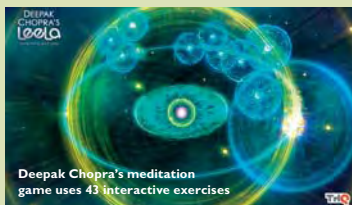
Life Game is a partnership between US insurance giant Aetna and wellness game developer MindBloom

INFO PANEL 2: GAMING CHANNELS

Ian Bogost – videogame designer, philosopher, critic and researcher

"Role-playing is the most compelling component in games: there's something intrinsically appealing about being someone else, whether you're a space marine, a professional football player or even just a farmer. But what makes games different from any other media is having a response to the choices you make, and seeing the impact of those decisions inside a simulated environment.

"There are other gaming elements, such as presenting a challenge, socialisation, rewards and status (think scoreboard). And there's a trend – especially in marketing – to extract these features and apply them to other online and offline services. For example, collecting points/rewards/unlocking badges for using a service, or having a leader board to distinguish loyal customers. Yet these elements are secondary systems that only matter – or that are certainly only heightened – if they're connected to a primary system (a game) that offers the compelling experience in the first place.



"There's a lot of disagreement around the gender dynamics in games too. One argument is that men are motivated by competitive games and women by collaborative or social games. But increasingly it's hard to know how true these claims are, as they're usually the result of small studies and very generalised. Games on Facebook, for example, are mostly social – but these are played by men and women alike, of all ages. I do know that there certainly isn't the same gender disparity there used to be – over half of adult players these days are women.

"Exercise games aren't new – they go back some 25 years – and this physical activity focus is going to continue with games such as Nike+. We're also going to see development in the clinical sector, with games produced for very specific uses by medical professionals, such as training surgeons or games for patients.

"There's also an emerging trend in the relaxation/meditation games arena. Deepak Chopra's Leela is a good example, while Wild Divine, with its whole body relaxation training programmes, launched in 2002. There are new styles of games, such as PlayStation 3's Flower, that are less about action and more about contemplation and observation."

A professor at The Georgia Institute of Technology in the US, Ian Bogost teaches undergraduate and graduate programmes in computational and digital media. He's written numerous books on videogames and is also the co-founder of Persuasive Games, which makes games about social and political issues. Details: www.bogost.com

to ramp up games. For instance, more US enterprises are partnering with companies like Keas, which offers employee wellness programmes – getting staff to eat better and exercise – through a live social media and virtual gaming mix.

FITNESS MOVEMENT

We're beginning to see some gaming movement in the fitness and wellness industry too. Mind-body guru Deepak Chopra has a meditation game, Leela, that uses 43 interactive exercises, focusing on the body's seven energy centres, to relieve stress. Chopra spent three years designing Leela, and has explained that it was the addictive nature of video games that attracted him, allowing his philosophies to reach and engage far more people. Meanwhile, US spa Canyon Ranch – which already offers 360 wellbeing iPad apps on fitness, meditation and healthy cooking – could easily transform its apps into games by adding layers like challenges, rewards and a social network.

"THE FITNESS INDUSTRY NEEDS TO CREATE ENGAGING GAMES THAT CONNECT THEIR CLIENTS TO CLUB PROGRAMMING"

Online wellness gaming is projected to generate around US\$2bn in revenues by the year 2015, according to digital media delivery specialists RealNetworks. The challenge for the fitness industry will be to create truly engaging games that creatively connect their clients to the health club/leisure centre's programming, experts and special community – either by using/customising third-party gaming platforms or by designing their own.

And while I have mostly focused on online wellness gaming, they don't

necessarily have to be online to be powerful: think of the many engaging ways gyms could integrate games and gaming mechanisms, rewards and social contests/challenges into their real-world programming. For example, the branded Biggest Loser weight-loss spa resorts in the US – based on the social, challenge-focused premise of the hugely popular TV show – launched in 2009, with a third destination now opening in New York state.

Whether these strategies are online or off, health and fitness clubs need to realise that they have a strong advantage and an opportunity in wellness gaming, because they forge powerful, real connections with – and between – guests and members. These connections are far more real than what's offered by most existing generic online wellness gaming communities.

 **susie ellis**
healthclub@leisuremedia.com



This feature first appeared in Spa Business issue 2 2012, p80

CONFIDENCE for EVERY-B♥DY

BODY CONFIDENCE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY, AND
THE FITNESS INDUSTRY NEEDS TO STEP UP TO THE MARK.
DEBBIE LAWRENCE REPORTS

According to recent research, one in four people in the UK are depressed about their body. Key contributory factors are the unrepresentative ideals of beauty portrayed by the media and the obsession with celebrity culture, all of which can lead to body anxiety among the majority of us who don't meet these unrealistic ideals. Research by mental health charity Mind revealed that nine out of 10 women aged over 30 battle with body confidence and low self-esteem, and over 50 per cent of women avoid exercising in public.

Yet many of us will try and pursue these ideals, negatively impacting the relationship we have with ourselves (self-alienation) and others. It can also lead to other unhealthy behaviours such as eating disorders and mental health issues, and is often the precursor to the search of quick-fix solutions.



Gok Wan and Central
YMCA CEO Rosi Prescott
at the campaign launch

INFO PANEL 1: BODY CONFIDENCE CAMPAIGN

The government's Campaign for Body Confidence was launched on 8 March 2010, co-founded by Jo Swinson MP and Lynne Featherstone MP, following the overwhelmingly positive response received by the Real Women campaign. Along with its co-founders, the campaign's steering group includes All Walks Beyond the Catwalk, Girl Guiding UK, Central YMCA, Mumsnet, Susie Orbach and Beat.

The campaign aims to deliver on three primary objectives:

1. More representative images presented through media and advertising
2. More critical evaluation of the images currently presented
3. Recognition of the emotional qualities – character and individuality as being equal expressions of beauty

Details: <http://lei.sra=1f2l>

Quick-fixes

Diets: Around one in four people in the UK are dieting at any one time, and 46 per cent of women feel pressured to lose weight. In reality, 95 per cent of diets fail and 35 per cent of dieters progress to pathological dieting. The diet industry's success is through the failure of its products: if diets worked, there would be no repeat customers.

Eating disorders: These are at an all-time high, with around 1.6 million people diagnosed in the UK. With 10 per cent of boys and girls saying they would take laxatives, 15 per cent of girls saying they would take diet pills to lose weight, and with eating disorders having the highest mortality rate of all mental health conditions, this is a serious concern.

Cosmetic surgery: Staggeringly, Central YMCA and Centre for Appearance research indicates that, if money weren't an issue, almost a quarter of men and a third of women would have cosmetic surgery. And procedures are on the rise: 43,069 operations were completed in 2011 (up 5.8 per cent from 2010). Women accounted for 90 per cent of these, but the demand for male plastic surgery increased by 5.6 per cent, with the male 'tummy tuck' up 15 per cent. Yet, quite aside from the risks attached to surgery, around two in three are unhappy with the results and the same number return for repeat operations.

Steroids: Steroids are linked to a range of serious health effects. Yet it's



Central YMCA is leading the way in the fitness industry, with a bold campaign that challenges gyms to appeal to all body types

“RESEARCH SHOWS NINE OUT OF 10 WOMEN OVER 30 BATTLE WITH BODY CONFIDENCE”

reported that around 250,000 people could be using steroids, and in Central YMCA research, one in 10 young men said they would take steroids if they were unhappy about their body. EHFA was also due to release its own research into drug use in the fitness sector as this magazine went to press.

Throwing down the gauntlet

The fashion, beauty, health and fitness industries are all being asked to be part of the solution. Steps are being taken in the right direction – *Vogue* has recently stated that it will not work with models who appear to have an eating disorder, for example. But there is more to be done.

David Stalker, CEO of the FIA, explains: “The fitness sector needs to work in partnership with government, the medical community, the media and advertising industries, and the fashion and beauty industries to tackle the problem. The FIA and its members take the issue of body image very seriously and are very conscious of the negative impact that low body confidence has on people.”

Minister for Equalities Lynne Featherstone adds: “The government has set up a nationwide campaign to boost body confidence [see info panel 1, p50]. As part of the campaign, we are working with the fitness industry to encourage health clubs to promote healthy bodies and realistic goal-setting.

