

health club



management

OCTOBER 2012

INTERVIEW

HANS PETER FRANKLIN

The founder and CEO of FITLane on the specific challenges of the Côte d'Azur

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a fitter WORLD

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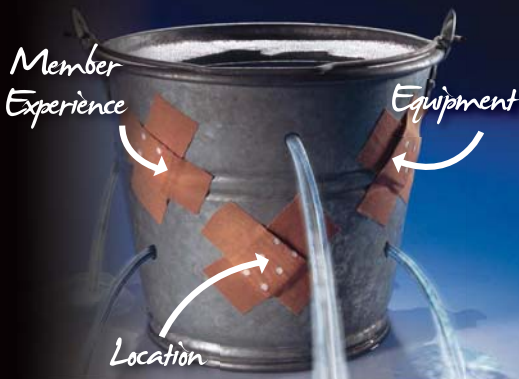
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Member satisfaction

The financial value of customer satisfaction has been magnified in the digital age. Gone are the days when – whether satisfied or dissatisfied – a customer would ultimately tell just a handful of friends. Today, internet-based review sites mean customer experiences are read by hundreds, even thousands, of people. And that has a very immediate impact on the bottom line of a business.

Recent research by two economists at Berkeley, US, found that – in online restaurant reviews – just a half-star improvement on Yelp's five-star rating made it between 30 and 49 per cent more likely that a restaurant would be fully booked for its evening tables.

Meanwhile in the fitness sector, payasUgym.com – which allows people to book passes to participating gyms on a 'pay as you go' basis – recently completed a study into online buying. Based on customer feedback and purchases through its website in the first seven months of 2012 – encompassing 450 clubs by the end of July, and well over 4,000 pieces of customer feedback – the study analysed the volume of purchases made for each gym. It then compared this to both the number of reviews the gym had

received, and its average feedback score based on a combination of five factors: customer service, equipment availability, range of facilities, hygiene and price (value for money).

Not surprisingly, gyms scoring an average customer rating of three out of five or more saw an uplift in sales of 25 per cent compared to gyms scoring less than three.

But number of ratings was also important. Gyms with fewer than four reviews saw no real variance in sales performance, but just four or five reviews immediately led to a sales uplift of 60 per cent in volume terms. More than five reviews meant another 150 per cent

Whatever the impact of good customer service on satisfaction, it seems equipment availability might be even more important, creating a very level playing field for the budget club model

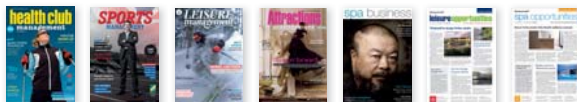
uplift on top of this. These scores were irrespective of review content, although as co-founder Neil Harmsworth explains: "The customer feedback we receive on gym visits is 94.6 per cent positive."

First of all, this makes a very clear case for gyms to proactively engage in the online buying process, securing a business-building volume of customer reviews. But just as importantly, it forces operators to work out where their value really lies – what elements of a gym's offering are key to good ratings?

Conventionally the sector's value has been seen to be held in its people, with the quantity of member-staff interactions the widely accepted key to driving retention. To that, based purely on my own experience, I'd add quality of interactions, with my recent experience at Aspria a great example (see p38). In spite of staff salaries being in line with market norms, Aspria's culture of immaculate service, where staff are seen as hosts as much as instructors, left me raving about it to all who would listen.

But now new data from GYMetry suggests that, in fact, it's equipment availability that really drives member satisfaction (see p62). This is backed up by a survey of 3,267 users rating gyms booked through payasUgym.com: 21 per cent were put off returning because the gym was too busy, with kit unavailable; rude or unfriendly staff only dissuaded 8 per cent of people. Whatever the positive impact of good customer service versus the negative impact of bad service, it seems kit availability might be even more important – all of which creates a very level playing field for the staff-light, equipment-max budget clubs.

Kate Cracknell, editor – katecracknell@leisuremedia.com / twitter: @HealthClubKate
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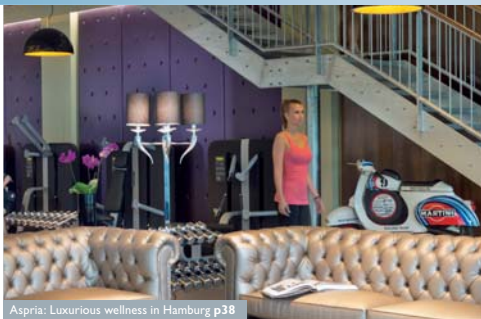
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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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buyers' guide:

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write to reply



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



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Trainers now need to move into the wider sphere of personal development

transforming clients' lives – a win-win situation

I was keen to reply to Scott Hopson's excellent piece on how we as a fitness industry can improve the way personal training is delivered and perceived (see *HCM* Sept 12, p54). Seeing the statistics in the cold light of day gives all of us food for thought. We are a great industry with so much potential – and we can do more.

I thought Scott put it perfectly when he talked about making a shift in mindset from personal training to world-class coaching. This requires us as fitness professionals to master our communication skills as much as anything else – something my colleague Gill Harvey-Bush and I have previously written about (see *HCM* Aug 08, p55).

There are several methodologies to help facilitate a transformation in our clients, such as NLP and motivational

interviewing. The most important thing is that these are used in an authentic manner to support real, positive and lasting change in our clients' lives. In this situation, everyone wins: health clubs, trainers and the people we work with.

In the fantastic book, *Change Anything*, the authors write: "The number one cause of illness and death today is not viral nor genetic. It's behavioural. Individuals who succeed at getting off the diet treadmill don't discover a magic pill or an all-powerful tool; instead, they create a robust plan for change that creates lifelong habits of health and wellness." That's where we come in. It's not just about training any more, but something far bigger and more enriching.

justin buckthorpe
performance director, prime health

behaviour change is key to weight-loss programmes

I was interested to read your recent feature about weight management (see *HCM* Sept 12, p41) – it's very inspiring to read how the industry is looking for solutions to deliver weight loss results.

At Vivafit, we agree that behaviour change is one of a three-part solution. Our approach has been to work with nutritionists who give each member an individualised eating plan. The process is simplified with an IT platform where each member fills out a comprehensive health questionnaire. This looks both at the eating profile of an individual and at the stress profile – the latter being part of the root of unsuccessful behaviours that can lead to undesired weight.

Each week, members receive a weekly behaviour change exercise tailored to their profile – change usually happens in small steps. The platform offers a number of support tools, instructors have received coaching, and members can contact the nutritionist via email at any time.

Recently we packaged this into a six-week weight loss challenge: 400 members took part, averaging 4kg lost. The first place winner lost 12kg, and in nine months has lost 32kg. We never had such amazing results with just exercise and motivation alone: nutrition and behaviour change are key.

constance ruiz
president & co-founder, vivafit



Carla Felix lost 12kg in six weeks and 32kg since joining Vivafit in late 2011

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YMCA refurbishes two Y+ Fitness gyms in London

YMCA London South West's Y+ Fitness gyms – Surbiton and Hawker Centre, Kingston – are being transformed as part of refurbishments at both locations.

The 285sq m (3,068sq ft) facility at YMCA Surbiton has already been unveiled following its facelift, with 32 stations of Precor CV equipment installed.

Meanwhile, the revamp of the 225sq m (2,422sq ft) facility at YMCA Hawker Centre is part of a wider development and will feature a new studio when complete.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=z7M9b>



Britons' healthy life expectancy is on the increase

ONS: UK residents living longer, healthier lives

People in the UK are living longer, healthier lives than ever before according to an Office for National Statistics (ONS) report.

The healthy life expectancy increased by more than two years between 2005 and 2010, with more than 75 per cent of a lifetime from birth spent in good health.

The figures do, however, differ regionally. While the proportion of life spent in very good or good general health is increasing in England and Wales it is, on the whole, falling in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=P6i3E>

Wyre Council plans leisure investment

Members of Wyre Council's cabinet were to discuss new proposals for a £7.4m investment in improvements to local leisure centres at a meeting scheduled for 12 September. It follows a comprehensive review of provision, and the local authority has now set out new plans for an overhaul of services and to redevelop its existing facilities. The plans will benefit three leisure centres, with Thornton Leisure Centre to receive a £3.4m upgrade that will deliver an extreme sports facility and improved fitness provision.

15 new clubs for Nuffield Health

Nuffield Health has announced the official launch of 15 new fitness and wellbeing centres across the UK, which have been unveiled at former Greens gyms acquired by Nuffield earlier this year.

The sites – bought from De Vere Group – will help Nuffield Health increase its presence in England and Scotland and the number of facilities it operates in metropolitan areas.

Among the locations of the centres are Stoke, Edinburgh, Birmingham and two in Glasgow. Each is designed to provide a "joined-up approach" to managing health and fitness.

Every member will be able to benefit from a comprehensive Health MOT to provide a clear overview of an their health status and to offer a bespoke plan to remain healthy.

The new openings take Nuffield Health – one of the UK's largest healthcare charities



The former Greens sites have been rebranded by Nuffield Health

– to 65 clubs open to the public and nearly 200,000 members.

Nuffield Health managing director, consumer wellbeing, Laura Kerby, says: "We are closer to achieving our strategic ambition of a national network of fitness and wellbeing facilities. We've introduced many fantastic benefits for our members at these centres, including the Nuffield Health MOT and Meet our Expert events."

High street personal training concept for DLL

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has announced the launch of its new high-street-based personal training concept, which will be trialled in three locations from the end of September.

The inaugural DL Studio site will open on Upper Richmond Road in Putney, London, while a second location is expected to follow in Winchester – subject to planning approval.

A third site is being planned in the centre of London, and DLL is looking to roll out the new format on a wider scale. The first three DL Studios represent a £500,000 investment.

It is anticipated that the new concept will provide one-to-one personal training sessions, exercise classes and group training run by DLL-qualified instructors. The non-membership based model is designed for "time-pressed exercise enthusiasts" and will offer a variety of options to purchase blocks of three or 10 sessions, or to pay monthly.

DLL chief executive Scott Lloyd says: "The creation of our new studio training concept provides a complementary alternative to the



The new concept will be trialled in three sites

traditional gym and brings an exciting new offer to the high street.

"We're excited by the potential for this concept, which fills a gap in the market for a convenient, local fitness solution, easily fitted around our customers' other day to day commitments and time pressures."

Tone completes Taunton indoor cycling studio

Tone Leisure has announced that it is to launch a new indoor cycling studio at its Wellsprings site in Taunton, Somerset.

The leisure trust has invested £40,000 in the new facility, including the acquisition of 24 new Keiser M3 spinning bikes.

Tone's commercial director Joel Chapman says: "We had noticed for some time that our studio class numbers had been growing in all our Taunton sites despite the general downturn in the economy."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=s5L3P>



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Health Club Awards: Results

The second annual Health Club Awards ceremony, in partnership with *Health Club Management* and sponsored by Centrum, took place at LIW last month.

Over 400 entries came from a mixture of independents, public leisure centres, hotel clubs and some of the industry's best-known brands.

Pure Gym was the most successful group on the night, taking 10 gold awards including Best Budget and Best Medium Chain.

Everyone Active claimed the Best National Chain Award, having taken silver last year, with David Lloyd Leisure taking silver and Energie Fitness for Women bronze.

Independents also shone on the night, taking 11 gongs in total including four regional golds, while Nuffield Health and Fusion Lifestyle both bagged a brace of regional golds.



The gold winners celebrate at last month's Health Club Awards ceremony

The two Grand Prix awards – Best Club in the UK with less than 2,000 members and Best Club in the UK with more than 2,000 members – were won by Energie Fitness for Women Eastbourne and Pure Gym Southampton.

A full list of winners can be found on the inside back cover of this issue. Entries for 2013 are now open: www.healthclubawards.co.uk

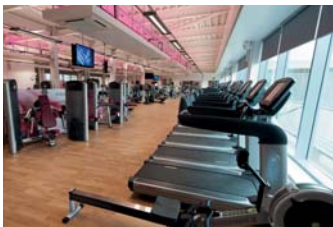
£11m Rochdale Leisure Centre fully open

The new £11m Rochdale Leisure Centre is now fully open following an 18-month construction period.

The opening marks the final stage of a wider £33.8m capital programme agreed by Rochdale Council in 2007, following the launch of Link4Life, the local cultural trust.

Facilities at the centre include an eight-lane, 25m swimming pool and a 17m learner pool with moveable floor. The main fitness area incorporates 120 stations, including equipment from Life Fitness, Trixter, Escape, Concept2 and Power Plate.

There is also a smaller 'activity' gym kitted out by Life Fitness, with pieces from its Signature Series, Circuit Series, Elevation Series CV, and Hammer Strength racks and



Opening marks the final stage of a £33.8m investment in local leisure

benches. A further studio will host 31 Star Trac Spinner bikes and Escape equipment.

A sauna and steamrooms, dance studios and a four-court sports hall also form part of the new KKA-designed centre, which was built by Willmott Dixon.

ISG/Trebor to design and construct five GLL sites

A joint venture between ISG and Trebor Developments has been appointed by GLL to design, develop and construct five leisure centres for London Borough of Waltham Forest.

The five projects – which will consist of refurbishments, extensions and new-build

leisure centres – will see leisure provision in Waltham Forest transformed over the next two and a half years, with a capital value in the order of £26m, funded by the local authority.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=G3n5l>

Cybox IFI equipment for Cambridge sports centre

Cambridge's Kelsey Kerridge Sports Centre is set to expand its fitness provision with the addition of new Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI)-accredited equipment from Cybox.

A total of 13 pieces of kit – including the VR3 line and Bravo functional trainer – will be provided, which will join existing Cybox equipment already at the centre.