“I want the industry to play its part by encouraging people to exercise to have fun and feel good, rather than solely because they want that perfect body. Unrealistic images of ‘perfection’ can set an impossible standard.”

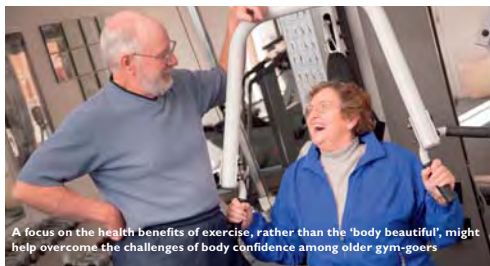
The Y leads the way

Many industry professionals are already on board with this socially responsible philosophy. Central YMCA is a proactive campaigner within its own facility,

promoting body confidence through its marketing. It’s also developing a qualification to be delivered nationally in schools, encouraging teachers and young people to explore body image.

Central YMCA is also pushing the agenda forward at a national level, involved in both the government’s Body Confidence campaign and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), for which it provides secretariat (see

info panel 2, below). As part of these efforts, in 2011 it commissioned research from COMRES to explore what MPs thought about body image. Findings included: 56 per cent of MPs would support government facilitating a voluntary code of conduct and policies for more responsible advertising; and 40 per cent thought secondary schools should have mandatory lessons on body image. ▶



A focus on the health benefits of exercise, rather than the ‘body beautiful’, might help overcome the challenges of body confidence among older gym-goers

INFO PANEL 2: APPG

APPGs – All Party Parliamentary Groups – are formed of MPs and peers of any political party who have a common interest. They are not part of the government, they set their own agenda, and they must contain members from at least the three biggest political parties in the House of Commons.

The APPG on Body Confidence has completed its consultation into the causes and consequences of body image anxiety in the UK, with its report scheduled to be published this month. David Stalker, CEO of the FIA, gave evidence to the APPG in February. He explains: “I spoke about the work the FIA is doing with the Department of Health’s Responsibility Deal and its Physical Activity Network (PAN), of which the FIA’s Fred Turok is co-chair. This reinforces the partnership work the FIA does with the medical community to help people understand the health benefits of exercise; there have been discussions about setting up a body confidence taskforce within PAN, which I would wholeheartedly support.”

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=o2N8z>



INFO PANEL 3: BODY CONFIDENCE AWARDS

A milestone for the APPG was the first ever Body Confidence awards, held at the House of Commons in April. The awards recognised efforts to promote body confidence and the acceptance of broader beauty ideals.

The Central YMCA's Sports, Health and Fitness Award was won by Virgin Active for its 'Oomph' marketing campaign, launched in 2010 for Virgin Active South Africa, which was subsequently brought to the UK. The campaign shows real-life members talking about how Virgin Active helped them get their 'oomph'.

Steve Dick, Virgin Active sales and marketing director, says: "Being inclusive will always be at the heart of our strategy. We pride ourselves on offering something for everyone. We'll be sharing this news with members because they made 'Oomph' a reality; spotlighting real people and their achievements drives our passion."

- It also conducted a survey with the Centre for Research Appearance to explore the attitudes of young people and adults around body image. It was found that young people believe that learning about the importance of sport and exercise (34.9 per cent) and having more support services in schools (34.5 per cent) would be the best way to promote positive body images.

Change the focus

Health clubs and exercise professionals have a key role to play in the body confidence agenda. They are, for example, in a position to provide the school-based support identified by YMCA research: schools could be invited to special sessions at the gym, where issues around body confidence could be explored.

The industry must also recognise that much of its current imagery offers an unrealistic model. Marketing materials must use more diverse, representative, non-airbrushed images (see info panel 3).

Susan Rossetto, group health and wellbeing manager at DC Leisure, says: "For decades, we've bombarded our populations with images of what is deemed by the media as being 'beautiful'. These often do not reflect real people or the diverse society we live in. As an industry, we need to support campaigns for increasing body confidence. One way is to feature images of 'real beauty', so all ages, ethnicities and differently-abled people can relate to them and engage in activities to improve their health."

Miranda Wassenaar of Curves Europe adds: "Curves' philosophy is to create a community where 'real women' can share their experiences, reach their fitness goals and realise their own value and beauty."

The sector also needs to understand and respond to a shift in the mindset of exercisers. Stalker explains: "A recent Eurobarometer survey found that, when people were asked about their motivations for exercise, 'improving physical appearance' was joint fifth,

▲ The Campaign for Body Confidence, launched on 8 March 2010, challenges unrealistic perceptions of body image

while 'improving health' was the main reason for 61 per cent of respondents."

Research has also shown that adherence to an exercise regime is improved if the motivation to exercise is not based solely on body image. Gym and trainer talk should be focused on wellbeing and acceptance of diversity, rather than a preoccupation with weight and inch loss. Staff may well need to be trained and supported to challenge their own body image ideals.

As Featherstone beautifully defined the issue: "We need to challenge the culture of conformity and widen the definition of beauty. And we need to help people recognise that their value goes beyond their physical appearance."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debbie Lawrence is a freelance technical writer, teacher and consultant. She is the author of 12 health and fitness books, published by Bloomsbury Publishing, and writes regularly for a number of awarding organisations and fitness industry journals. She is also a qualified counsellor, delivering group workshops to promote and support mental health and wellbeing. Website: www.debbielawrence.com Contact: info@debbielawrence.com

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SECONDARY SPEND

HOW CAN GYMS GET THEIR STAFF MOTIVATED AND GEARED UP TO DRIVE SECONDARY REVENUE? KATE CRACKNELL ASKS A PANEL OF SPORTS NUTRITION SUPPLIERS FOR THEIR BEST PRACTICE ADVICE

Michael Clark

Owner, Ultrabody & Dorian Yates Direct

Most gyms under-deliver when it comes to the revenue that can be driven from supplement sales. However, those gyms that do maximise this potentially significant revenue stream are almost always defined by three key sales strategies.

The first point is member education, staff training and knowledge. This doesn't have to be in-depth for all staff, but most member-facing staff – gym, sales, reception, group exercise – should have some simple and compelling information to impart, and ideally some personal experience of the products from which to draw.

Secondly, operators need to make it easy for members by creating a nutritional pack. Bundle products together as a 'solution' to facilitate the

decision-making process for the member. The sales teams can then sell at the time of joining, while personal trainers and gym staff can sell as part of a member's exercise plan. Don't expect the member to seek out products for themselves.

The most successful gyms also offer rewards for exceeding targets. Staff, in my view, shouldn't be automatically incentivised to drive supplement sales, as dietary advice should be part and parcel of any fitness professional's member interaction.



However, incentives to exceed target are always a healthy and important part of driving supplement sales to other members besides the very keen top 20 per cent.

In reality, supplements are often viewed with suspicion by many members – a perspective that's at odds with the primary member goal of weight/inch loss. Education and ease of access, along with sharing successes and results achieved by those using the products, are essential if we are to get supplements to the masses – and in turn gain considerable, and often much-needed, additional revenue.



▲ Sharing the success stories of those using the products will help drive sales

Matt McKie

Marketing manager, Maxinutrition

The sports nutrition industry is rapidly growing year-on-year, with

Datamonitor predicting that the European market alone will reach a total value of £2.25bn by 2013. This generates a great opportunity for fitness centres to maximise their secondary spend, with a wide variety of products available to complement their members' training goals.

In order to take advantage of this opportunity, staff must be appropriately motivated to push secondary spend products where possible. There are a



number of methods such as monthly sales targets, staff bonuses and competitions, but education is key to a more effective and powerful sales message.

Training your staff to understand the ingredients of the products you sell, as well as their benefits and their target audience, encourages them to become advocates of those products. Educating your staff in this way also develops their sales skills, ensuring more effective messaging in their communication with members. Indeed, it can even contribute to the level of staff-member interactions, as visitors become confident in using staff as a source of credible information.

Furthermore, as this knowledge is passed on to members, those members

will enjoy a greater understanding of the benefits of sports nutrition, helping them fulfil their training and fitness goals and resulting in a continued contribution to your secondary revenue streams.



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▲ Energieau: Giving fitness professionals the skillset for effective sales

James Lewis

General manager, Energieau Ltd

The majority of UK gyms are tasking the wrong staff to sell the wrong products. I wouldn't take advice from a hairdresser when servicing my car – nor should I expect members to take nutritional advice from a receptionist.

SOME OF OUR CLIENTS ARE GENERATING AN ADDITIONAL £200K A YEAR

To generate high levels of secondary spend, you need to source good value, quality products – and then you have to motivate the right people to sell them. The right people in our case must be fitness professionals – that is, gym staff or personal trainers. Most members appreciate and retain advice given to them by fitness professionals, and the key for operators is to harness this inherent trust.

The primary obstacle is that fitness professionals tend to have limited sales experience, or sales confidence, so educating and

incentivising them is paramount.

At Energieau, we've become recognised as a sustainable source of secondary spend by giving fitness professionals the knowledge and skills to become effective sales people. We run a general programme for all staff, which builds understanding, excitement and buy-in from the team. For the fitness professionals, we run a nutrition programme that explores the science behind electrolyte and vitamin balance and outlines the importance of hydration during exercise. Our sales programme deals with who, when and how to approach gym members.

Our trainers also provide a management programme, which implements a range of processes and commission structures.

Once the right product is given to the right staff and sold in the right way, the sky's the limit. Some of our operators have become so successful that 85 per cent of their members now pay an extra monthly flat rate for our product, generating an extra £200k a year.



Lawrence Mallinson

Managing director,
James White Drinks



Sports supplements are an easy sell – but only if you understand what they are about. The science can be intimidating and it's difficult for the uninitiated to know where to start. This presents clubs with an easy win, but a small amount of effort in staff training is needed. Products will not sell themselves – at least not to start with.

Club members listen to personal trainers when it comes to training regimes; they would also listen to personal trainers if they had a small range of supplements to recommend – provided it was clear exactly who the products were for and how they worked.

Keep it simple and focused on certain key issues: strength, stamina and recovery. Within that, it's important to recognise that these issues matter to different members in different ways. Protein supplements have a very

macho image, which could be intimidating for many. But stamina and recovery are issues that are important to most keen club members.

I believe, if one personal trainer per club were given the initiative to trial a few carefully selected supplements that he/she believed in, other personal trainers would take an

interest and the idea would quickly catch hold. How this is incentivised is up to the individual clubs, but it would undoubtedly work best if those who promote most effectively get some reward – though care must be taken to ensure that personal trainers aren't encouraged to hard-sell.

Too hard a sell of sports supplements might reflect poorly on a health club's overall reputation with its members. Informed selling, on the other hand, would enhance an operator's reputation.



▲ Beetroot has been shown to build stamina – a benefit with broad appeal

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THE NEXT GENERATION



WITH THEIR NATURAL ENERGY, GETTING CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SHOULD BE EASY – BUT THEY'RE A DISCERNING AUDIENCE AND THERE'S A SCIENCE TO GETTING IT RIGHT. KATH HUDSON TAKES A LOOK AT A SELECTION OF INITIATIVES THAT SEEM TO HAVE CRACKED THE FORMULA

It's no secret that kids need to be doing more exercise. The Department of Health recommends an hour's moderate exercise every day; the World Health Organization agrees with that duration, but thinks the intensity should be moderate to vigorous. But with school sport in decline and lifestyles generally less active, this is becoming harder to achieve.

The FIA has recently launched a set of guidelines for operators wanting to introduce exercise to the under-18s (see *HCM* Feb 12, p36), but there's already some great food for thought from across the sector. We review some existing initiatives which offer inspiration to those wanting to do more to cater for kids.

LES MILLS

Group fitness expert Les Mills is now turning its attention to children, with new programmes currently being trialled around the world; the official launch date is yet to be set.

"We know the power of group fitness, and we're applying our formula to an exercise solution for children, so they get active and exercise, but also want to do it," says CEO Phillip Mills. "Getting someone to love exercise is the first step to influencing their future, and that's the basis we've started from – they've got to love it to want to do it again and again."

The classes cater for different age groups: five- and six-year-olds; seven-year-olds; eight- to 12-year-olds; and 13-

to 15-year-olds. Broadly speaking, the younger classes are more dance-based, with storytelling techniques to engage the youngest children; as they get older, there's less dance and more conditioning and martial arts. Age-appropriate music is used at each stage.

"So far, feedback is showing the importance of a flexible approach, tailored to the fitness level of the children in the class. They must all feel successful at the end of it," says Mills. "A key learning is that children need to be motivated in a different way from adults. The fitness industry thinks of children generically, when really they need different things at different ages and stages."

LEISURE CONNECTION

Leisure Connection has introduced aquatic youth clubs to inspire eight- to 14-year-olds to keep coming to the pool. Water polo, snorkelling, fitness swimming, aqua disco and life-saving skills are offered. All these aquatic activities are backed up by a number of social programmes, to encourage interaction and build relationships among the group.

"We have invested in these clubs in response to a slight drop-off in structured swimming for this age group," says Tara Stroud, Leisure Connection's head of swimming. "The programmes are designed to be fun and energetic and help to ensure children and young people are feeling the benefits of physical activity – sometimes without even realising it."

FREEDOM LEISURE

Freedom Leisure's Junior Summer Fitness Challenge aims to motivate four- to 14-year-olds to increase their levels of physical activity during the summer school holidays, when all school and extra-curricular classes stop.

Each participating child receives a free fitness diary in which they record all their activities. For every 10 activities they complete, Freedom Leisure gives them a reward. The aim is to complete 30 physical activities – anything from cycling and walking the dog to leisure centre-based activities like swimming or tennis – and receive a certificate.

The scheme has been running for seven years at the Guildford Spectrum, with 71 schools signing up last year to promote it to their pupils. The initiative will now be rolled out to the rest of Freedom Leisure's 34 sites, with the leisure trust hoping to engage 5,000 children this summer.

The leisure centre isn't essential to the challenge, as the goal is to simply promote activity. However, stats indicate that it nevertheless plays a big role: 89 per cent of last year's participants used



Each child receives a free fitness diary

the centre during the summer holidays, and visits to the complex increased by 6,000 while the scheme was underway. Ninety-nine per cent of the kids said they would like to do it again.

GUGAFIT

DC Leisure has partnered with Gugafit, a new health and wellbeing project that offers fun and innovative exercise classes for primary school children. Activities include hula hooping, limbo, dancing and aerobics to party-style music, with moves choreographed to appeal to children aged five years and upward. Children also learn about the importance of a nutritional diet and an active lifestyle.

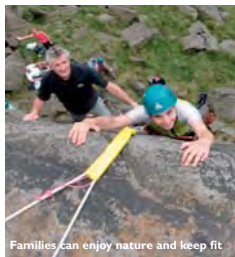
Gugafit – which stands for Get Up, Get Active – has already launched at nine of DC Leisure's sites and will be rolled out across the group during the next two years. To date, 60 DC Leisure staff have been inducted as trainers.

Susan Rossetto, group health and wellbeing manager at DC Leisure, says: "Two major factors in the rising problem of childhood obesity are that children are becoming less active and increasingly eating unbalanced diets.

"Gugafit hits the spot for tackling both of these issues, through the provision of fun and engaging workouts, plus the interactive website – www.gugafit.com – where activities extend to the whole family, encouraging a healthy lifestyle through quizzes as well as an online exercise and diet diary."



Gugafit encourages healthy lifestyles



Families can enjoy nature and keep fit

OLDHAM COMMUNITY LEISURE (OCL)

Encouraging family fitness has been a key goal for Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) over the past few months. Since April, children aged 11 years and older have been permitted to accompany parents to any of the studio classes, such as Zumba and tai chi.

Fitness manager Alex Knibbs says the exercise scheme has run smoothly to date: "OCL decided to soft launch the scheme to minimise concerns from members about the attendance of children or the availability of sessions.

I'm sure that small challenges will arise as the product develops, but as yet no such issues have arisen – customers' needs have been met."

OCL is also now running a programme of outdoor activities involving nature walks and rock climbing in the Peak District. Outdoor development officer for OCL Alan Keane says: "The nature walks are a great way for families to explore nature while participating in exercise together, as well as bonding with other families."

UFC GYM

UFC Gym brings together traditional fitness and youth mixed martial art classes for kids aged three and upwards, including Muay Thai, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and sports conditioning. The programmes were put together after researching what interests young people.

Adam Sedlack, senior vice president of UFC Gym, says it's important for a children's programme to be fun: "Children love to play. They will play any time they get the opportunity. Our method takes advantage of the natural instincts of children and allows them to work hard at playing – something they will want to do regardless of intention."