Kelsey Kerridge Sports Centre has two gyms on offer to members – the Outlooks Gym with cardio and resistance equipment, and the Free Weights Gym.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=D9r9d>



The gym is open to staff, students and the public

motive8 completes revamp of Richmond College's gym

motive8, the consulting firm that specialises in gym and spa design, has completed an upgrade of fitness facilities at Richmond upon Thames College in Twickenham.

The gym is open to staff, students and members of the local community and work to renovate its offer was carried out with the aim of attracting new members.

motive8 has expanded the CV element with the addition of three Star Trac treadmills, two upright bikes and two further Octane Fitness cross-trainers. Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=V9Vof>

Yeovil school's new £800k leisure centre completed

Work has been completed on an £800,000 scheme to create a new dual-use leisure centre at Preston School in Yeovil.

Createability has worked with the school, Alliance Leisure, leisure trust 1610 and Somerset County Council to provide a facility for people of all abilities.

A 143sq m (1,539sq ft) gym with 30 stations, a 70sq m (753sq ft) multi-use fitness studio, and a reception area form part of the centre, while the existing sports hall at the school was refurbished.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=w1n8j>

1610 invests £150,000 in Taunton sports centre

Leisure trust 1610 has started a £150,000 refurbishment at Castle Sports Centre in Taunton, Somerset, which will provide new fitness facilities for members.

A new gym with 29 cardio machines from London 2012 supplier Technogym is to be created as part of the project. Free weights will also be provided.

Castle Sports Centre will house a temporary fitness facility for gym members, which they will be able to use until work on the refurbishment – and the new fitness suite – is completed.



C-SALT launched in July as a charitable trust

C-SALT trust to manage Wokingham facilities

Wokingham Borough Council-owned leisure facilities are now operated by a new trust linked to Leisure Connection.

C-SALT, launched in July – will manage Loddon Valley, Carnival Pool and St Crispins, with each of the venues retaining the Harpers brand and current facilities.

The charitable trust will re-invest any of the profits generated by the centres into improving facilities, while also being able to benefit from VAT exemption, business rate relief and other funding opportunities.

Three new leisure centres for Everyone Active

Everyone Active has opened two new leisure venues in Daventry and Ely, while also renewing its contract to operate Waterfield Leisure Centre in Melton Mowbray.

All three centres will be operated in partnership with their respective local authorities and recently received a combined total of £3m-worth of improvements.

Daventry Leisure Centre, operated on behalf of Daventry District Council, has undergone a £500,000 modernisation programme. Read more: <http://lei.sr7a=48DoV>

Study: obese people can be 'fit'

New research has claimed that individuals can be obese and "metabolically" healthy, with no greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease or cancer than non-obese people.

The study – the findings of which were published in the *European Heart Journal* – was led by Dr Francisco Ortega, who is affiliated to Spain's University of Granada.

Dr Ortega is also affiliated to Sweden's Karolinska Institutet, but undertook the project at the University of South Carolina, US, under Professor Steven Blair.

As part of the research, 43,265 people recruited to the Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study between 1979 and 2003 completed a questionnaire and a physical examination.

Participants were tracked until they died, or until the end of 2003, with nearly half (46



The research claims obese people can be "metabolically" fit and healthy

per cent) of obese individuals found to be metabolically healthy by the research team.

Obese-yet-healthy individuals had a 38 per cent lower risk of death than unhealthy peers, while there were no "significant differences" compared with normal weight participants.

Read more: <http://lei.sr7a=z805L>

Fit4less opens 'smallest ever' health club

Budget operator Fit4less by énergie has opened its smallest ever club in Maidstone, Kent. The 279sq m (3,000sq ft) club is the chain's 23rd in the UK.

Facilities at the new club include equipment supplied by TRX, Precor cardio stations, resistance machines, free weights, changing facilities and showers.

The new Maidstone club is the third Fit4less site headed by entrepreneur and ex-Fitness First manager Tom Burke since he became a franchisee in 2010.

The club reached 500 pre-opening memberships, which Burke believes is due to the brand's strict and aggressive marketing guidelines.

David Beattie, Fit4less brand and marketing director, adds: "This pint-sized gym



The new club in Maidstone measures just 278sq m (3,000sq ft)

demonstrates the versatility of the énergie Group's low-cost brand.

"Our gyms are adaptable to the space, and the 'small box' concept is becoming increasingly popular for franchise investors, as well as the end user looking for a convenience and 'on the doorstep' venue to work out."

£1m boost for Windsor and Maidenhead initiatives

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) has unveiled proposals for a post-Olympic funding boost worth £1m towards local fitness and sports projects.

Members of the council's cabinet discussed the planned cash injection on 23 August,

with the majority – £945,000 – to come from Section 106 developers' contributions.

It takes investment in leisure across the borough to £2.4m and will include expanding the BodyZone gym at Charters Leisure Centre. Read more: <http://lei.sr7a=c7F5H>

FitHub launches first club in Reigate

The first FitHub-branded fitness facility has opened above Marks & Spencer in central Reigate, Surrey, headed up by local businessman Robin Kirkland.

The new affordable fitness concept offers 929sq m (10,000sq ft) of space and houses 150 pieces of CV and strength equipment, as well as free weights.

FitHub memberships start at £27 a month with no contract, while personal trainers are available at an additional cost. Other services include studio classes and virtual training. Studio classes include everything from total body workouts, group cycling and abs to boxing, Zumba and pilates.

It also offers an interactive fitness wall for fun training on your own or with friends. The Sport Flex training system – which uses a variety of props – has been designed to create a 'fun and stimulating' workout for



FitHub offers 150 pieces of cardiovascular and strength equipment

individuals and groups and provides a full body workout.

Elsewhere, there is a relaxation area, and there will also be access to a number of treatment rooms, available at preferential rates for relaxation or rehabilitation sessions.

A FitHub spokesperson says: "Whether you want to run, cycle, step, cross-train or row, we've got the kit to help you achieve your aims."

Ray Hatton, dad of Ricky, opens club

Ray Hatton, father of former world champion boxer Ricky Hatton, has launched the first of what will ultimately become a chain of gyms. Located at the Merseyway Shopping Centre, Stockport, Metro Fitness has been launched as a premium-offer budget gym.

Split over two levels, the club offers a large selection of equipment, supplied solely by Cybex, which was also appointed to provide all the equipment at Ricky Hatton's Health club when it opened three years ago.

The Metro Gym offers specific workout zones including a women-only area, virtual group cycling, suspension training, a large freeweight space, functional training area and Power Plate facilities. Monthly memberships have been priced to start at £19.99.

Ray Hatton says: "Our aim is to marry premium service and facilities with affordable, flexible pricing. People are tired of paying too much for health clubs which in some cases treat them purely as a number."

The new Metro Fitness club will offer a full programme of weekly group exercise



Ray Hatton (far right) with Metro staff and son Matthew (black shirt)

classes that are all available to members at no additional cost.

George Stylianou, director at Metro Fitness, says: "This gym will attract a whole new market, namely those who may have previously considered joining a gym but who have been put off by the inflated prices, hidden extra costs and long-term commitments."

"We are also attracting gym members who have become disillusioned with the lack of customer service, cleanliness and general upkeep of both equipment and facilities."

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Coral Hanson
Health and Fitness Manager
Blyth Valley Arts and Leisure

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TRX to launch training and education arm in the UK



A TRX Suspension session in progress

Randy Hetrick, creator of the TRX Suspension Trainer, made an appearance at Leisure Industry Week (LIW) in Birmingham last month in order to launch a new training service.

To unveil TRX Training and Education, Hetrick took to the stage and delivered a keynote session – entitled *The Next Evolution in Small Group Training* – at the LIW Education Village on 18 September.

The new service has been created to deal with the demand for TRX training. Figures show that during 2012, TRX's UK-based course instructors will teach more than 1,000 trainers in suspension training.

Wright's referral training to be accredited by CYQ

The Wright Foundation has announced that CYQ will now accredit its exercise referral training, as well as both its Level 2 Certificate in Fitness Instructing and Level 3 Certificate in Personal Training programmes.

There has been a rapid growth in the skill base and expertise of exercise and fitness professionals in the area of exercise referral, and The Wright Foundation is acknowledged as a leading authority in this field. CYQ head Jenny Patrickson says: "There is a great deal of synergy between the work of both organisations to improve the health and wellbeing of the population."

STA creates new partnership with Swimtime

The Swimming Teachers Association (STA) has formed a new partnership with Swimtime, provider of swimming lessons for children.

The agreement will mean that youngsters who learn to swim with Swimtime will benefit from STA's International Learn to Swim Programme (ILSP).

Swimtime delivers 12,000 lessons every week through a nationwide network of franchisees across the UK.

Investor in People for Gym Group

The Gym Group has been officially recognised as an Investors in People organisation – a Kitemark associated with 'exceptional commitment' to staff development.

In order to achieve the accolade, the budget gym chain had to demonstrate the implementation, management and practice of processes and procedures that fully support staff training needs and career development.

An Investors in People assessor interviewed staff members from all tiers of the organisation to ensure all written claims by the company's senior management team were genuine.

Following the assessment process, The Gym Group has become the only group operator in the fitness sector to currently be accredited by Investors in People, being especially commended for high motivation and energy levels displayed by the staff team.

John Treharne, founder and CEO of The Gym Group, says: "Since our launch in 2008, the company has experienced incredible growth at a time when most of the other operators in the sector are shrinking, consolidating or standing still."

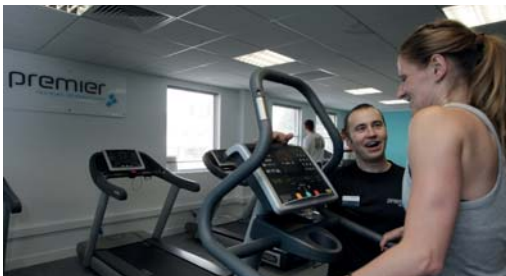


John Treharne, founder and CEO of The Gym Group

"In 2012, we will open six more clubs and a further 11 are planned for 2013. Expansion brings opportunity for our employees and we have been proactive in making sure a clear development path is available for all our staff. We are very pleased that this commitment has been recognised."

The Gym Group currently has 30 sites in its estate, six of which are in pre-opening stage.

Premier Training to launch new qualification



The full-time course will incorporate the Certificate in Gym Instruction and Certificate in Advanced PT

Premier Training International (PTI) has revealed it is to launch the new Diploma in Fitness Instruction and Personal Training at its Norwich training venue, Easton College.

The first course is scheduled to commence on 5 November as part of the provider's plans to increase outreach and to support aspiring professionals throughout East Anglia.

It is a full-time course that will incorporate the Certificate in Gym Instruction and Certificate in Advanced Personal Training, and has been designed to help graduates instruct "safe exercise".

The diploma is fully recognised by the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) and is an accredited qualification through awarding organisation Active IQ.

PTI sales and marketing director Victoria Branch says: "We hope that our new diploma will offer the community even better options in terms of becoming a fitness professional. We already have a number of other new courses and venues planned around the country, so this is a really exciting time for Premier."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=W4b6s>

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in brief...

SATS launches SATS You

Acknowledging that many members struggle with motivation, SATS has launched SATS You™ – a comprehensive, eight-week training and motivation programme which is offered free to all new members. Existing members can also purchase the package for €100 if they want to give their training more momentum.

The programme includes three PT sessions, with personalised workouts designed for the member as well as recommendations on other training and group exercise they might do outside of these sessions. Support and motivation, as well as the option to book classes, is also offered online.

Raising fitness in the UAE

The Dubai Fitness Competition, an initiative of His Highness Sheikh Majid Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, took place in August to identify the fittest man and woman in the UAE.

Run in collaboration with Fitness First Middle East, and in line with His Highness' vision to raise health and fitness levels in the UAE, the competition encouraged residents to maintain a healthy lifestyle, particularly during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The event aimed to highlight the importance of adopting fitness activities as an ideal way to combat changes that the human metabolism undergoes while fasting.

SATS deal for Precor

SATS has signed a deal with Precor to equip 10 new clubs opening in Sweden and Norway. The contract will see the SATS group installing around 500 pieces of CV kit from Precor's Experience Line.

Retention deal for Sportlife

Retention Management has launched its retention programme into 60 of Sportlife's 100+ clubs in Sweden. "This consolidates strong growth into European markets this year. It's great to be working with forward-thinking, customer-focused operators such as Sportlife," says Jon Nasta, director for Retention Management EU.

Pure Fitness unveils fifth site

Pure Group is opening its fifth location in Hong Kong this autumn. At 3,345sq m, and spread over three storeys, the new club is the largest Pure Fitness in Hong Kong to date, located in one of the city's liveliest leisure and business districts.



PurMotion will be available at the club

The gym is kitted out with equipment from Life Fitness, Technogym, Concept2, Woodway, Jacobs Ladder, Marpo, TotalGym and Keiser. There's a dedicated weightlifting platform equipped by Eleiko and Powerlift, and the club will also be the first in Hong Kong to offer the PurMotion functional training frame.

Other facilities include the group's largest dedicated boxing and kick boxing area to date, as well as specialist athletic turf for functional training.

Over 80 group exercise classes will be available every week, including TRX, ViPR, Les Mills classes and Keiser group cycling, as well as formats including high-intensity interval training.

Complimentary Wi-Fi access and a pre/post-workout chill-out lounge with Juice Bar are also on offer.

Fitness First opens Abu Dhabi Mall club

Fitness First Middle East has opened its third club in Abu Dhabi and 24th in the United Arab Emirates at a Platinum club located in Abu Dhabi Mall.

The 2,350sq m club comprises a ladies-only gym on one side, with a mixed gym on the other. The fitness suite is equipped by Life Fitness – including Hammer Strength in a dedicated free weights area – as well as AMTs from Precor. There's also a stretch zone and a freestyle area featuring TRX suspension training, ViPR, kettlebells, Power Plates, Swiss balls and a PurMotion training frame.