UFC Gym offers a pathway all the way up to adulthood, with children's programmes leading onto youth and school PE programmes. "UFC Gym's



UFC likes to build strong roots with kids

MMA tree starts with kids building strong roots and then moving into our youth programme as the core of the trunk. When they reach our adult programming, they can branch out to any of our disciplines," explains Sedlack.

PULSE

Pulse Soccer and Fitness Wednesday in the West Midlands has transformed its traditionally dead Sunday evening slot into a buzzing supervised gym class for 12- to 16-year-olds. Members can pre-book their children into the class, where they will learn about health, fitness and targeted exercise. Launched in November, the class swiftly became over-subscribed, and now the club is looking to put on more sessions.

"It's important to engage children at an early age in a fitness suite, as they will be our future members," says deputy manager Richard Smith. "This session allows children to become familiar with the fitness suite, equipment and exercise in a supervised, controlled environment accompanied by both a qualified fitness professional and a parent."

YOGA TIGERS

Northampton-based yoga teacher Samantha Nixon starts them young, with a yoga concept – Yoga Tigers – aimed at two- to five-year-olds.

Nixon uses adapted postures, quiet listening, affirmations, breathing exercises and relaxation snuggled up with parents. But it's far from serious: children are encouraged into postures

by pretending to be animals like butterflies and snappy crocodiles.

"I followed the Early Years Foundation Stage framework when putting the programme together, so it involves finding out about bodies, encouraging sharing and learning to take instruction," she says. "The emphasis is on fun and giving parents quality time with kids."



Yoga Tigers engages two- to five-year-olds



Poses are fun and use adapted postures

DRUMMOND EDUCATION

Drummond Education runs training courses in exercise and physical activity for children. All trainees receive the children's fitness toolbox: a series of lesson plans which are all 30-40 minutes long and which comprise a mixture of activities such as street dance, combat and games.

"When introducing a kids' programme, it's important to accommodate everyone: different levels of ability and maturation, as well as physiological and psychological differences," says Drummond Education director Gill Cummings-Bell. "Any club looking to introduce kids' fitness programmes needs to make sure they are accessible, with boundaries regarding timings – classes should be at certain times to give kids a routine. The activities also need to be varied, fun, exciting and achievement-based."

FIT FOR SPORT

"The instructor is the key to a successful kids' programme," says Fit for Sport's Craig Jones. "The class can't be led by someone who's too inhibited to crawl around the floor like a snake. Running children's activities is a specialism: kids will soon tell you if it's boring!"

To make use of dead studio time during the holidays, Fit for Sport runs Ofsted-registered full-day activity sessions for three- to 12-year-olds, taking care of the marketing, equipment and instructors. It hires the area from the leisure centre and takes care of everything, so the centre is driving revenue through the space and

offering a service, but with none of the risk or hassle. Activities offered include sports skills, team games, gymnastics, fitness games, learning about healthy lifestyles and water confidence sessions.



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A FEW BECOME MANY

How should operators use social media to move from a sales focus to a community-building approach, in order to drive success? Simon Bolton offers his advice

We have to assume that, in principle, health club operators would love to put a smile on the faces of their members and connect with more customers. Step forward social media: an opportunity to build relationships and communicate directly with customers. Done well, it can enhance your reputation, build committed communities, allow you

to respond to customer issues in real time and lead to peer-to-peer recommendations – the best form of recommendation we can get.

Yet social media represents a double-edged sword for operators. Done badly, it can damage your brand through inappropriate content, a lack of customer empathy, and/or not responding in the right way at the right time.

A recent KLM campaign – giving out personal gifts at airports – led to one million Twitter impressions



David Carrol and the United Airlines broken guitar escapade reflects how bad news can travel fast in the age of social media. Canadian musician Carrol, who said his guitar was broken while in the airline's custody, had no joy during months of negotiations with United. The airline's refusal to pay compensation for his C\$3,500 guitar resulted in him creating a music video about the experience that was posted onto YouTube. Millions of fellow travellers identified with this experience – resulting in very bad press and a damaged brand reputation for United.

Yet social media presents health club and leisure centre operators with a unique opportunity to move away from a sales approach and towards a community-built focus. Operators need to understand how to maximise the power of the crowd in the search for greater success. They also need to understand the vital importance of recognising and rewarding customers.

This article aims to encourage this form of new thinking, and explain why it will ultimately lead to greater success.

RECOGNISE & REWARD

Successful companies focus on understanding customer needs, motivations, aspirations and tensions. However, this alone is no longer enough. Today's customers are looking for instant gratification. They expect to be recognised and rewarded for their loyalty and commitment to using your services and products.



Companies must identify loyal customers who will spread the word to their families and friends



**“TODAY’S CUSTOMERS
ARE LOOKING
FOR INSTANT
GRATIFICATION. THEY
EXPECT TO BE
REWARDED FOR
THEIR LOYALTY”**

So how can we achieve this? Smartphones and tablets are making everyday activities instantly more interactive, and successful operators will be those that create interest and engagement with their customers.

Traditional rewards and money-off offers are no longer enough on their own. Being able to create gaming attributes for increased consumer participation and interaction are the new success drivers (see gamification feature, p46). These are the approaches that will start to differentiate the winners from the losers. The ability to recognise and reward customers in novel ways – providing them with access to unique services and support for special interest groups within your clubs – will be a growing trend.

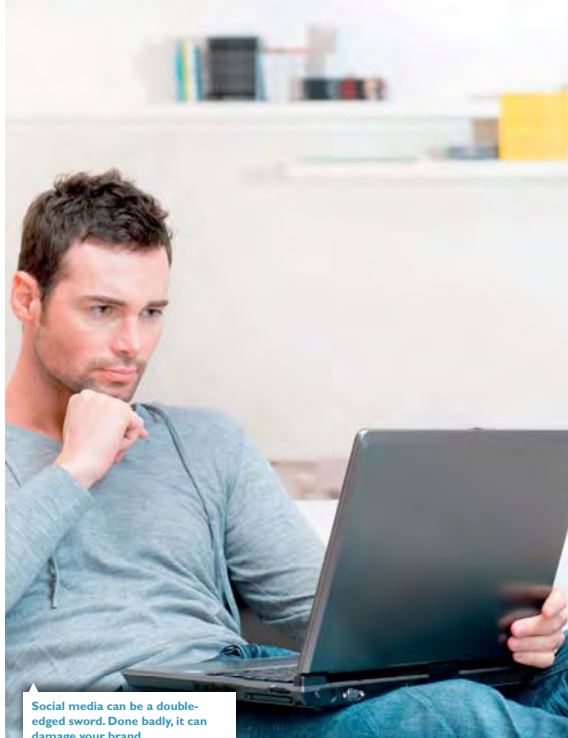
POWER OF THE CROWD

This change process relates to new emerging consumer journey models. Customers are increasingly interacting far more intensively with peer groups.

They now seek more feedback before forming purchase decisions and are interrogating propositions more aggressively before making choices.

This change creates opportunities as well as potential threats. Innovative companies are mobilising passionate interest groups, not only engaging them to take part in developing new products and services but also in co-creating them. Success in the future will be based on an organisation’s ability to act on the information received and communicate it publicly in both a meaningful and an engaging way.

But what is driving this change? Certainly mass-market communication is moving to a ‘less is more’ strategy. More emphasis is being placed on building quality connections with individuals who are loyal to the business and who can spread the word in a more meaningful way. The companies that succeed in effective community building will be the ones that become the trusted brands within the market.



Social media can be a double-edged sword. Done badly, it can damage your brand

THEORY INTO PRACTICE

The following case studies bring these ideas to life very well, highlighting how focusing on the simple capabilities of social media can help companies put a real smile on the faces of their customers – and ultimately convert a few into many:

KLM: The personal touch

KLM wanted to see how it could use social media to make passengers feel special – and what knock-on impact that might generate. Its focus was on turning boredom into happiness, putting a genuine smile on the faces of its customers. The company targeted a specific moment in time: one we are all familiar with, namely the dead time we experience when kicking around an airport waiting to board our flights.