The group exercise studios offer a range of classes including Les Mills formats and Zumba, while lockers offer keyless access.



The new Abu Dhabi club has a ladies-only facility as well as a mixed gym

Goodlife acquires Australian Fitness First clubs

In Australia, Goodlife Health Clubs has confirmed its intention to acquire Fitness First Essendon and five Fitness First gyms in South Australia (SA) – Adelaide City, Marion, Holden Hill, Payneham and Hindmarsh.

In June, it was announced that Fitness First was offloading nearly a quarter (24) of its 97-strong Australian portfolio as part of the group's restructuring process. 333 Capital was appointed to help secure new owners. Fitness First Essendon and Fitness First SA are

expected to come under Goodlife's ownership by the end of October, with all clubs continuing to operate as normal as the deal is finalised.

Goodlife CEO Greg Oliver says: "Our aim is to continue to provide outstanding service to all members and transition to Goodlife with little disruption to current programmes and operations."

Goodlife is owned by Ardent Leisure, the Australia-based owner and operator of leisure facilities including Dreamworld and WhiteWater World theme parks.



Hard Candy pledges to bring a whole new fitness experience to the Australian market

Fourth club for Hard Candy Fitness

Hard Candy Fitness – founded by Madonna in partnership with New Evolution Ventures (NeV) – opened its fourth club last month.

Located in the heart of Sydney, Australia, the 2,800sq m location spans four floors. Selena Short, CEO of Hard Candy Fitness Sydney, says the new club “brings to Australia a whole new gym experience, offering a beautifully designed club with a huge range of innovative and entertaining workouts unlike any other gym”.

The Hard Candy Fitness brand centres on unique group fitness programming, and this is reflected at the Sydney club. The space has seven group fitness

studios including Dance, Pilates, Hot Yoga, Barre and Cycling. Classes on offer include the brand’s proprietary Addicted to Sweat classes, which are inspired by Madonna’s own workout routine. Members can choose from over 30 different styles of workouts and more than 150 classes every week.

The club also includes a rooftop outdoor training space with a climbing cage and space for Warrior and Bootcamp training methods. Functional training highlights include Olympic training platforms, a boxing ring, gymnastic equipment and TRX trainers.

There are also locker rooms with saunas, a rehab space, and a members’ lounge.

New ‘trucker’ model for Snap Fitness

Snap Fitness opened the first of its Snap Fitness Rolling Strong clubs in June.

The new model is specifically targeted at truck drivers, with the first site launched in Dallas, Texas, US.

The inaugural club – located in the parking lot of a Pilot Flying J truck stop – was developed in partnership with Rolling Strong, a company that provides wellness solutions for professional truck drivers across the United States.

The Dallas club is the first of five sites planned to open in Pilot Flying J travel hubs by the end of the year.

As with the core Snap Fitness offering, Snap Fitness Rolling Strong clubs will be open 24/7, and members will have access to all 1,300 Snap Fitness clubs around the world. Drivers will also have access to specially designed nutrition and workout programmes designed to boost driver wellness, as well as a wellness handbook.

“We’re proud to be helping drivers get results and live healthier, happier lives,” says Peter Taunton, Snap Fitness CEO.

Snap Fitness originally announced its intention to launch Snap Fitness Rolling Strong in October 2011.

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HealthCity launches Crosscity programme

HealthCity International last month launched a new programme, Crosscity, across all of its French clubs.

The small group training concept picks up on the popularity of CrossFit, incorporating real-life functional moves that use body weight and/or small pieces of kit such as kettlebells and medicine balls. However, where CrossFit can be seen to be catering more for elite competitors, HealthCity has specifically designed Crosscity to be accessible to all members – whatever their age or gender.

The full-body workout changes every week and lasts for 50 minutes: 15-minute warm-up, 25-minute workout, 10-minute stretch. “You always work in a small group, which is great for building a sense of community among the members,” says a spokesperson for HealthCity France. “We’ve also introduced an element of friendly competition, with performances written up on a board to encourage people to push themselves to improve.”

Holmes Place takes on Marriott Warsaw



Club becomes Holmes Place's fourth in Warsaw

Holmes Place Health Clubs has been awarded the contract to operate the health club in the Marriott Warsaw after the insolvency of World Class Poland.

The club is a full-service facility serving over 500 Marriott rooms, as well as in excess of 1,000 members. It becomes the fourth Holmes Place club in Warsaw.

Neil Burton, chief operating officer of Holmes Place Central Europe, says: “Working with the premium end hoteliers – where hotel management requires first-class facilities and service that marry with the company’s in-house brand rules – is becoming a speciality for us.”



PHOTOGRAPHER: MIKAS BERTSON

Facilities at SATS Danderyd include a large gym, as well as a Hot Mojo (Hot Yoga) studio

New clubs and upgrades for SATS

SATS, the leading full-service fitness chain in the Nordics with 280,000 members and more than 110 clubs, has further expanded its estate with two new club openings in August, as well as upgrades to existing sites.

The two new facilities are both located in Sweden – SATS Västerås and SATS Danderyd – and opened on 18 August and 25 August respectively.

SATS Västerås is located in a shopping mall and measures 1,913sq m over three floors. It offers a large gym with separate CV area, three group exercise studios – including one group cycling – and MiniSats (childcare) among its facilities. SATS Danderyd, in northern

Stockholm, measures 1,600sq m over two floors. Facilities include a large gym with separate CV zone, two studios – one group cycling – a personal training area, Hot Mojo (Hot Yoga) and MiniSats.

Meanwhile, there are upgrades for SATS Regeringsgatan (Stockholm) and SATS Sjølyst (Oslo). In response to member feedback, the upgrade of the Stockholm club includes a dedicated 300sq m CrossFit area for PT, group exercise classes and individual training. Meanwhile SATS Sjølyst, the operator’s largest club in central Oslo, becomes the first club in Norway to offer Hot Mojo (Hot Yoga). A boxing ring and sprint track are also being installed.

Energy Fitness opens in Cancun, Mexico

Yankees star Alex Rodríguez opened his fourth gym last month – in Cancun, Mexico – with more than 800 people already signed up as members prior to opening.

The new 3,300sq m club offers views over the Caribbean Sea and includes three spacious group exercise studios.

The first – Enerize-E-Dance – is dedicated to dance classes, fitness and Energy-exclusive class concepts, including a sports conditioning class in which members follow A-Rod’s own training routine to improve physical strength, sports performance and body conditioning.

The second is the Ener-Cycle room, which offers cycling classes. And the final studio – the Ener-Relaxation studio – is designed for meditation in movement, including yoga and pilates to improve energy levels, balance and concentration.

The studios are complemented by a large fitness suite with over 150 pieces of CV, resistance and free weight equipment, plus a pilates studio, functional training and modern batting cage.

There’s also a 25-metre swimming pool, steam/sauna/spa pool, dressing rooms and an Energy Bar.



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King won gold in the London 2012 team pursuit

Olympic champion named Matrix brand ambassador

Johnson Health Tech UK's commercial division – Matrix Fitness – has announced that Olympic cycling champion Dani King will become a brand ambassador for Matrix and its associated brands.

Matrix has already created a group of elite and up-and-coming athletes who reflect the ideals of 'commitment' and 'striving for excellence', together with the Matrix brand positioning of 'Expect More'.

After previously riding for the Vision 1 and Horizon Fitness-Prendas teams, also sponsored by Johnson Health Tech UK, King is currently part of the Matrix Fitness-Prendas cycling team.

She will now become an individual ambassador, working closely with Matrix Fitness and its customers to encourage people to participate in an active lifestyle.

King won a gold medal at the London 2012 Olympic Games for the team pursuit, alongside fellow riders Laura Trott and Joanna Rowsell.

She will join other Matrix ambassadors, who include Tim Brabants (sprint kayaker), James Cracknell (Olympic rowing champion) and Sally Gunnell (Olympic gold medalist hurdler).

Wave Leisure Trust elects new chair and vice chair

Wave Leisure Trust has appointed Vincent Burch as its new chair and David Hearn as the new vice chair.

Burch joined the board of Wave Leisure in 2005. He has extensive experience in the social housing sector and recently joined a local environmental compliance and recycling company as financial controller.

Hearn joined the board of Wave Leisure in January 2012. He has a background in public and third sector sports and leisure management, including more than 15 years' experience working at a strategic and operational level.

Rieger to lead EHFA's standards

The European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) has appointed Dr Thomas Rieger as the new chair of its Standards Council.

He replaces Dr Alfonso Jiménez, who announced earlier this year that he was to become head of the School of Sports & Exercise Sciences at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

Rieger holds a doctoral degree in social sciences, with a specialisation in sport science, from the University of Tübingen. He also has a masters degree in public health. In 2007, he was appointed professor of sport management at the Business and Information Technology School – BiTS (Laureate International Universities).

Rieger says: "I'm honoured to have been given this responsibility at a time when EHFA is accelerating standards development



Dr Thomas Rieger has degrees in public health and sports science

work, particularly at higher levels and in areas of chronic disease, looking at how fitness can play an increasing role in promoting the benefits of health-enhancing physical activity and exercise.

"I have a very capable Standards Council who will be helping with this work, together with very many technical experts from across Europe and around the world."

Nuffield names Richard Wayment as COO

Nuffield Health has announced the appointment of Richard Wayment as COO of its fitness and wellbeing division.

Wayment joins Nuffield Health – the UK's largest not-for-profit healthcare provider – from House of Fraser, where he was retail operations director, taking responsibility for 63 stores and 17,000 staff.

Wayment will report to Laura Kerby, managing director, consumer wellbeing, taking responsibility for all sales and operations, food and beverage, nursery and membership administration across Nuffield's 65-strong portfolio of fitness and wellbeing centres.

Kerby says: "We are delighted to announce Richard Wayment's appointment. Richard's expertise in running complex multi-site and multi-channel businesses, as well as his proven track record in producing robust results through people, will be a real asset to Nuffield Health."



Wayment joins Nuffield from House of Fraser

Nuffield Health's annual report, published in June, revealed how finances grew strongly despite the challenging economic circumstances, with turnover rising by 4 per cent last year to £575m from £552m.

British Swimming appoints panel for 2012 'debrief'

Conor O'Shea and Thomas Lurz are to form part of a panel of experts appointed by British Swimming to support and contribute to its London 2012 Performance Debrief.

O'Shea is a former national director of the English Institute of Sport and current director of rugby at Harlequins, with experience of

coaching, sport science and sport medicine. Meanwhile, German-born Lurz is a two-time Olympic marathon swimming medallist and is to contribute to analysis of Team GB's open water swimming performance. The panel will be chaired by Craig Hunter, an independent member of British Swimming's board.

PEOPLE PROFILE



Rachel Hobbs

Technogym selected Hobbs as an 'Inspirational Trainer' to work with athletes at the 2012 Games. We find out about her company, Zest, and her football academy - the ventures that got her selected

How long have you worked in the fitness industry?

Seven years.

How has your career progressed?

I started as a recreational assistant in a leisure centre, advanced to fitness instructor and studio instructor before completing my personal training qualification. I continued to do a degree in dietetics and nutrition as well as gain my GP exercise referral and Level 4 specialist personal trainer status in obesity and diabetes.

What is your typical day-to-day at the moment?

There is no typical day-to-day at the moment - every day is slight madness! I'm woken up by my son (aged four) at around 6.00am, before taking him to nursery. After that, my day is mixed between training clients, going to university lectures, teaching studio classes and writing health-related articles before collecting my son, giving him dinner then going to teach some more "fitness diva" evening classes - my own combination of fun exercise, dietary advice and weight management techniques.

Could you describe what Zest does as a company?

Zest's primary aim is to support, advise and inspire individuals to be the healthiest and happiest they can be, using a combination of personal training, dietary manipulation and life coaching.

I set up Zest in 2010 and I now work closely with a wide range of local professionals to offer the best health to our clients.

You've also founded Love Kids Football Academy - what is it?

I visited Ghana with my son in 2011 and spent two months living in an

orphanage. There were so many children who could not afford to go to school and who spent the days getting into trouble, so Love Kids Academy was founded to support these children. It's been set up specifically to offer them support and education and to give them a goal and a purpose in life.

What did the role of Technogym Inspiration Trainer involve?

During the Olympic Games, I was based in the main gym in the athletes' village. I worked with the athletes and their coaches on how to use the equipment correctly, as well as assisting them with workouts and new exercises. Moving forwards, I hope to work closely with Technogym in the future - I believe in their philosophy of wellness.

What did it mean to you to be selected as one of Technogym's Inspiration Trainers?

It was so wonderful to be selected for this once in a lifetime opportunity. To be working alongside others with the same passion for fitness as myself was amazing. It was a simply unforgettable experience.

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

The lack of recognition for trainers - just because personal trainers don't have to go to university, people don't always trust in them. However, most personal trainers are self-motivated and extremely knowledgeable in their chosen area.

What drives you?

Passion. I love fitness and seeing how exercise can benefit individuals physically, psychologically and emotionally.

What is your favourite life motto?

It's this: Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.

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Latin American market data

• richard bilton • ihrsa board member, and president & director of companhia atletica (brazil)

In August, IHRSA published *The IHRSA Latin American Report: Size and Scope of Key Health Club Markets*, which was generously sponsored by Hoist. The report demonstrates that the Latin American market is robust, still growing, and has much room for improvement.

There has always been much speculation about the exact market size of this region. We have heard conflicting reports: that market growth had stopped, or that it had in fact grown at 15 per cent a year. But solid data was always lacking – until now.

The 16 Latin American markets analysed in the new IHRSA report generate US\$5.5bn in revenue from more than 46,000 clubs. Nearly 15 million Latin Americans are health club members. Brazil alone accounts for more than half of the health clubs in Latin America, including the 16 clubs operated by my company, Companhia Athletica.

All Latin American companies within the sector have to live with the extremely strict state regulations that end up hindering the market. For instance, in Brazil, medical certification attesting to a person's suitability and fitness for performing physical activity is mandatory before someone can use a health club. However, if the client does not present



Nearly 15 million Latin Americans are health club members, with Brazil taking the lion's share

such a certificate, the gym – not the client – is accountable before the law.

Additionally, we face taxation burdens which rank among the highest in the world. A simple example is that of employers' contributions: generally, someone who makes R\$1,000 in-hand costs a company R\$2,000.

Here, as abroad, the industry is moving toward segmentation, with gyms

operating at three different price levels: high, medium and low. Our clubs are included in the first group, which require high investment to be built and target an affluent audience.

At the other end of the spectrum are the low-cost gyms which, like the premium sector clubs, have more space for growth and eventually end up weakening the mid-priced gyms, which offer a reduced variety of services. In other words, those clubs which operate on the extreme ends of the spectrum have an advantage over those in the middle, which are affected by the polarised market dynamics.

Our company – which currently operates only in Brazil – has been analysing opportunities in Chile, Argentina and even the US. If we were to make a move, we'd repeat what's been most successful for us in the past – that is, opening a highly differentiated unit in a city where we'd be considered a reference point for the local market.

The IHRSA Latin American Report covers the following markets: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.

Ask the experts..... Winning back former members

"We're designing a mail-shot to send to former members to get them back on board before increasing dues in January. How can we best capture their attention and get them to rejoin?" Active Management owner Justin Tamsett offers his insight on this topic:

"A former member only becomes a member again if they believe you can help them. You are starting off ahead of your competition (hopefully), provided they have had a positive experience with you, your people and your brand.

"Your marketing piece absolutely must convey new classes, people, hours, equipment, facilities, services and/or programmes – and not just a



Tamsett: Offer relevant new news in marketing

list of them. You need to include how or why they benefit members or, in this

case, former members. If you have nothing new to offer them, why would they come back?

"So hit them between the eyes upfront – your headline should include words like 'Announcing' or 'Look' or 'It has arrived' and so on. The copy can then give more details.

"Finally, finish your marketing piece with a call to action – and ensure that this call to action provides the alumni's status, for example: 'As a former member, you are entitled to...'

"As with all marketing, to increase conversion, follow up the marketing piece with a phone call."

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



Estimated start-up costs for an Anytime Fitness franchise are around £150,000–£250,000

Anytime Fitness eyes UK roll-out

US chain Anytime Fitness has announced its intention to offer its business model to potential franchisees across the UK, having already opened its first sites in the UK market in 2011 and 2012.

Founded in 2002, Anytime Fitness has almost 1.5 million members in 2,000 clubs spanning countries including the US, Canada and New Zealand. It was recently named the fastest-growing fitness chain in the world by iHRSA and was ranked number one in the fitness club category of the *Entrepreneurs* 500.

Anytime Fitness estimates that start-up costs for potential franchisees are around

£150,000–£250,000, and claims that the steady revenue provided by annual membership fees is a more reliable source of income compared to other franchised businesses.

Anytime Fitness launched its UK headquarters in Hertfordshire in the summer of 2011, and currently has five clubs in locations that include Bristol, Basingstoke and London – Anytime's first central London club opened in the King's Cross area of the city in early 2012.

Original stated goals had been to have up to 50 clubs in the UK and Ireland by the end of 2012.

events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

1–4 November 2012

12th Annual iHRSA European Congress – Vienna, Austria

15 November 2012

Social Media – Friend or Foe? (Webinar)

19–22 November 2012

ChinaFit / iHRSA China Management Forum – Shanghai, China

19–22 March 2013

iHRSA's 32nd Annual International Convention & Trade Show – Mandalay Bay Hotel & Convention Centre, Las Vegas, Nevada, US

Activity lessens smoking cravings

A study conducted by Adrian Taylor at the UK's University of Exeter and other colleagues from the UK, US and Canada found that smokers were able to lessen their cravings for cigarettes by exercising.

The study examined 19 previous trials on the subject. Most commonly, participants were combined into one of two groups, one tasked with a sedentary activity like watching a video or sitting quietly and the other tasked with a physical activity like walking briskly or riding a bike.

In general, after working out, people had less of a desire to smoke than they had before. Although it is not clear what accounts for the difference, Taylor told Reuters that smokers who had exercised reported cravings as being a third less than those completing sedentary activities.

news in brief

Technogym Village opens

Technogym this month launches its brand new Technogym Village.

Located in Cesena, Italy, the consolidated Wellness Campus extends over 60,000sq m (645,000sq ft) and will be the hub for Technogym going forward.

The complex encompasses offices, factory, warehouse, research centre, restaurant, gym and landscaped grounds, with the gym free to use for local residents.

The buildings make use of natural light and materials, with the complex designed to reflect the company's mission, vision, brand and corporate ethos throughout.



New site for John Harris

John Harris Fitness has opened its second club in Linz, Austria, and its ninth in the country.

The site – which was previously a Holmes Place location – was officially handed over on 6 August. Negotiations for the takeover of the location had gone on for months, since the insolvency of the Salzburg and Linz Holmes Place locations in late 2011.

Five years ago, John Harris Fitness opened its first site in shopping centre ATRIUM City Center Linz.

About iHRSA

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

To learn how iHRSA can help your business thrive, visit www.ihrsa.org

Locate a quality iHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

Customer-focused experience

IHRSA European Congress speaker Shaun Smith talks to Jon Feld about product differentiation and passion

Former British Airways (BA) executive Shaun Smith will address more than 400 fitness industry executives, managers and industry suppliers on the topic 'Bold – How to Be Brave in Business and Win' at the 12th Annual IHRSA European Congress, which takes place at the Hilton Vienna, Austria, on 1–4 November.

Founder and partner of smith & co in the UK, Smith is former head of customer service, sales and marketing training for BA. The best-selling author and world-renowned consultant will redefine customer experience at the IHRSA event.

IHRSA interviewed Smith for the September issue of *Club Business International*. The following is excerpted from that interview:

customer service

You helped British Airways differentiate itself from its competitors during its well-publicised turnaround. How?

One headline at the time said that BA stood for "bloody awful." It takes a lot of money and time to reposition an airline, because of all the capital costs and complex infrastructure involved. So we started by



Ex-BA executive Smith helped turn the airline brand from 'bloody awful' to 'bloody awesome'

focusing on the one thing that was easiest to influence quickly, and that customers notice first – our people. Initially we focused on trying to improve the service.

We looked at the complete lifecycle of our employees: how we recruited, trained, rewarded and promoted them. Our goal was to make sure the way we treated our people was completely aligned with the way we wanted them to treat our customers. Within 18 months, we'd won an award for having the best cabin crew. The next headline said that BA stood for "bloody awesome."

feelgood factor

What parallels do you see with health clubs? For one, they both have perishable products. Once an airplane takes off, and it's half empty, you're never going to sell those seats again. Similarly, with a health club, if you've got a half-empty club in the morning, you'll never sell that space again.

Secondly, both industries are fragmented and highly competitive. You have a number of players in the market, each competing for very similar customers with very similar products.

Finally, both rely on a feelgood factor to prosper. With the exception of essential business travel, nobody has to fly. And nobody has to go to a club to exercise. Both are discretionary purchases, and getting people to voluntarily give their money to a firm in these sectors is based on them feeling good about the brand.

customer experience

There's a great deal of talk about 'customer service' and 'customer experience'. Is there really a difference between the two?

A lot of people think 'customer experience' is just consultant jargon, but it's much more than that. Traditionally, customer service has to do with the interaction between employees and customers, but business has become much more complex. Today, we can interact with prospects and clients through a variety of channels, and the processes we use to do so are very different too. Amazon.com, for example, offers a very high quality experience, but I'll make a small bet with you that you've never spoken to an Amazon employee. People interact with Amazon through its website, its logistics and packaging. All of these things create an 'experience' with Amazon. It isn't about dealing with a person.

need for passion

In your book See, Feel, Think, Do – The Power of Instinct in Business, you claim that "short-term thinking, analysts, and research have replaced vision, leadership, and passion in many large businesses today." How can the balance be redressed? Look at the ways organisations reduce their costs. One way is to be data-driven and steadily increase the efficiency of your processes and products, making you less reliant on that expensive component called people. On many low-cost airlines, you frequently don't receive food or beverages on board, which reduces the amount of cleaning required, which, in turn, reduces the amount of labour. As a result, those companies operate at a much lower staff-to-customer ratio, which reduces overhead.

However, if you lower costs in these ways, you need to increase the quality of the interaction when somebody does, in fact, deal with one of your employees. And that's where the passion comes in. When customers interact with people, you have to make sure it's done very well indeed – otherwise you just look cheap. When you take away service completely, without compensating, it can lead to a low level of affection for the brand. So you can be a budget operator in the fitness industry, but you need great processes.

For more details or to register for the 2012 IHRSA European Congress, visit www.ihrsa.org/congress or email intl@ihrsa.org



Smith will be a key speaker at the forthcoming IHRSA conference in Vienna, Austria



SportsArt Fitness launches the new energy-harnessing Green System

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Plugging the research gap



The new academic lead for the FIA Research Institute, Dr Chris Beedie, explains the significance of the 2011 pilot study, and outlines plans to undertake one of the largest ever studies into the effectiveness of physical activity and structured exercise



We all know that exercise and physical activity can be effective in the prevention and management of disease, and rest assured that we have not established a Research Institute to go over this old ground. Rather we are developing, evaluating and validating methods to deliver physical activity programmes in both the prevention and management of disease.

This process will help to solve what is often called the 'research gap' between the academic community and frontline services. The best example of this gap is in the provision of exercise referral programmes. Pick up any academic journal and you will find evidence demonstrating how exercise or physical activity can reduce insulin dependence among type 2 diabetics, for example, or lower the risk of heart disease. However, pick up an academic journal for a review

of exercise referral programmes and you will quickly find statements such as "weak evidence base". The Research Institute is attempting to fill this gap, by delivering research within health and sports clubs, leisure centres, walking groups and outdoor bootcamps.

In doing so we are going to establish areas of best practice for physical activity providers, impacting on education and training and creating a culture of data collection. I am therefore delighted that the Research Institute is sponsored by leaders in these fields, such as MYZONE, Bodystat and Lifetime Health and Fitness.

Mirroring the sector

My role thus far has focused on two areas: the publication of the pilot study and the development of the 2012 study.

In 2011, the Research Institute partnered with Impulse Leisure to

investigate the effectiveness of a structured exercise intervention – in comparison to both unstructured use and physical activity counselling – on modifiable cardiovascular risk factors and physiological performance markers.

These categories were not selected at random: they mirror the services provided by FIA members across the UK. For instance, a consumer entering a leisure centre can receive a tailored exercise programme that outlines explicitly how they should be exercising, or they can simply access the facility and equipment and work out independently. Acknowledging the barriers to exercise for a completely sedentary person, a few forward-thinking operators are also offering physical activity counselling programmes, whereby a sedentary person is coached to take the first steps to becoming more active.

In the pilot, the Impulse Leisure-operated centre recruited 97 untrained participants aged between 35 and 55 from their 'inactive member' lists, as well as non-members and people from other community groups. Those 97 people were split into three groups: structured exercise (40 people), unstructured exercise (39 people) and physical activity counselling (18 people). Each of the participants received a health check at baseline and at the end of the 12-week programme.

Success across the board

First and foremost the study was a success, as it had a 92 per cent retention rate – relatively unheard of in academic studies, where we normally expect an attrition rate of 30 per cent. Furthermore, 99 per cent of the participants enjoyed their experience, which is a crucial component of any exercise programme. Without these enjoyment levels and retention rates, the programme would



Activity counselling involves coaching sedentary people to take their first steps

CANDYBOX IMAGES / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



LUCKY BUSINESS / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The pilot physical activity study had a 92 per cent retention rate – a figure that's almost unheard of in academic studies

have been a failure regardless of any physiological results.

The average participant in the study experienced a decrease in Body Mass Index (BMI), fat mass, total cholesterol levels, LDL (bad) cholesterol, tryglycerides, body fat percentage, systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure and resting heart rate. The average participant also increased their fat-free mass, HDL (good) cholesterol, VO₂, muscular strength and flexibility.

Translated into English, this means that all of the participants increased the ability of their muscles to utilise lipids as opposed to glycogen, which aids the reduction of plasma lipids and therefore cholesterol levels. The reductions in cholesterol are crucial, as anyone with a cholesterol level above 5mmol/L has twice the risk of developing heart disease.

Additionally, the average reduction in systolic blood pressure was over 5mmHg. To put this in perspective, it has been stated that a reduction in systolic blood pressure of as little as 3mmHg will reduce the risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) by 5–9 per cent, strokes by 8–14 per cent and all-cause mortality by 4 per cent.

Structured interventions

The structured exercise group took part in a structured programme that was standardised across the 40 people. This group actually reduced their systolic blood pressure by 7mmHg on average,

meaning that they more than qualify for significant reductions in the risk of CHD, strokes and all-cause mortality. They also reduced their body mass by 2 per cent, fat mass by 6.6 per cent, and resting heart rate by 6.15 per cent.

The evidence suggests that, when an individual follows a structured exercise intervention within a leisure centre, they can achieve significant physiological benefits. In short, if we can get an individual into a centre and adhering to a programme, we can improve their health.

Counselling – community hubs

However, what about the percentage of the population who will never enter a centre to take up exercise?