So what did KLM do? It identified a selection of passengers who were booked onto flights on a given day and who were also registered to a Foursquare or Twitter account. The team profiled each of those ▶



Listening to what members are saying on social media will help your club connect to them

► passengers to find out their likes and interests through their social profiles, and then identified a simple gift that would appeal to each of them. Those passengers were then tracked down at the airport and presented with their individually selected gifts. This was an inexpensive way of demonstrating that KLM cared and had taken time to think of its customers in a real way (see <http://lei.sr?a=DlxZW>).

In terms of converting a few into many, a seven-week initiative developed 1,000,000 impressions on Twitter alone.

DIESEL: Harnessing 'likes'

Diesel, meanwhile, focused on two drivers in its social media initiative: getting to know what its customers actually liked; and getting its customers to tell their friends they liked Diesel.

We all like telling each other what we like: this is one of the fundamental features that has made Facebook the success it is today. Some bright spark at Diesel recognised this, and it resulted in a strategy that was really, really simple. This is the key with social media: keep it simple, but at the same time make it an interesting experience.

As Picasso said, "all great artists steal". So it was that Diesel adopted the 'like' click-button concept from Facebook, linking this to handheld technology – a quick response (QR) reader.

The 'I Like Diesel' social media campaign encouraged people to go in-store and identify which jeans they loved. Having a QR code next to each product allowed customers to scan the jeans they loved the most. This took them to a web page, where they could vote if they liked or disliked them, which then posted an 'I like' on their Facebook page.

In doing this, Diesel created a simple and effective way to understand what their customers really liked, as well as a mechanism to get customers to tell all their friends they liked Diesel.

A COMMUNITY APPROACH

I can't offer any silver bullets, but I can suggest four key activities that will help you build a community-based approach. There is an obvious interrelationship between these four activities, and it is this that creates success – but this connection can also cause problems, as you're only as strong as your weakest link.

Learn to listen: This is key to success. Many of your new and existing customers are actively engaged with social media. Listen to the things they are saying and interested in. It helps you to keep in-tune and target activities that are relevant to your brand. Social media monitoring helps identify where your customers are. Key tools are Google Alerts and Twilert. Identifying the key hashtags used by your target also helps. It's also useful for monitoring what your competitors are talking about.

Engage where they engage: Finding out where new and existing customers hang out really helps – but without listening skills, it's difficult to do this. It's important to consider the use of multiple platforms to continually engage with your audience; monitoring where they engage is critical to success. This is due to rapid change in platform trends, from niche to mass. The use of social media management dashboards such as HootSuite, Threadly and Mywebo are key off-the-shelf packages that can help.

Do the obvious: Email still provides you with a major community engagement opportunity and helps you to signpost existing customers to your social media activities. It can be used to share content, tips and exclusive information with your newsletter subscribers. But remember, if you say you're going to do something, you must actually do it! To help yourself, select a schedule you can stick to. If you can only do a newsletter once a month, that's fine – but make sure it's relevant, meaningful and interesting to your members. This means planning your content and your approach.

Merge the digital with the physical:

Both the KLM and Diesel examples bring this concept to life. Engaging with your local community through both online and physical events helps to quickly enhance the community-building process. The ability to put a real face to a service builds that emotional connection. This is crucial to success.

CONCLUSION

The companies that succeed will be those that are able to identify and focus on the specific capabilities of social media. Critical to success will be keeping it simple and relevant.

The new success drivers will be linked to the ability to creatively merge the digital with the physical to increase consumer participation and interaction.

'Less is more' strategies will become increasingly important. Extra emphasis will need to be placed on building quality connections with individuals who are loyal to the business and who can spread the word in a more meaningful way. To achieve this, companies will need to learn to listen, and to engage with customers where they engage.

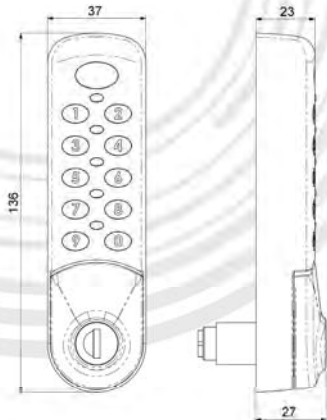
The companies who successfully build communities will be rewarded with the prize of becoming the trusted brands in the marketplace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Bolton is chair professor and director of the Centre for Competitive Creative Design at Cranfield University. He is currently a global thought leader for Procter & Gamble, advises BSKYB and has over 15 years' experience of working in the fitness industry, collaborating with brands such as Reebok, Fitness First and Escape Fitness. He has also owned his own manufacturing company in China. s.bolton@cranfield.ac.uk



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PAYING ITS WAY

DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTING REVENUE TO CLUB MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE COULD MAKE A COMPELLING ARGUMENT FOR INVESTMENT – AND ONE THAT SOFTWARE COMPANIES ARE, OF COURSE, KEEN TO HARNESS. ABIGAIL HARRIS EXPLORES THE MARKET

Contrary to the premise that software sales are slow at the moment, Legend's experience is that financial pressures are driving more people to invest in software and the return on investment (ROI) it can demonstrate. "We've installed over 400 new sites in the last four years and expect to install another 140 this year alone – a steady yearly increase as the recession has deepened," says Legend MD Sean Maguire.

Clarity director Kevin Anson agrees, and says the company is seeing healthy enquiry levels – a trend he believes is set to continue, as Clarity's public sector leisure clients increasingly use ROI measures and sophisticated performance reporting to demonstrate success and analyse their investments.

The MINDBODY website even features a calculator that operators can use to estimate the increase in revenue and decrease in expenses that its software could help them

achieve: the company reports that a sample group of existing clients experienced a 17 per cent year-on-year gross sales growth from 2010 to 2011.

Gladstone Health and Leisure is also seeing strong year-on-year growth. Its experience is that operators are now committing to long-term contracts in order to get the highest possible return on their investment. "In any climate, customers want to see direct ROI from a project," says Tom Withers, head of sales. "However, in this difficult economic time, a financially stable provider that can respond and develop according to market needs is crucial for success. Our Software for Life promise, for example, returns free software updates, providing real value that's demonstrated by the number of customers now committing to us long-term."

We take a look at a selection of case studies where software has led to a measurable return on investment.

DRIVING DIRECT DEBITS

Client: Life Leisure
Supplier: Legend Club Management Systems

Stockport-based leisure trust Life Leisure has grown by approximately 11,000 members over the past four years, boosting surpluses by 800 per cent in the process – but this meant a new software system was needed to support the rapidly growing business.

The previous system did not offer the functionality required, such as instant and flexible report production, direct debit tracking and utility consumption monitoring. It also required time-consuming weekly updates in order to continue operation, leading to disruption in day-to-day administration.

Legend Club Management Systems was brought in to provide CRM systems and BACS bureau services for Life



Leisure's 13 leisure centres, in order to improve direct debit management.

Malcolm McPhail, MD at Life Leisure, says: "The dramatic growth we have experienced made us realise that we needed a leisure management system that would support us more efficiently and with greater functionality. With a far larger membership, the small inconveniences we had been able to persevere with rapidly became intolerable – we needed a partner that

could help us grow even further, as well as future-proofing the business."

The partnership with Legend enables the 13 centres to readily record and analyse data on individual members' interactions, including details of which centre a member is attending, what classes or specific facilities are proving popular, overall frequency of use and payment schedules.

"We're now able to offer our centres an infrastructure that not only reduces ▶

► day-to-day administration, but that also enables our teams to directly influence the growth and management of our centres," continues McPhail. "This has already been demonstrated by the superb results we've seen through the implementation of Legend's BACS bureau service."

Since using the outsourced back office service, Life Leisure has seen a 19 per cent rise in direct debit income and a 50 per cent reduction in direct debit rejections, through a more effective administration process and rise in membership numbers.

"The results we have seen so far have been really strong indicators of where our business is going in the future. We're looking forward to expanding the partnership with Legend still further: together we can expect Life Leisure to grow almost beyond recognition," concludes McPhail.

There is no doubt
that closing all
public telephone
lines to our leisure
facilities was the
right decision

CALL CENTRE CALM

Client: Wirral Borough Council

Supplier: Gladstone Health
and Leisure

A central call centre at Wirral Borough Council has made major efficiencies across the local authority's seven leisure facilities.

The Call Centre Manager module, linked to Gladstone Health and Leisure's Connect online membership bookings system, went live in September 2010 in a bid to improve customer service at reception desks and telephone enquiry response times. All calls for leisure centres are now directed through the system, which allows the council to monitor call volumes, the speed with which the call is answered, as well as each call length.