The investigation also provided a solution for these individuals. The physical activity counselling group received a fortnightly face-to-face counselling session using the '5 As' method (assess, advise, agree, assist, arrange), which encouraged them to be more active. This group of people were totally inactive and started from a lower base, but the results were impressive. The average participant reduced their fat mass by 2.3kg, resting heart rate by nine beats per minute, and systolic blood pressure by 3mmHg. A quarter of the individuals have now joined the centre and participate in regular physical activity counselling.

Health magazines are often filled with statements that leisure centres

could become hubs of the community, supporting the health and wellbeing of the entire community rather than only those who decide to take up memberships. This study has unearthed evidence that fortnightly 10-minute engagement sessions with an exercise professional at a leisure centre can improve health and wellbeing. We are not talking about a robust, complex method – just a simple discussion which can indeed transform facilities into hubs of the community.

Long-term impact

The pilot study has given us the platform to develop and deliver an even more ambitious study. From lessons learnt, the FIA Research Institute is now launching an investigation across 29 facilities, 2,320 participants, and delivered by 59 exercise professionals. Starting in September 2012, the new investigation will last a year. It will therefore prove whether we can change long-term behaviour and create the ultimate goal of getting previously sedentary people to exercise independently and sustainably.

The final message of what I hope will be many articles on the institute is that we've completed a successful pilot study which has created an evidence base for what centres can deliver. Even more importantly, it has given us the platform to undertake challenging research that will create new methods for the sector to collect outcomes from training.

28 OCTOBER 2012

sky ride local in bath

Sky Ride Local events by British Cycling, the UK governing body for cycling, have been set up as fun, free community bike rides – a way of getting people out exploring their local area. There are 45 rides taking place across the UK in 2012, and this one in Bath is a 26-mile circular route taking in the rolling hills, hidden villages and lush countryside surrounding the city. It's estimated that the course will take around three hours 20 minutes (including breaks when necessary). Details: www.goskyride.com



Sky Ride Local: Free community bike rides



The event includes a 3km run

PHOTO: GOSKYRIDE.COM

9 DECEMBER 2012

fritton xc sprint duathlon: winter series

The first of three cross-country sprint duathlons in Fritton Lake Country Park, Norfolk, is held on 9 Dec. The distances – 3km run, 10km bike, 1.5km run – are in line with International Triathlon Union guidelines and include uneven trail paths through woodlands. The other events are on 20 January and 17 February and entry costs £15 for each or £40 for all three. Details: www.activeoutdoorsport.co.uk



GORELLA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Walks are for 6–8 hours a day

29 MAY–2 JUNE 2013

3 cities cycle ride

The 3 Cities bike ride, on behalf of charity Action Against Hunger, covers 332 miles. Riders start off in London, taking in quintessential English villages, and make their way to the Dutch lowlands via Amsterdam. Along the way they'll take in canals, historical landmarks and rural villages before reaching the final destination: the city of Brussels in Belgium. Registration costs £99 and a minimum of £1,500 should be raised for Action Against Hunger – an international humanitarian organisation committed to ending child hunger around the world. Details: www.doitforcharity.com/ www.actionagainsthunger.org.uk



Holland is the second stop

5–10 MARCH 2013

pyrenees snow shoe challenge

This new event by Charity Challenge features snow-shoeing – a relatively unknown activity, but an ideal way to explore the winter landscapes of the Pyrenees. Participants will walk between six and eight hours a day in the mountain range that crosses from France to Spain, including the Aigüestortes National Park. The open charity event has a £295 deposit and minimum sponsorship is £1,995. Details: www.charitychallenge.com



Learn about becoming a yoga teacher at The Yoga Show in London

OCTOBER

9-12 | Interbad

Venue Trade Fair Centre
(Airport), Stuttgart, Germany

Summary
A trade fair focused on swimming pools, saunas and spa equipment, which attracts pool, spa, hotel, beauty and design professionals.
Web www.interbad.de

12-14 | Club Industry Conference and Trade Show

Venue Las Vegas, US

Summary
An independent fitness industry event focusing on for-profit and not-for-profit facilities. Offering professional development opportunities, strategic business solutions and industry networking, the 2011 event attracted over 4,000 attendees.
Web <http://east.clubindustryshow.com>

15-17 | ISPA Conference & Expo

Venue Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center, Florida, US

Summary
The ISPA Conference & Expo is the largest ISPA event of the year for spa professionals. It's designed to provide spa owners, directors, managers and suppliers with cutting-edge tips on where the industry is heading and how to ensure that business is sustainable.
Web www.experienceispa.com

20-21 | Camexpo

Venue Earls Court, London, UK

Summary
A dedicated event for the complementary, natural and integrated healthcare sector in the UK. This event is now in its 10th year and attracts alternative therapy practitioners, spa therapists, students and retailers.
Web www.camexpo.co.uk

25-28 | Inner IDEA Conference

Venue La Quinta Resort & Club, Palm Springs, California, US

Summary
An educational event for delegates to study integrative wellness with the world's top researchers, teachers and presenters. The conference is designed to offer a unique, experiential education weekend that explores the latest research, advanced techniques and new programmes in wellness.
Web www.inneridea.com/conference

26-28 | The Yoga Show

Venue Olympia, London, UK

Summary
Presenting all things yoga under one roof, this event will include a range of free yoga and pilates classes, pilates reformer sessions, kids' yoga, demonstrations and lectures. This year, there will also be a full teacher training conference focused on how to become a yoga teacher.
Web www.theyogashow.co.uk

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everyone's talking about . . .

celebrity fitness

A scan of the newsagent's shelves will show that botox is so last summer. Now it's all about celebrities toning up with exercise. Is this an opportunity that we should be capitalising on?

The switch in editorial focus in women's magazines – from plastic surgery to exercise – has to be good news for our industry, doesn't it?

Surely teenage girls, or young women who stopped sport once they left school, might be motivated to get fit if they see the positive impact exercise has had on their favourite celebrities?

Yet with Central YMCA research suggesting 90 per cent of women want to see more diverse images in the media and advertising, do these celebrity pictures represent an unattainable goal, out of reach for the average person? Does it give

the message that great abs are only achievable if you have the financial means to hire a PT and several hours a day to devote to training? Do these images of perfect bodies – however they are achieved – just make the vast majority of people feel inadequate?

Former Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone says young people are being set an impossible standard in the media and advertising, which can erode their self-esteem. So is the celebrity trend a good one for us to capitalise on, and build campaigns around, or is it a dangerous bandwagon to jump on?

Jon Roberts, co-owner of Matt Roberts Personal Training – which

counts The Saturdays and David Cameron among its clients – says he has lost count of the number of people who have said they want Kylie's bottom, even though their bone structure means it would never happen. Rather than burst their bubble, he says it's possible to convince them what they actually want is tone and shape, which is achievable.

And surely there's a balance in all of this, whereby we celebrate the current focus on exercise without giving people unrealistic expectations. The question is: how do we do this? Do we hitch a ride on all this publicity with direct campaigns, or just make the most of any interest generated? We ask the experts.

IS THIS TYPE OF PUBLICITY GOOD FOR THE INDUSTRY? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

david stalker

fitness industry association • ceo



"Any media coverage which puts a stronger focus on the health and fitness sector is positive and helps to communicate the mission of the FIA and its members: to get more people, more active, more often.

I'd like to think the positive change in focus in the consumer media is partly due to our sector's work to

build relationships with journalists, and to provide innovation in our offerings as exercise providers to capture the public's imagination. Also, it can't be over-emphasised what the home Olympics have done for exercise and sport; already we are seeing peaks in interest in people wanting to take up a new activity and emulate our Olympians. This, coupled with strong and widespread media coverage of academic research – such as *The Lancet* report released in July on the dangers of inactivity – has pushed health and fitness up the media agenda.

We need to use this publicity to drive forward and target the large percentage of the population who are still inactive. In addition, the sector needs to continue building relationships with health and fitness journalists, to give writers the support needed to get more impact. We should not fear the media."

rosi prescott

central ymca • chief executive



"While we welcome anything that promotes being physically active, I think it's important not to focus too heavily on the 'body beautiful'. Most celebrities have personal trainers, dietitians and ample time to exercise, so the end result is unrealistic and unattainable for most people.

Aspirational images of celebrities might inspire some people, but since two-thirds of the country is overweight or obese, the images are just too far removed to be motivating for most. Research from Cambridge University showed that women are 200 per cent more likely to buy a product if the image shown is like them.

We welcome any shift in editorial focus which extols the benefits of exercise, although we are keen to see a greater diversity of models used by the media to promote health and fitness. Aspiring to look like some of the 'perfect bodies' which are often associated with health and fitness could set people up for negative cycles of exercise and dieting, or even deter people from starting in the first place. Instead, we would advocate promoting the many other benefits of exercise – for example, the fact that it makes you feel better, is sociable and fun."



Positive role models: Media coverage of athletes like Jessica Ennis may help to get more women into the gym

sue tibballs

women's sport and fitness foundation • ceo



“Historically there has been a notion that being fit and sporty is unfeminine, but we’re starting to see a shift in attitudes which is reflected in this change in editorial focus. Women’s fitness is becoming mainstream: more celebrities are getting involved in fitness and successful female athletes, like Jessica Ennis and Victoria Pendleton, are making it aspirational to be fit and healthy.

The shift in editorial focus among the consumer press could help to reverse the decline in activity among teenage girls, especially if the industry provides the opportunities for them to participate. Currently only 10 per cent of 14-year-old girls are active enough to maintain fitness. Our research shows it is during the teenage years that girls start to disengage with sport, and school sport has a big role to play in this. Mothers are a powerful source of encouragement for participation in sport, so creating opportunities for families to be active at the gym together is a good idea, such as ‘mother and daughter’ classes.

Most sports are male dominated, but gym membership is around 50/50, so the industry has an important role to play in creating opportunities for women to get active.”

matt roberts

matt roberts personal training • ceo



“I think this coverage is positive for the fitness industry, and I think it coincides with healthier attitudes towards fitness and exercise.

We have noticed two key things in the last two to three years: people willing to change their lifestyle rather than looking for short-term fixes; and a focus on technique and achievement, with people

wanting help to complete a triathlon or a marathon.

Although the celebrities we have trained have helped to build our brand, we don’t use it for PR as it can be off-putting for many other people. We’re proud of everyone we train and always aim to steer people away from aspiring to look like a celebrity, but rather build their goals around what is achievable for them as individuals.

What the fitness industry needs to do is keep driving up standards and push its quality, expertise and understanding: sell memberships on the basis of how you can help people achieve their goals and make sure the service is provided to support people with these goals. Despite the low-cost model becoming so popular, people are willing to pay more and travel further if they get the results they want.”

HANS PETER FRANKLIN

THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF FITLANE TALKS TO KATE CRACKNELL ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF OPERATING IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

It says much about the fragmentation of the French fitness market that FITLane – with its five clubs in the south of France, and a sixth under construction – is not only the market leader in its catchment area of the Côte d'Azur but, according to founder and CEO Hans Peter Franklin, also one of the largest operations in France after the likes of Club Med Gym.

It also says much about the relative immaturity of the market that things we take for granted in UK- and US-based clubs – monthly direct debit contracts, for example – were brand new to the Côte d'Azur when Franklin launched FITLane just eight years ago.

International horizons

Franklin – himself half Danish, half English, and fluent in French – arrived in the south of France in 2000 after a long stint in Asia. "My mother always told me to first choose where you wanted to live,

and then work out how to make a living there," he says. "I'd always loved the south of France, ever since I spent university summer holidays selling snacks on the beach in St Tropez."

University term-time, meanwhile, was spent studying for a degree in physical education. Says Franklin: "I was captain of rugby, football, tennis. I actually wanted to be a professional tennis player, but sadly I wasn't good enough. But after university I knew I had to be in sport somehow, and I also wanted to travel the world, so I went to the French Alps to ski and started a language school down there. One of our clients was Nestlé, and they offered me a job in Japan."

After a couple of years in Japan, Franklin moved to Hong Kong, joining up with ex-college friend Gary Knill, who was already in Hong Kong running a small coaching business. The two men joined forces and founded coaching company Sportathlon. "Both Gary and I were

Franklin moved from the Far East to the south of France in 2000 and set up FITLane in 2004



FITLane now has 25,000 members – equal to two per cent of the Côte d'Azur population



“I realised this was complete virgin territory – even better than Hong Kong, and even easier”

“We soon realised that, in the space needed for four or five tennis courts – catering for maybe a dozen people – we could have 2,000 people doing fitness. It didn’t take us long to realise that’s where the business was. One thing led to another and we started leasing space in hotels in Hong Kong: the Excelsior, the Sheraton and so on. We began running small, hotel-based health clubs, but with a private membership, under The Spa brand – by definition they had wet areas too.

“Then we were approached by Sun Hung Kai Properties, one of the big property developers in Hong Kong. It was building a lot of commercial and residential properties, which included on-site clubs to incite tenants in: swimming pool, tennis courts, small gym. But it didn’t know how to manage those clubs, so together we started a joint venture company – Sun-Sportathlon – to manage its residential clubs, and in the end also its ice rinks.

“But the real business wasn’t there: the real business was building and running large fitness clubs. We knew it, but although our businesses were going well, we didn’t have any serious capital behind us to do it. So instead we decided to go overseas, finding hotels and residential complexes with sporting facilities that needed managing in markets such as Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines.

“In the end we had around 15 or 20 leased sites operating under The Spa brand, and we were spending a lot of money on buying equipment. We therefore developed another company, Sportathlon Leisure Supplies, which became the local agent for a number of equipment brands, including Star Trac.”

Learning curve

And then there was a gear change, as Franklin explains: “In the mid-90s, by ▶

tennis coaches, but we expanded into swimming coaching, gymnastics coaching, something we called ‘all sports coaching’.