Mike Barber, senior leisure manager for Wirral Borough Council, says: "We handled well over 30,000 enquiries and bookings through our central call system last year, with an average answer time of just 39 seconds. There is no doubt that closing all public telephone lines to our leisure facilities was the right decision.

"We now have more phone lines available, so telephone customers are not waiting for long periods for receptionists to be available, and walk-in visitors don't

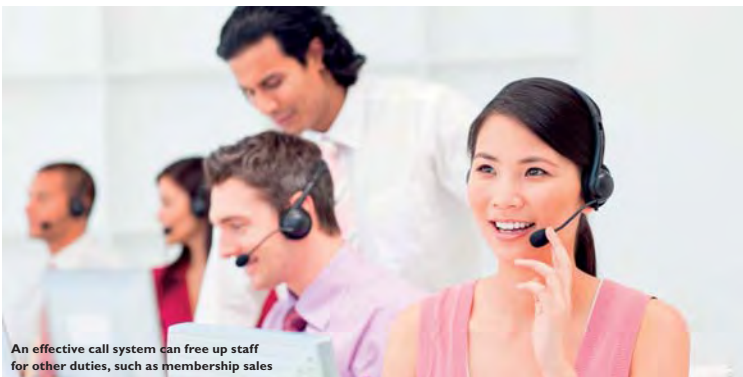
have to queue while receptionists deal with telephone calls. And by linking the call centre with Gladstone's Connect software, we are also able to make instant bookings for those customers who don't have internet access."

Wirral Council acted as a pilot for the system, which uses Gladstone's customer-facing Connect online booking software but allows staff to log in and access membership details. "From an audit point of view, the system works perfectly," Barber continues. "It can record calls for training purposes and log call details, including whether it was forwarded to a site for further assistance. It also ensures the operator logs on to the system, creating a traceable history for each booking.

"It's also had a significant impact on the consistency of information issued to the public, as telephone operators supply corporate knowledge across all sites, using the centre web pages to keep updated with all programmes, pricing and events."

In addition, from a ROI perspective, implementing the software system has had a big impact on cost-efficiency. All existing receptionist posts have been maintained, in order to deliver customer service on-site – "the resources are now there to assist with customers and selling memberships, rather than answering the telephone," explains Barber. However, he concludes:

"While there has been no reduction of permanent staff, we no longer require extra cover during the holidays or busy periods. That alone has contributed to a saving of more than 1,100 hours in seasonal receptionist wages."



An effective call system can free up staff for other duties, such as membership sales



Denbighshire Council says it saw a 4.2 per cent cost reduction and 9.6 per cent rise in income in the first nine months of installing and using the new software



BINNING THE PAPER

Client: Denbighshire Leisure

Supplier: Xn Leisure

Denbighshire Leisure introduced a brand new management software system – Dimension, from Xn Leisure – across its seven leisure centres in spring last year. The management components were rolled out by Xn Leisure throughout the year, with the final phase – online bookings – set to launch this summer, along with entry kiosks on-site.

Alastair McNab, business performance manager for leisure, libraries and community development at Denbighshire County Council, says: "We identified the need for a computer-based management information system to collect comprehensive data about our users, manage the membership schemes and provide an online internet booking service from the council website.

"We were probably the last to market, still working from a paper-based system, but we actually see this as a benefit. In recent years, software has become less

expensive and far more sophisticated, so we could choose a system very specifically to suit our needs."

In the first nine months of using the new software, the council saw a 9.6 per cent increase in income and a 4.2 per cent reduction in costs. The new streamlined system has cut red tape at the sites and reduced administrative time from 2.5 hours per site every week to just four hours a week centrally.

"The XN system allowed us to introduce new membership schemes and leisure cards, which have encouraged increased sales, more memberships and direct debit payments, increasing our income by £100,000," McNab continues. "While these improvements cannot all be attributed to the Dimension system, the fact that we can track and analyse customer use helps to identify the really profitable revenue streams and the areas that can lead to a cost reduction."

Denbighshire Leisure, which runs seven facilities (six are shared with schools), operates on a subsidy of only £420,000 – the lowest council subsidy across the 22 authorities in Wales. In spite of a reduction in the subsidy, income has been improved across the estate – costs lowered and revenues enhanced – thanks to a series of initiatives such as the new software installation. In fact, additional income has been sufficient to re-invest in the facilities, building new gyms at two of the council's sites in January 2012. ▶



software for *Life*

CLEAR ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

Client: Aspire Sports
& Cultural Trust
Supplier: Clarity

As a not-for-profit leisure trust, ROI is vitally important to Gloucester-based Aspire Sports & Cultural Trust, which re-invests any surplus generated into its community programmes.

Business development director Jacqui Douglas explains that there are several key business areas where the trust can see clear ROI from its leisure management software, ClarityLive.

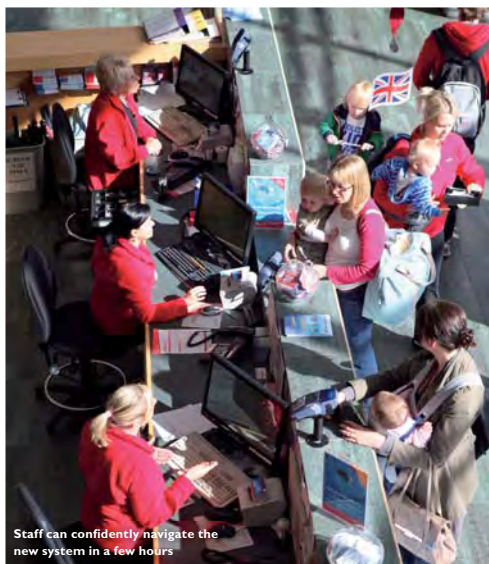
The trust, which provides public leisure facilities and services to over one million customers every year, has invested in a new toning suite in order to help meet its health, social and participation objectives.



The suite helps the trust meet its health and social objectives

Douglas says: "Our forecast ROI on the toning suite increases by 20 per cent over a five-year period. This has been made possible by the management reporting capabilities and subsequent insights offered by our ClarityLive booking software, which allows us to identify and maximise business opportunities and easily adjust booking slot parameters."

“Our frontline staff training requirements have reduced dramatically, as the software is so intuitive”



Staff can confidently navigate the new system in a few hours

She continues: "Our frontline staff training requirements have reduced dramatically because the software is so intuitive. Within a couple of hours, staff are able to confidently navigate ClarityLive and carry out speedy transactions, saving us 30 per cent on our staff training budget alone." These savings are then re-allocated to other services to maximise quality and value.

"I see customer service excellence as a key driver of ROI, and ClarityLive software supports this right across our business. The ease of use, rapid transaction speeds and three-dimensional view it gives us of our customers all mean fewer queues and happier customers. We know these all have a positive impact on retention levels and repeat visits, and the continuing increases in usage, overall participation and customer loyalty speak for themselves."

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A FINE BALANCE

Balance training is an exciting area at the moment, with an influx of specialist equipment from the US and new programming ideas.

Kath Hudson reports

In the last few years, there has been more investment in functional training areas – but to the uninitiated, the equipment can be baffling. Without instruction, how do you know how to translate a Swiss ball, or a BOSU, into meaningful exercise?

Functional training has traditionally been used at the two ends of the spectrum: by older people and prehab/rehab patients working with physios, or by elite sports people. But recently it's started to move towards the mainstream, with more innovation, experimentation and education to get clubs and members excited.

Balance training is a part of functional training: it's about making the core strong – something we all need to be able to carry out everyday activities. Indeed, in its new guidelines, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) states that cardio and resistance workouts should ideally be backed up with balance training. If you haven't already done so, now is the time to get on board with balance.

"As the industry – and those of us working in it – mature, we're all starting to realise that resistance training can't just be about strength, or building muscle, but that it needs to include other aspects like flexibility, mobility and balance, as we are losing these functions with our sedentary lifestyles," says Jon Johnston, managing director of Johnson Health Tech.

IMPROVING RESULTS

In old age, better balance can help prevent falls; in youth, it can improve physical performance. Indeed, by working out on an unstable surface, challenging the stabilising muscles as well as the compound muscles, balance training can enhance overall training results in the gym. "The unpredictability of balance training opens up many possibilities. As the body reacts to the movement, many more muscle groups are worked," explains Anthony Carey, CEO of Coretex.

And yet, according to Jonathan Lewis, head trainer of

CrossCore Europe, those who have always worked out in gyms have less of an understanding about balance and body awareness compared to those who have participated in movement-based activities like yoga, pilates, martial arts and dance. There is, he believes, a clear need for balance training programmes in gyms.

"The key thing with balance training is understanding how to move. It's about spatial awareness, body awareness, weight transference and co-ordination," says Lewis. "Our CrossCore 180 product [see p74] helps develop this. Since it involves rotational movement, people have to constantly stabilise and control the rotation. We suggest people start with simple movements first, such as squats and lunges. Once they have established a sense of balance, they can progress to more difficult positions."

Meanwhile for operators, as balance training generally requires explanation and therefore engagement with clients, it can be a relatively easy sell for personal trainers, helping drive this secondary revenue stream. Alternatively, it offers the opportunity for a group exercise class with a difference.

The Physical Company, for example, is currently working on a BOSU group exercise class. "BOSUs have been in most clubs for a while now, but the next move is taking them into the studio. We're currently working on a new group exercise programme," says John Halls, sales and marketing director at The Physical Company. "We're also looking at ways of product integration: using different products together, such as kettlebells or free-form boards with the BOSU, or two BOSUs together, all of which makes balancing more of a challenge and helps to improve proprioception."

INTRODUCING BALANCE

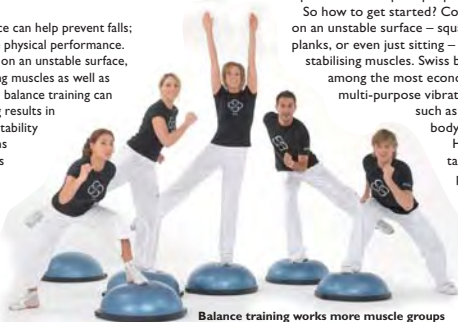
The opportunities offered by the equipment are so varied that balance training really is appropriate for everyone, from improving the balance of the infirm to sharpening the responses of elite sportspeople.

So how to get started? Conducting basic exercises on an unstable surface – squats, lunges, push-ups, planks, or even just sitting – will all work the stabilising muscles. Swiss balls and BOSUs are

among the most economical solutions, with multi-purpose vibration training platforms such as Dynamic Activity's

bodycore another option.

However, if you want to take it further, a number of products are now joining the likes of BalanceMaster in the area of balance-specific equipment.



Balance training works more muscle groups

Read on for
our balance
equipment
briefing

▶ BALANCE PRODUCTS

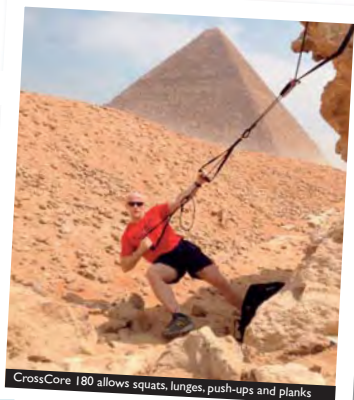
CROSSCORE 180

Based on gymnastic rings and a patent pending pulley system, the CrossCore 180 allows the range of motion to be adjusted for either a stabilised workout or free movement. Holding on to the straps, users can perform a whole host of exercises including squats, lunges, push-ups and planks. The user stands on the floor but, in some exercises, one or both legs can be hooked into the rings. This makes the user particularly unstable, with the body constantly working to balance itself during the exercises.

Only available in the UK since last year, the product was initially sold into yoga, pilates and personal training studios, but is now targeting commercial clubs. Kicks Gym in Chelsea, London, has just ordered eight units to run group exercise classes.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

crosscore



CrossCore 180 allows squats, lunges, push-ups and planks

"BALANCE TRAINING OFFERS A GREAT WAY TO ENGAGE WITH CLIENTS"

ARKE



The Arke range is colour-coded for different training functions

Technogym's Arke functional range activates the whole body in 360-degree movement, with a wide range of benefits including improved core functional movements, co-ordination, stability and balance.

The range has been designed to retrace the body's development journey, in order to increase awareness about posture and help individuals find their centre of gravity. The range is divided into four categories, each named after a natural element and colour-coded. The green equipment, Earth, is for stability and proprioception and includes items like balance domes, stability disks and balance pads on which to conduct standing exercises. The blue equipment, Water, is for agility and balance and includes water balls, which people lift and move with, challenging them to find their centre of gravity.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

technogym

CORETEX

"It's basically a skateboard in a bowl," says Coretex inventor Anthony Carey. "I came up with the idea when I was preparing for exercise with some squats, and felt like it would be good to have some movement to mobilise the hips."

Coretex is a 30-inch dish which moves along three balls, ensuring continued contact with the sources of motion. It can be used in a wide variety of ways: standing, kneeling, lying, feet on, hands on. If the handrail is attached, or if balance is very good, it can be used standing up. Advanced users can even work with a partner to push them off balance.

As the equipment translates (slides away), rotates and tilts at the same time, it causes the body to react and respond as it does in the real world. Carey explains: "Holding a plank on it for 10 to 15 seconds is the equivalent of doing a plank on the floor for one minute. The increased muscle



Coretex is a balance dish which moves along three balls

activation ensures an efficient workout." Since Coretex is always moving, the user has to work to stabilise during any movement performed on it, thereby improving balance.

Virgin Active in the UK has just acquired 10 units to use in the functional training areas.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

cortex

VICORE

Matrix (part of Johnson Health Tech) is now distributing Vicore's free weights benches in the UK and Italy, with a few trendsetting clubs currently trialling the product.

A weights bench with a rounded, inflatable cushioned top, similar to a BOSU, Vicore promotes the engagement of stabilising muscles during use. This makes for a more challenging workout in less time and with lower weights – the user works harder, as they are using more muscle groups to keep their balance while they are training.

"We think this will be a clever niche product for us, because it brings together the free weights area and the functional training area," says Matrix MD Jon Johnston. "It combines the instability of a Swiss ball with the safety and durability of a bench, which ensures the safety of the user." Indeed, the bench is apparently so robust that it can even cope with a truck being driven over it.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

vicore

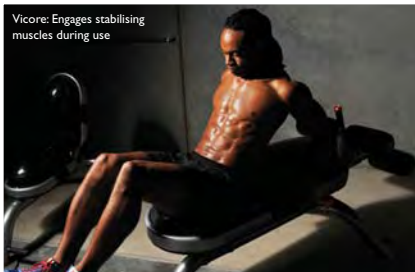
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Vicore: Engages stabilising muscles during use



PEDALO

German company pedalo offers a number of products that fit nicely into balance training, including the Spring Board: two circular discs connected by heavy-duty springs. This is an optimum training device for golfers, helping them to develop stabilising muscles that will be used in their swing. The company also offers rotating balance boards, see-saws and other products that challenge the user

to maintain their balance, as well as a software instrument to collect data of posture, balance and co-ordination, so users can chart their progress.

The company also works with naturalMOVE, which has developed programming – including balance programming for a wide range of user groups – around the products.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

pedalo

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pedalo and naturalMOVE have created balance programmes



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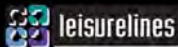
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Tactical move from TRX

The creators of the TRX® Suspension Trainer® have added to their portfolio with the TRX Force Kit: Tactical. The kit contains a 12-week progressive forces-inspired programme and the new TRX Tactical Suspension Trainer. It also comes complete with a TRX Extender Strap, which allows for a higher and more vertical anchor point.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

trx



Balanced Body's Allegro 2 Reformer

The Allegro® 2 Reformer from Balanced Body offers a streamlined, uncluttered, optimised functional training experience. Its EasySet Footbar adjusts vertically by lifting up the footbar and moving it to the next position – even with your feet. And the SoftTouch Rope System can make instant, one-touch, rope adjustments even while lying on the carriage.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

balanced body

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fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

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PUMP UP THE HEAT

Supplier Slim Jims
Client Miele

Slim Jims has been exercising the heart of the City of London since it was first established in 1970. It moved to its current home on the Broadgate estate, part of the Liverpool Street Station complex, in 1985.

During 2006, Slim Jims was extensively refurbished to provide one of the most spacious and stylish cardio and weights areas in the City. Slim Jims also provides two squash courts, a large aerobics studio, a separate group cycling studio, Power Plate studio and treatment rooms offering massage, physiotherapy and IPL permanent hair removal.