“We worked with sports clubs – the Hong Kong Football Club, for example – but primarily we ran group exercise classes in around 20 or 30 of the international schools in Hong Kong. There were no extracurricular activities for expat children at the time, and we began to bring in coaches from the UK to meet demand: at one point we had some 3,000 children a week on our books.”

Franklin continues: “That went on for many years until we had enough money

to start our first club. A large, local real estate company, Hong Kong Land, decided to build an indoor tennis centre on the roof of the World Trade Centre in Hong Kong, and approached us to lease it from them and run it.

“We ran that alongside our Sportathlon Coaching business, and then Hong Kong Land approached us about a fitness centre it owned in Exchange Square above the stock market, which was losing money. We leased that too and it became our first ever fitness centre – The Spa at Exchange Square – and was very successful.



FITLane currently has five clubs open on the Côte d'Azur, with plans to expand to around 12 clubs there



▶ which time Gary had moved on – a company called First Pacific Davies bought a large chunk of our company and was pushing me to build larger clubs. We got to know Ray Wilson, whose Family Fitness Centres chain – 110 clubs in California – was eventually sold to 24 Hour Fitness. We came together with Ray in a 50:50 joint venture to build, develop and manage a chain of clubs called California Fitness Centres.

"We started building big, American-style gyms in Hong Kong – Ray with his expertise and us with the local knowledge. There was strong emphasis on sales and marketing, which I learnt a lot from. In fact, everything I know today I'd say I learnt from them.

"Our relationship didn't last very long though. We got up to about 10 clubs, but there was a bit of a culture clash and we ended up selling our stake in the business." California Fitness ultimately became part of 24 Hour Fitness, until 24 Hour sold the clubs in mid-2012.

"I eventually also sold my shares in the Sportathlon Group to First Pacific Davies, who subsequently sold Sportathlon to Fitness First to create Fitness First Asia. Once the Sportathlon adventure was over, I decided to move to France."

France beckons

So was the intention always to pick up where he left off, building and operating health clubs in the Côte d'Azur? "When I got to France, I actually wanted to play golf and have a different life. I was dabbling in antiques, a bit of real estate, but the temptation grew and

an opportunity presented itself with a one-club test.

"It was a little facility in Mandelieu – run down, but in a super location and with the possibility to expand. I took it over, built a second floor and applied what I had learnt from California Fitness. That meant proper marketing – we now spend 6 per cent of our revenue on marketing, really pushing to build a brand. It meant proper sales, separating sales from admin, putting everyone in uniform, having meetings, measuring everything, implementing direct debit for memberships. It might all sound obvious, but nobody else was doing that here.

"The club took off and got to 4,500 members. I realised this was complete virgin territory – even better than Hong Kong, and even easier. Bit by bit we started building more clubs, under the FITLane brand, growing at the speed the company could afford – we have little or no debt and use internal cashflow to build our facilities.

"There were all sorts of little clubs down here, but no really big health clubs offering extensive, clean, well-equipped facilities, and with a good marketing and sales team. And that's all it took to be honest. People now come all the way from Monaco to use the Nice club, for example – there's just nothing else like it around here."

Expansion plans

Franklin continues: "FITLane now comprises five, soon to be six, fitness centres with a turnover of €10m. We have some 25,000 members – around 2 per cent of the entire Côte d'Azur population – primarily on direct debit at an average of about €50 a month." In the Côte d'Azur, this places the brand firmly at the budget end of the scale – or value, as Franklin prefers to call it.

In fact, FITLane offers a range of options depending on length of contract and whether you want access to just one or all of its clubs – monthly fees start at €49, going up to €74. But although people have then committed to anything up to a two-year contract, those contracts are transferable – if you need to leave, you can pass what remains of your contract on to a friend without the clock then starting again for them.

The Nice club, which opened in July 2010, is the best example of where Franklin sees the brand going forward. Measuring 2,500sq m, and with cleaning staff on the floor at all times, Nice offers a very large cardio and resistance floor. There are several hundred pieces of kit, all supplied by Star Trac, as the close relationship originally forged by Franklin in Asia has continued – Franklin is majority owner of Star Trac France, which operates as a sister company to FITLane. ▶



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Fashionable fitness: FITLane clubs are designed to offer a buzzing, trendy place to be



"I DO SEE FRANCE CATCHING UP WITH THE REST OF EUROPE - AND THAT MEANS A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY"

► There's also a 200sq m group exercise studio and an 80-bike Spinning studio – group exercise is very popular in France – as well as functional training and circuit areas. Significantly for the south of France, where parking is at a premium, the club also offers 600 free parking spaces.

The club has already surpassed all targets: with 7,000 members, the original goal of 4,000 has been smashed. "We're a volume business," admits Franklin.

"Rightly or wrongly, I've always believed volume tends to work," Franklin is already negotiating a second site in the centre of Nice, and would like to open a third.

The latest development – a new-build on the outskirts of Antibes – is due to open in early 2013 and is currently slated as the sixth site. However, Franklin now plans to speed up expansion, with other options – Grasse, central Nice and further afield in Toulon – all in advance negotiation that may beat it to launch.

Plans are to reach 10 to 12 clubs on the Côte d'Azur "as quickly as possible, then I believe the job is done in this area". Private equity offers – which are already coming in – might then be considered to take the brand to other regions. "But I don't want to do what I consider was a mistake for Fitness First, which was to put one club in each part of France, like little islands stuck out there. It's important to control your geographic area."

French focus

Given that FITLane is having such success with what Franklin himself admits is a fairly simple model – albeit delivered

effectively – is he not worried about competition coming in and taking market share, perhaps even undercutting him?

"Really, to understand the French fitness market, you have to go back to the beginning. It developed on a franchise basis – franchising is very popular out here. But while that's all very well in a mature industry, in an immature industry like fitness it can go wrong very quickly.

"The way it happened here, finance companies were brought in to finance all the memberships in advance. Club operators got all their money upfront, with members signing up for two years, but owners perhaps didn't have the financial discipline to run the operation. The money would run out, clubs closed, members were up in arms and the banks put a big cross against fitness.

"That happened a lot in France, and it's one of the reasons why the percentage of the population who are gym members remains well below not only the US and UK, but also Germany, Spain, Italy.

"But that's all changing now, and that's why there's such a market. I shouldn't be saying this, because everyone will want to come and try it, but I do see France catching up with the rest of Europe. And that means a lot of opportunity.

"But first operators have to get a foothold. Anything's possible, but if they come to the Côte d'Azur, they won't be any cheaper than us – certainly not for the same service. France is not an easy place to run a business. VAT and social security are high. And when you go beyond 49 staff, a percentage of the

profits must go to them. Real estate is expensive and incredibly hard to come by, as there's no commercial real estate – you have to buy people's businesses.

"I suppose discount operators might be able to come in and knock off €5–10 a month, get a bit of market share – but make money? I doubt it. I think there's a limit to how discount you can go here, and ultimately €49 isn't a barrier when you have access to 10 classes a day, great equipment, air conditioning, nice showers, a good reception and generally a buzzing, trendy place to be.

"You have to make it a fashionable place – get the film stars in there, the sports stars. If you have two restaurants on a boulevard and one's packed and the other's empty, which are you attracted to? The same goes for nightclubs. And I believe a fitness centre is no different – it has to be the place to be."

Local specialist

Yet Franklin is modest about FITLane's success: "If I were to describe our model compared to what's on offer in LA, Chicago, maybe London, we don't offer anything that's exceptional. The best way I can describe it is a fresh version of what 24 Hour Fitness, California Fitness and Fitness First have already been doing, which I think is a very good offering.

"What I know is how to operate in the south of France – and, believe me, that's not easy."

 **kate cracknell**
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

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A class APART



Aspria's latest new opening in Hamburg, Germany, wows both with its facilities and its service standards – as well as the story behind its creation. Kate Cracknell pays a visit

When you arrive at the new Aspria Uhlenhorst club in Hamburg, Germany – the operator's eighth site, which opened in March of this year – one thing is very clear: you're arriving at a club, not a gym.

Turning off the road and walking through well-kept gardens, you pass tennis courts and large windows with views into enticing gym spaces before entering a spacious reception area. There you're greeted by a courteous member of staff more akin to a hotel receptionist than a gym front desk.

Off to the left, the gym and spa – the latter artistically laid out within landscaped gardens, the former spread over two spacious, light-filled floors. Behind reception, a café area overlooking

the club's indoor pool; a separate outdoor pool lies beyond, in the gardens.

NOT JUST A CLUB....

So far, so top-end health club. But at Aspria Uhlenhorst, there's another side to the offering that sets it apart, and that lies on the first floor. An atmospherically lit corridor leads away from the elevator towards 48 Mulberry-furnished hotel rooms, their bathrooms stocked with products from Kerstin Florian, the on-site spa's chosen product house. Rooms are available to both members and non-members, starting at €120 a night including access to the gym and spa; members enjoy a 10 per cent discount.

Some of these rooms open out onto the huge rooftop terrace, which adjoins the other particularly unexpected element

of the club's offering: a large restaurant, bar and lounge area with a menu, wine list and service standards that quite frankly sit in an entirely different category from any health club F&B offerings I've ever seen. Far from mere post-workout snacks – the café downstairs caters for that, as does the poolside snack hut in the gardens – this is somewhere you'd actively choose to go for dinner, or for a sunny Sunday lunch, even if you weren't planning on using the club's other facilities.

Members can bring guests into the restaurant, which also serves an extensive buffet breakfast for hotel guests, as well as for members keen enough to get in for an early morning workout.

Staff fuel the impression of being in a top-end hotel – in fact, in many cases better, as they're courteous without being

In the fitness area (opposite page) exercise equipment is mixed with trendy sofas and artistic lighting, while elsewhere around the club the feeling is very much one of a luxury hotel



distant. All wear name badges including little flags that denote the languages they speak – an impressive number are multi-lingual and Union Jacks seem omnipresent.

Sitting on the rooftop and enjoying the morning sunshine as I ate a well-deserved, post-swim breakfast – the quality of facilities honestly inspires you to get up and work out – the Marks & Spencer ads with which all UK readers will be familiar kept popping into my mind: “This is not just a club. This is an Aspria club.” If I’ve sounded effusive so far, apologies – but this has to be the best club I’ve visited to date, both for its top-class facilities and for its immaculate standards of service.

EMBRACING EXERCISE

As Aspria CEO Brian Morris explains: “We’re a membership services company that provides excellence in many areas,

“We’re a membership services company that provides excellence in many areas,”

but that doesn’t concentrate solely on the fitness component.” And yet the fitness component is very impressive – a two-storey offering that combines great kit with plenty of space and light to invite you in and make you genuinely excited about working out.

Both floors have large windows looking out over the gardens, and the colour scheme is gentle – browns, creams, lots of wood. There’s plenty of space, and the gym, at least during the daytime, is peaceful – perhaps in acknowledgement that most people bring their own music anyway. There’s also a real sense of flow between gym and recreational, non-workout space: an open doorway links

the first floor area of the gym with the restaurant, and there are leather sofas, standard lamps and even a pool table encroaching into the gym space. Mirrors in the gym are also more ornamental than the norm – huge and gilt-framed, they add a touch of glamour to the free weights and functional areas.

Unusually for a gym, the result is simultaneously calming and stimulating – less the adrenaline-fuelled vibe of ‘must work out’ present in so many gyms, and more an enticing ‘come in and feel uplifted’.

The equipment is top-class and very varied – it’s real kid in a candy shop stuff. As you enter on the ground floor, there’s a large Pavimgym-floored functional ▶

THE UHLENHORST STORY



When *Health Club Management* interviewed Aspria CEO Brian Morris in 2009, he spoke of a site in Germany that he’d been working on for 10 years, since before Aspria was even founded. It was, he said,

“horribly, horribly political” but that, when it opened, it would be unique in Germany: the first time a development had involved a three-way partnership between operator, sports club and local government. That site is Aspria Uhlenhorst.

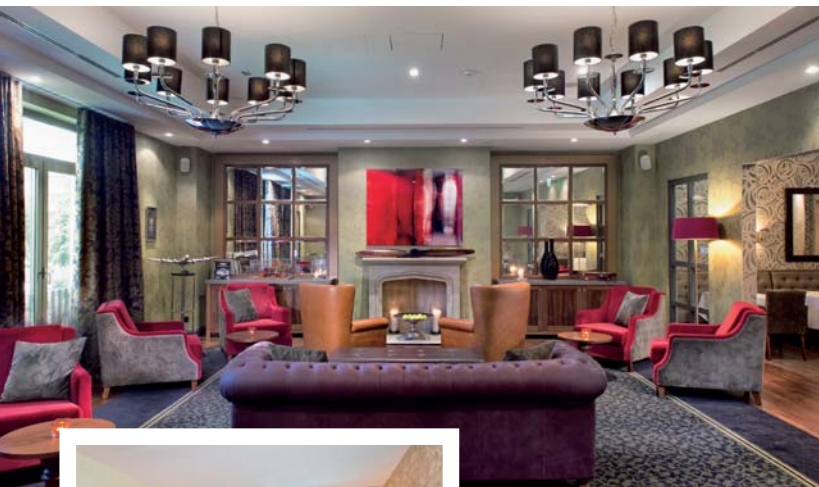
Morris explains: “The Klipper Club was formed over 100 years ago, when the property would have been on the edge of the city. Over a century later, it’s now in a high quality, centrally positioned, primarily residential district.

“The partnership is between the City (Stadt Hamburg), Klipper Tennis and Hockey Club (Klipper THC) and Aspria. We have a direct relationship in property terms with the City of Hamburg, which retains the freehold subject to Aspria having a long lease of the site. There’s a parallel agreement with Klipper concerning certain rights and privileges that Klipper members have the benefit of following redevelopment of their club.

“The overriding challenges were ironically not in reaching an agreement with Klipper but in getting all relevant political parties to agree to support the partnership. Each political party would confirm its support to the Aspria project individually, but they could never agree between themselves how the partnership should move forward.

“Over the 13-year period that the project took from start to finish, there were a number of low points when it seemed that intransigent politicians would defeat this very special project. It took us threatening to withdraw completely to break the political deadlock.

“Shareholders, with support from our banking partner, have invested over €25m. We demolished the existing clubhouse and tennis facilities and undertook a comprehensive redevelopment of the site, maintaining a junior hockey pitch and multi-sports area for children. We used a local Hamburg-based architect for the basic building and a British interior design company, SparcStudio, for some of the fit-out work. The rest of the design and specification work was carried out internally by the Aspria team.”



The club offers a range of high-end F&B offerings, a sumptuous lounge area, 48 Mulberry-furnished hotel rooms, and a large spa with extensive wet areas and six treatment rooms



- ▶ area equipped with all sorts of training tools: Gymsticks, ViPRs, medicine balls, Swiss balls, stability cushions... Around the edge, a couple of Power Plates and two Kinesis from Technogym. Although there are two studios upstairs – one for group cycling, with 20 Technogym bikes, the other a large, well-equipped group exercise studio including seven wall-mounted TRX – small group sessions, included within the membership, are also offered in this functional space at regular intervals throughout the day.

The rest of the gym is equipped by Technogym, complemented by four Water Rowers. There's plate-loaded Pure Strength equipment downstairs, alongside free weights, functional trainers, 16 pieces

of CV equipment and a full set of Kinesis Stations. Upstairs there's a second set of Kinesis Stations, strength equipment from the Selection range, and another 30 or so pieces of Technogym CV equipment – with integrated screens offering the VISIO AV system – alongside the Water Rowers.

I could honestly have worked out all day – as it was I was kept entertained for a good few hours, including my first proper workout on Kinesis Stations and Water Rowers, both of which get a big thumbs-up – but I had a spa to get to!

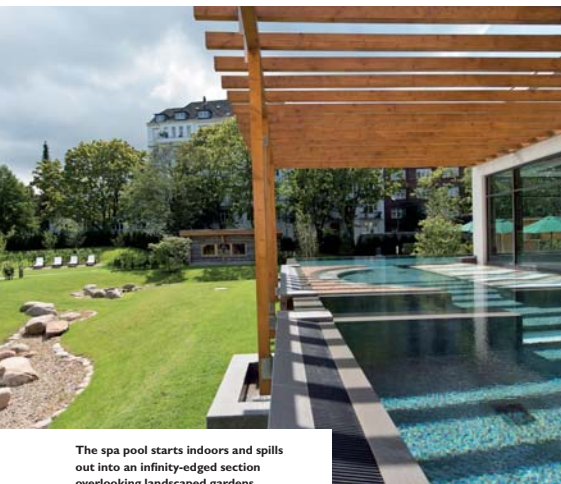
SPA RITUAL

The Europeans put us Brits to shame when it comes to spas: it's so much part of the national psyche in places like Germany

and Austria that the spa offering is really as important as the gym. And once again Aspria comes up trumps with a huge spa area that spills out into the gardens.

There's a spa pool that begins indoors, with a swim-through to an outdoor, infinity-edged section. Five different scents and temperatures of sauna are on offer, plus a steam room, all supplied by Finnjark. Dead Sea salt scrubs are available for the steam room, with a different scent every day, while the saunas host an hourly 'aufguss' – essence-infused water poured onto the coals to increase humidity, all wafted towards participants by a member of the knowledgeable, helpful spa team.

Facilities also include experience showers, footbaths, ice fountain and a



The spa pool starts indoors and spills out into an infinity-edged section overlooking landscaped gardens

number of relaxation areas. It's a very, very easy place to spend several hours – if not at entire day if, as was the case when I was there, the sun is shining and the recliners in the garden inviting.

And all this costs just €125 a month – a premium offering certainly, but given that it includes access to both the gym and the spa area, plus discounts elsewhere in the club, Aspria is perhaps

EXPANSION PLANS

"There will certainly be a few more Aspria clubs in key European cities, but we are also considering developments further afield," says Aspria CEO Brian Morris. "We're in the early stages of connecting with investors that have Middle East and Asian networks or interests. We will never leave Europe behind, but I do have aspirations for Aspria that have a more global outreach in mind. After more than 25 years in the industry and 12 years leading Aspria, I'm probably more excited now about our future prospects than I have ever been."

creating its own niche in the market: that of the value premium club.

Complementing these wet spa facilities are six treatment rooms and a hammam, with an extensive treatment menu featuring Kerstin Florian products. Members receive discounts on all treatments, while external guests can also access the spa on a day spa basis.

I tried one of the spa's signature treatments, a 90-minute luxury caviar facial, which was both effective – my skin felt wonderful afterwards – and sufficiently relaxing that, for the first time ever in a facial, I drifted off to sleep. I then treated myself to a wellbeing massage the following day – also very good, with a great balance between relaxation and working through the knots in my back.

SERVICE FIRST

So what is it that makes Aspria Uhlenhorst such a great club? Ultimately, although the facilities are clearly top-end, it's the people: from reception to gym, spa to restaurant, they're courteous, helpful, welcoming, smiling, knowledgeable. To reiterate Morris, Aspria is a membership services company. When you visit, you quickly realise that service really does come first. And probably second and third too.

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Rolling out

CORE FITNESS

Fitness industry experts are tipping 'CoreFitnessRoller®' to follow The Step, The Bosu and more recently TRX to become a 'must have' product in health clubs, leisure centers and dance and pilates studios throughout the world.

The CoreFitnessRoller® (CFR) is an innovative fitness product that delivers a multitude of unique, specific or full-body workouts in a compact, easily portable package. The versatility of the CoreFitnessRoller® makes it ideal for clients of all fitness levels and allows for limitless programming – including pilates, dance conditioning, sports-specific, intensive core work, cardio, strength, and self-myofascial release.

The uniqueness of CoreFitnessRoller® was recognized early on by Nautilus, a global health and fitness distributor. In late 2011 the company secured an exclusive distribution agreement in the USA for an "at home" version of the CoreFitnessRoller® and in September 2012 it launched a large direct sell campaign through TV and other visual media.

The Nautilus deal has allowed CoreFitnessRoller® to focus on the development of a range of education products to support the professional CFR product, including (but not limited to) an eight-hour CFR Foundation Course which all instructors must take before they can then specialize in areas

The CoreFitnessRoller® shown here lying with stability wedges has many other configurations.



like pilates, dance conditioning, high energy fitness, rolling and myofascial release. Those fitness professionals wishing to become course instructors or who want a much deeper comprehensive understanding of the fitness programming on the CFR are offered a four-day course.

The CoreFitnessRoller® is currently used in health clubs and studios in 10 countries outside of the USA with CoreFitnessRoller® distributors in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, United Kingdom and Europe.

In the UK, Cotswold-based fitness equipment distributor The Mad-Group (yoga-mad.com, fitness-mad.com, pilates-mad.com,) has secured an exclusive distribution deal for the CoreFitnessRoller® and has partnered with Oxfordshire-based Mbodies Training Academy which delivers all CoreFitnessRoller® education in the UK.

The launch of CoreFitnessRoller®



The Side Plank left is a Pilates exercise whilst a Dance Conditioning class (Right) is to music,



kicked-off with CFR Foundation, CFR Comprehensive and CFR Intensive Pilates workshops in London and Leeds in September 2012 taught by Darya Bronston from Santa Barbara, California, USA. Darya invented the product and leads the education faculty in the USA. The first 35 UK-trained instructors were delighted with the versatility of the CoreFitnessRoller® and the quality of the education.

Physiotherapist, fitness professional and fully certified pilates instructor Imelda Noble heads off to Palm Springs USA in October to complete her training as the main course tutor for the UK, she is supported by Matt Gleed and Stefan Taylor who are tasked with developing a network of CFR course trainers in the UK.

Massage therapist and Pilates professional Shanti Bhoola-Evans was the first UK client to purchase a CoreFitnessRoller® back in July 2012. After completing the training course, Bhoola-Evans said: "Thank you to Mbodies and Darya for one of the best workshop/training courses I've ever done. Darya was so warm and enthusiastic."

"I woke up thinking about VRM's and extension arms and carabiner clips. I really found her to be an inspiration and would love to do further training."

UK studio owner, Emma Newham, who is a trained pilates instructor trainer, took the UK course after having attended a CoreFitnessRoller® class in Sydney Australia.

Before signing up for the training she wrote: "I just wanted to let you know that I did a CFR class today at Bondi Pilates in Sydney and I loved it. What a fab workout and such a versatile piece of kit. I was taught by Deanna Berry of "Call Me" pop video fame (by Eric Prydz). She was excellent – a good advert".

Bondi Pilates is just one of a number of health clubs, athletic clubs and pilates studios outside the USA which have jumped at the opportunity to attract new customers, provide unique multi-dimensional workouts, transition pilates mat-work instructors to equipment exercises and develop myofascial release

and rolling courses increasing revenue and bringing in new members.

Michelle Koton, co-owner of the Bondi Studio, says: "Our studio philosophy is to always offer clients training options that incorporate both the brain and the body in an effort to produce positive movement patterns and wellness that they feel now and that will enhance their future health."

"Our incorporation of the CoreFitnessRoller® for both private clients and small groups has been a fantastic addition to our studio offerings."

"Private clients have loved the challenge of the instability of the CoreFitnessRoller® and we have seen incredible improvements in their balance and proprioceptive abilities. The added challenge of being able to work through pilates based exercises, unilaterally, has highlighted many imbalances for clients



The CoreFitnessRoller® challenges stability and strength in combination for a total body workout.

and we have been able to work on strengthening and balancing the body."

"Our small group classes on the CFR have grown in popularity and we currently limit each group to a maximum of eight."

"These classes are high intensity and challenging for clients as we use music through the class. The classes focus on balance and coordination with a wide variety of body position changes with varied resistance levels. It has been fantastic to see the rapid improvement of our clients in balance, focus and proprioceptive behavior and the consistent use of their core strength has been complementary to our regular studio offerings."

The CoreFitnessRoller® is certainly a genius product. The movement choices it offers us are limitless and the depth of benefits clients receive whilst working on the CFR are multidimensional."

Clubs who would like to try out the CoreFitnessRoller® can arrange master classes for their members and taster sessions are being programmed across the country.

The next eight-hour CFR Foundation Course is in Witney Oxfordshire on 24th November with a CFR Pilates Intensive course on November 25th.

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HIT the GYM

In the third part of our series on high-intensity interval training (HIT), Kate Cracknell asks the experts for their advice to operators wanting to introduce this training modality into their gyms

MATT JANUSZEK

CUSTOMER SOLUTIONS
DIRECTOR,
ESCAPE FITNESS



The question of how operators can best implement HIT in their gyms got me thinking back to my evening job from many years ago, as a doorman in a nightclub. I was fortunate to work in some of the best nightclubs, and from behind the scenes I saw how everything, including the queue at the door, was carefully engineered

to create an experience where people would do almost anything to get in and spend money.

The lighting, décor, colours, music, uniforms – all were designed to teleport you from the rest of the world into the exciting world of the club. The DJ had the knack of motivating a crowd of several thousand people, starting by getting everyone's feet tapping as they arrived and then pumping it up as the whole place rocked by midnight. Then, if you're as old as me, you will remember another change of pace for the slow dance.

I know a gym's HIT area is not a nightclub. However, we also know that

most people, given the choice, would rather be entertained than work out – so can we learn from other leisure activities competing for the same share of time and wallet?

How can you create an experience to help your clients escape from their day-to-day life? Do your trainers have the skills to take on the metaphorical role of the DJ and motivate your clients? Has the member journey been thought through from the moment they arrive to the time they leave? Do they make friends and have fun? Are all the senses being stimulated so they leave you on a high, prepared to do almost anything to get in next time? ▶



HIT can help members
get a sense of escape
from their daily life

JON JOHNSTON

MD, MATRIX FITNESS



I'm a big fan of HIT: due to my lifestyle I have to rely on brief, intense workouts to keep in some kind of reasonable shape.

However, when considering implementing HIT in the gym, my main concern is that we do not compromise safety. We must consider how appropriate HIT is for each individual, taking into consideration their age, goals, background and workout history.

Those engaging in HIT typically have a long background in exercise or sport, and have built up high base fitness levels over

years. Among more typical gym members, HIT brings a greater risk of injury: muscle function increases proportionately much faster than ligaments and tendons develop, so although individuals' functional capacity and tolerance of a high workload develops quite rapidly, their structural systems develop at a much slower rate.

Among our staff at Matrix, we have a good example of how HIT can go wrong: an apparently healthy, fit 25-year-old female who had regularly attended the gym but not done much strength and conditioning work. Her first HIT class resulted in a tear in her medial collateral ligament; she's now out of action for weeks.

To avoid such scenarios, we must ensure programmes are properly periodised, with workloads and resistance monitored and appropriate. Proprioception, joint stability and strength should be developed first, before focusing on power.

I would suggest we approach HIT with a lot of vigilance, at first cautiously applying the principle in unstable and dynamic environments.

In addition, while HIT is highly effective as a cardio protocol based on intervals, we must avoid applying the term to all extremely high power or hard training, as this also brings inherent risk.

**THOSE ENGAGING IN HIT TYPICALLY
HAVE A LONG BACKGROUND IN EXERCISE**

SOL GILBERT

OWNER,
ZT FITNESS



We have always incorporated the principles of HIT at our club, but over time we've worked out how to package it better. Make it more exciting and members will

want to get involved – and we find the income then follows.