Slim Jims' laundry handles an enormous 280–300kg of laundry – towels and robes – every day. As part of the refurbishment, the club therefore installed an on-premise laundry facility: two washer-extractors and three heat pump dryers, not supplied by Miele.

However, the dryers did not live up to expectations, and Allsop and Francis – one of Miele's professional dealerships – was approached by Slim Jims to discuss a possible replacement. Andy Musk from Allsop and Francis explains: "The decision was taken to offer a trial period. We fitted the Miele PT8257 WP heat pump dryer in November 2011, which met Slim Jims' highly demanding laundry requirements. The final two machines were installed in February 2012."

Miele's PT 8257 WP heat pump has a drum volume of 250 and a load capacity of 10–13kg of laundry. It also offers short cycle times: 10kg of laundry is completely dried in only 44 minutes. Miele's new heat pump technology also pays off in terms of energy consumption – Miele predicts that Slim Jims' heat pump dryers will have paid for themselves after one year of operation, using 60 per cent less power.

Slim Jims manager Louise Slater says: "Our laundry room is in continual use, 24 hours a day, throughout the week.



Miele predicts the dryers will pay for themselves in a year

We have an extremely high turnover of loads, and a smooth-running laundry room is essential to fulfil the service we offer our members."

Slim Jims is located at basement level of a bank in the City, presenting a unique set of challenges for Allsop and Francis. Firstly, security is particularly tight – permits had to be obtained for every stage of the fitting, from access to the car park to using the lift. Security personnel accompanied the engineers at all times. Secondly, an additional pump was fitted to push the waste up to drain level – an addition Allsop and Francis felt was necessary for this particular laundry location.

Slater concludes: "We have been delighted with the Miele dryers and the service provided by Allsop has also been exceptional. We asked if it was possible to have plinths on casters made, so we can effortlessly move the machines for ease of cleaning, and this was done. We have been equally impressed with the fast drying times and reliability, meaning we can focus more of our time in the gym rather than the laundry room."

For more information: www.miele.co.uk/2012

The laundry processes 300kg of towels and robes for Slim Jim members daily



As a luxury club in the City, an onsite laundry is key for club operations



The YMCAfit facility has so far trained over 500 instructors

SETTING STANDARDS

Client YMCAfit
Supplier Merrithew Health & Fitness

Located within the Central YMCA Club in the heart of London, YMCAfit is the UK's first STOTT PILATES® Licensed Training Centre (LTC).

The state of the art studio, which opened its doors in 2011, delivers public classes and private sessions in the STOTT PILATES method, exclusively developed by Merrithew Health & Fitness™. Instructor training courses and workshops are also available and taught by certified STOTT PILATES instructor trainers.

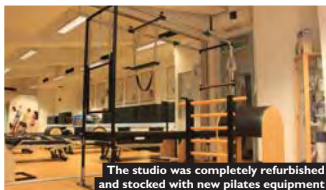
Prior to opening, the new YMCAfit studio was completely refurbished and stocked with brand new Merrithew Health & Fitness equipment: four V2 Max Plus Reformers, eight Professional Reformers, one V2 Max Plus Rehab Reformer, one Cadillac Trapeze Table, three Stability Chairs, one Ladder Barrel, two Spine Correctors, 13 Arc Barrels, one Rotational Diskboard, one Soft Footbar, eight Cardio-Tramp Rebounders, eight Jumpboards and a range of small equipment (flex-bands, toning balls etc).

YMCAfit has trained over 500 students to date and attracts well over 90 people a week for a variety of classes: the current group timetable offers 12 classes a week, both matwork and reformer, at beginner, essential, intermediate and advanced levels. All are taught by instructor trainers. The Physiotherapist Rehab Studio – a separate unit within the main studio – is also used on a weekly basis, to rehabilitate and train clients.

The studio also sells a wide variety of Merrithew Health & Fitness equipment, DVDs and resources for both industry professionals and pilates enthusiasts.

As the only UK-based STOTT PILATES LTC, the full range of STOTT PILATES Intensive & Advanced Programmes and Injuries & Special Populations education and content is delivered. Also offered are STOTT PILATES workshops and Speciality Tracks, delivered by instructor trainers.

"Instructor trainers possess the knowledge and practical experience to help a client achieve the fitness goals they set within a safe and structured environment," says Lindsay G Merrithew, president and CEO of Merrithew Health & Fitness. "Qualified and engaging instructors are vital to delivering exciting and informative classes, which further add to the high operational standards at YMCAfit."



The studio was completely refurbished and stocked with new pilates equipment

"YMCAfit has a strong reputation for delivering high quality training. It was a simple choice to work with Merrithew Health & Fitness as a partner which shares the same ethos," says Denise Page, director of YMCAfit. "Pilates instructors are required to recognise the unique needs of their clients and provide bespoke exercise programmes; this requires professionalism and advanced skills."

"We believe that Merrithew Health & Fitness has used its years of experience to develop training programmes to produce elite instructors. We look forward to continuing our close working relationship."

In the same way that proper instruction and the right equipment is required for an effective fitness programme, so too is industry support and recognition an important element of any training offering. Merrithew Health & Fitness is now an approved training provider with SkillsActive, providing REPs members with CPD points: 16 CPD points are available to those completing a STOTT PILATES Reformer course, for example.

"This latest acknowledgement has strengthened the credibility of the Merrithew Health & Fitness brand as it relates to content and education, combined with the use of proper equipment, which effectively help deliver successful courses, workshops and classes to the ever-growing pilates community," says Merrithew.

For more information: www.merrithew.com

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research round-up

Exercising in your early 20s may reduce the risk of osteoporosis later in life, according to a study based on 800 Swedish men

bone builder

The World Health Organization estimates that there are currently 200 million people suffering from osteoporosis worldwide. The disease, which occurs as part of the ageing process, is characterised by the loss of calcium and other minerals from the bones, making them susceptible to fractures and breaks. While often thought of as a woman's disease, osteoporosis can also develop in men, usually after the age of 65.

Previous research has shown that exercise before and during puberty is important for bone development. However, a new study from scientists at the University of Gothenburg's Sahlgrenska Academy has now indicated that exercise in the early 20s can also aid bone growth and counter the risk of fractures later in life.

the study

Based on 833 Swedish men, the five-year study was the largest and longest of its kind. At the start of the study, the participants – aged between 19 and 24 – had their bone mass measured in their hips, lumbar spine, arms and lower legs.

Over the course of the five years, the study used a standardised, self-administered questionnaire to record information about participants' patterns of physical activity – recording the type and frequency of activity. At the end of the study, participants returned to the lab to get their bones scanned again.

increasing bone mass

The results, published in the *Journal of Bone Density* in January, showed that at the start, 529 subjects were physically active and 304 were sedentary. At the end, 531 were active and 302 sedentary.



Load-bearing activities were found to be the best at building bone mass

Mattias Lorentzon and his colleagues at Sahlgrenska Academy observed an association between increased physical activity and favourable developments in areas such as total body bone mineral content, plus lumbar spine and total hip areal bone mineral density. Lorentzon adds: "The men who increased or maintained high levels of physical activity also developed larger and thicker bones in their lower arms and legs..."

"Osteoporosis actually seems to start by age 25, when bones start to lose tissue. This study sends an important message to young men: the more you move, the more bone you build."

For every hour of extra physical activity, men gained bone mass. In comparison, men who remained sedentary over the five years lost around 2.1 per cent of bone mass in the hip – the bone that is most likely to break in later life.

load-bearing activities

Perhaps even more interesting was the finding that load-bearing sports such as basketball and volleyball, followed by soccer and tennis, seemed best at pushing the body to form new bone tissue: those who took part in such sports for four hours a week on average increased the bone density in their hips by 1.3 per cent.

Activities that do not put an increased load on the bones, like swimming and cycling, did not seem associated with the building of bigger bones or more bone mass, in spite of other health benefits.

Study participants were all from Sweden and mostly white, so Lorentzon feels the findings are likely to be applicable to Caucasian men worldwide. Research on the impact of load-bearing exercise on bone density in ethnic groups and women was suggested as two areas that could be further explored.

*Nilsson M et al. Increased physical activity is associated with enhanced development of peak bone mass in men: a five-year longitudinal study. *JBRM*, January 2012

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