We've always tried to run dynamic classes that keep our members, and their bodies, guessing. Fit-X and Box-X are our staple HIT classes: 45-minute instructor-led sessions in which participants spend 25–30 minutes above 80 per cent of their maximum heart rate. The sessions are often competitive, but are inclusive and geared to the participants' capabilities – if you only gear HIT to those who are already fit, new attendees won't stay

longer than their first session. You have to get results for everyone.

Location is the other key to monetising HIT. We want everyone to feel the buzz, so sessions take place at the heart of the gym rather than in the studio. Effectively we're advertising the class to other gym members every time we do it. We charge £6.50 a class and regularly have around 15–20 participants. We monitor heart rates in Fit-X and Box-X, but also offer a new HIT MYZONE class. Taking place daily, also at £6.50 a class, this focuses not on reps or distance but on effort – the intensity at which each individual is working.

The engaging, dynamic gym floor presence of HIT has seen our class attendance increase and we further monetise this through selling heart rate belts. For our members, by focusing on results, we're offering real value for money. As a club owner, HIT helps me secure short-term income on promised results and long-term income on actual results.

**ZT Fitness: The dynamic
gym floor presence of
HIT attracts new users**



DAVE WRIGHT

CEO, CREATIVE FITNESS
MARKETING/MYZONE



Setting up a HIT training programme is not as difficult as it may seem. You don't need a great deal of space: 140–185sq m (1,500–2,000sq ft) will suffice. And as far as apparatus goes, kettlebells, ropes and so on are all low-cost items to get you going.

Importantly, the high intensity aspect of the training has to be matched with instructors who are high energy, so they can deliver a structured programme in a short period of time with the level of enthusiasm required.

You must also be organised and understand the intensity levels of the participants. Heart rate monitors will allow you to make sure the training is safe – some systems incorporate screens displaying all the participants' heart rates, so it's clear how hard they're working.

Groups are best kept small and intimate, with much of the programming done in pairs – ideally where fitness levels are matched.

People are prepared to pay extra for HIT programming, and gyms should be ready to trade their members up. Even budget clubs such as Blink Fitness – the low-cost offering from high-end operator Equinox – are able to offer HIT programmes that are charged at a premium on top of monthly membership.



Offering quick 'micro-workouts' can keep the gym floor buzzing

MARK TALLEY

FITNESS DIRECTOR,
LA FITNESS



It's important to remember that HIT isn't for everyone. However, short, intensive classes can make a huge difference – both to a member's fitness and also to their overall experience at the gym.

One of the main issues with many gyms is that you're often left to your own devices, with no-one talking to you. To address this, LA Fitness runs regular PT-led, 10-minute Fast-Classes and Micro-Workouts on the gym floor. Based on HIT methods, these are an excellent way of introducing members to new exercises and equipment they'd otherwise never try.

Our PTs and coaches actively encourage people to join in the Fast-Classes, approaching members on the

gym floor or catching them as they arrive at the club. Typically five or six people take part in each class, giving us good quality contact with those members.

The classes – both the content and the type of equipment used – are tailored for time of day and the type of member we have in the gym at the time, whether that's mums and older people during the day or office workers in the evening. However, they can involve various pieces of kit, from kettlebells and medicine balls to Swiss balls and free weights.

But it's also important to remember that these classes aren't really about targeting dedicated gym-goers; they will always work out regularly. Fast-Classes are about engaging, motivating and educating our 'normal' members – people who might easily fall out of the habit of coming to the gym. If we can make their experience interesting and varied each time they come, as well as showing them positive results, we're much more likely to retain their loyalty.

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Healthtrax pioneered the Nautilus system, which offered results in less time

DOUG WERNER

VICE PRESIDENT,
HEALTHTRAX FITNESS
AND WELLNESS



Historically, 'no time to exercise' has been one of the main excuses used by non gym-goers. Among the pioneers in addressing this was Arthur Jones, founder of Nautilus: although very controversial in some circles, several studies proved that 'one set to momentary muscular failure' training on Nautilus kit could provide similar or better results than traditional free weight training, in less than half the time.

Healthtrax was an early adopter of this concept. We opened our first fitness centre in 1979 with just two 12-piece Nautilus circuits, mostly targeting adults who wanted quick, effective exercise to drive weight loss. It was such a hit that we opened nine centres in our first 18 months.



HIT can benefit from its own distinct area – preferably at the heart of the gym – as well as from specialist trainers

Nowadays our clubs are typically 3,250sq m with the same programmes, services and kit as most other operators. But one thing has remained constant: a professionally supervised Nautilus HIT circuit is still the core of our strength training component, and the 30-minute workout still the focus of our sales pitch.

All this being said, we know of plenty of HIT programmes that have failed, usually due to poor trainer buy-in – which mostly derives from a lack of education – and/or weak promotion of the concept. We believe HIT should have its own a distinct, central area, with signage and enthusiastic 'promoters' trained in the biomechanics, physiology, features and benefits of the equipment and HIT protocol. These trainers must develop a professional coaching relationship with each member, creating demand by carefully explaining the benefits of HIT training, demonstrating proper technique and providing motivation.

We're finding that the growing Baby Boomer market segment is not only familiar with HIT, but also partial to it – it's not just a concept for the young and fit. Interestingly, most of our top revenue-producing PTs have also learned that the HIT circuit is the ideal spot to develop their client business.



kate cracknell
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GAME ON!

In part two of our investigation into the 'gamification' of wellness, Rhianon Howells explores how fitness operators can engage with the trend, and takes a look at some innovative examples

In the June issue of *Health Club Management* (see HCM June 12, p46), we reported on the exponential growth of digital gaming concepts aimed at encouraging people to adopt healthier lifestyles. And with leading fitness technology companies from FitLinx to Fitbit adding challenge and reward elements to their existing wellness applications, activity monitors and health-tracking devices, not to mention retail giants Nike and Adidas getting in on the act with concepts such as FuelBand and miCoach, the growth shows no signs of waning.

If you're unfamiliar with the mores of this brave new world, however, it may be difficult to grasp how gamification can work for your business, while the prospect

of learning a whole new vernacular can be daunting – but the rewards of embracing the trend, say experts, are equal to the perils of ignoring it.

"For a long time in our sector, technology has been seen by some as a risk to be managed, whereas in every other vibrant industry it's the primary driver of growth." So says Steve Ward, policy and development director at the FIA, which recently launched spogo, an online search engine for sports and fitness services with the wider remit of promoting technological innovation in the sector. Ward continues: "From a behaviour management perspective, all the evidence suggests that the principles of gamification – such as challenges, tracking, progression, levels and rewards

– can very positively reinforce what we're trying to do."

"Fitness is one of the prime industries where gamification can play a very significant role," agrees Sarah Catlett, vice president with international think-tank The Futures Company, which is monitoring the trend. "It's a huge opportunity for health clubs not only to retain current members but also to reach new customers who are looking to switch clubs, or who have never used a health club before."

Sensory experience

This all sounds good in theory, but how can operators engage with the trend in a way that has a real impact on both member behaviour and the bottom line? "The important thing is for operators not to feel that playing in this space is beyond them," says Ward. "Consumers are admittedly so used to the Apples of this world that they won't tolerate anything other than great digital experiences. However, there are some excellent technology companies specialising in this field, and if they understand that the fitness sector is really open to collaboration, they'll approach us with ideas."

So when shopping around for a suitable gaming concept, what should operators look out for? Part of what consumers are looking for is a fun, sensory experience that encourages them to think about fitness in a different way. "One of my favourite examples of this is Volkswagen's musical staircase," says Catlett. "A staircase and an escalator stand side-by-side in a subway station, but almost everyone takes the escalator. But by building a set of piano keys up the stairs, they make it fun – and the number of people choosing the stairs over the escalator increases by 66 per cent."

One of the best current examples of a digital gaming concept that successfully

Gaming concepts can help users think about fitness in a different way



CHRISTOPHER EDWIN NUZZACCO / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

injects fun into fitness, says Ward, is *Zombies, Run!* Designed by company Six to Start and compatible with iPhone, iPod Touch, Android and Windows Phone, this 'running game and audio adventure' casts the player as 'Runner 5' in an post-apocalyptic world populated by zombies. Responding to orders and other voice recordings delivered through headphones (including the rattling groans of approaching zombies), you must navigate the world outside your 'base' to collect supplies while also staying alive. "It's brilliant," says Ward. "I mean, what's going to make you run further or quicker than being chased by zombies?"

But while having fun is important, there's more to gamification than entertainment, says Catlett: "Consumers want control, particularly in a time of constant uncertainty. Giving them a way to track progress, understand setbacks and feel a sense of accomplishment is something a successful gaming concept can deliver on."

Intrinsic benefits

Rewards are another facet of gaming that can be a great motivator, although Catlett warns that these cannot be a substitute for a meaningful experience. This is borne out by Nexercise, a hugely successful smartphone app that rewards physical activity with free or discounted merchandise, from energy bars to discounts on massages (see below). "The rewards offer fun, extrinsic motivation, but they're not what keep most active users engaged," says co-founder Greg

PROPERLY LEVERAGED, TECHNOLOGY LIKE OURS CAN HELP THE FITNESS INDUSTRY POSITIVELY INFLUENCE THE LIVES OF MILLIONS*

Coleman. "The physical rewards are only available in the US and UK, but we're also seeing high rates of adoption in Latin America, where rewards are not available, which tells us a lot of people are responding to the intrinsic benefits."

And while real-world rewards such as cash, discounts or other giveaways are undoubtedly more attention-grabbing, virtual rewards – such as badges on a player's profile or their name on a leaderboard – can be just as effective at influencing behaviour, says Ward. In fact, social interaction and recognition are a key part of what makes fitness gaming work. "One of the fundamental principles of gaming is that you don't do it by yourself," says Catlett. "You're competing or collaborating with others and that can really drive you to do more than you might have done on your own."

But beware: if you don't get the competitive elements of a game right, the results can actually be the opposite of what's desired. "Leaderboards can be extremely demotivating if the top score is so high you can never get near it," observes Stuart Dyson, founder of

BodyBook (see p52). "On BodyBook, every time a player looks at the leaderboard they're taken to their own position on the board, so their focus is not the top-scorer but the player directly above them. The results can also be filtered so only their own friends feature on the board, and on some challenges we re-set the board every month so a new player can be top."

Although getting to grips with the finer nuances of gaming psychology may prove to be a learning curve, there's no doubt among the experts that this is a trend the fitness industry simply can't ignore. "I don't know how long the term 'gamification' will be the cool buzzword, but I do believe that if you can motivate a person to perform a specific action, you will always be relevant – and if you can motivate people to perform actions in large numbers, you can change the world," says Coleman. "Properly leveraged, technology like ours can help the fitness industry to positively influence the lives of millions of people."

We take a closer look at just a few innovative examples of fitness gaming.

NEXERCISE

www.nexercise.com

What is it? A free app for iPhone and Android that rewards exercise with wellness-related prizes and coupons. Users choose an activity such as running, sports or working out at the gym; the app then uses sensors built into the phone to verify activity has taken place. The more someone works out, the more points – and rewards – they earn.

Key features? As well as earning rewards, Nexercise users can compete against each other; the app also automatically uploads users' achievements to Facebook and Twitter.

How does it make money? Through reward partners (who pay to provide prizes), advertising sales and custom features that users pay extra for.

Where is it available? The app is downloadable all over the world in English or Spanish, although rewards are only available in the US and UK.



More exercise leads to more points – and therefore greater rewards



How successful is it? Both the iPhone and Android versions have a 4.5-star rating and user numbers are in the six-figure range.

How can health clubs benefit? Simply encouraging members to download Nexercise has the potential to increase member engagement, says co-founder, president and COO Greg Coleman, while becoming reward partners could enable health and fitness clubs both to attract new customers and drive gym usage.

BODYBOOK

www.bodybook.com

What is it? A website and online community aimed at boosting physical activity among the sedentary population. After signing up, players take part in free, one-off fitness challenges on their own or with friends – running a set distance, for example, or completing a set number of workouts/sports sessions. Creators such as health clubs, sports centres and other fitness professionals pay a monthly fee to set challenges with a view to increasing client engagement and attendance, while charities are also invited to set fundraising challenges which supporters pay to take part in.

Key features? The site has a strong social element: players can play against the clock or compete with friends, while a direct interface with Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube allows them to share their achievements in a variety of ways. Each time a player completes a challenge they receive a virtual sticker for their online stickerbook and their name is added to the BodyBook leaderboard. Players and creators can also add their own 'FitRewards' as an additional incentive.

How does it make money? Commercial creators pay a monthly fee; charities pay a small percentage of donations as per other well-known fundraising websites; players pay

for custom features not included in the free service; and affiliates, such as Amazon.co.uk and adventure travel companies, pay for links. Moving forward, the company is also looking for compatible brands to supply rewards.

Where is it available? All over the world (but only in English).

How successful is it? BodyBook is currently in the Alpha phase of its release, aimed at testing the system's useability and gameplay with a limited number of users. The company is now looking for health clubs to trial the challenge creation element of the concept.

How can health clubs benefit? As creators, operators can use BodyBook to increase engagement among members and to reach out to new ones through the site's social elements.



FITBUG'S GAMES ENGINE

www.fitbug.com

What is it? Fitbug is an online health and wellbeing coach that allows people to monitor their daily activity using tracking devices to count steps, calories burned and other metrics. Data can be accessed and updated via the fitbug.com website or a new smartphone app. The system includes a competitive element called Fantasy Football, which pits individuals or teams against each other in virtual walking/running challenges. This year, the company has expanded the concept to create a new 'games engine', including a library of virtual routes from the Great Wall of China to Route 66.

Key features? As players progress along a route, they can 'visit' local hotspots, learning about the area, accessing local recipes and picking up a variety of wellness tips. The site also includes leaderboards, a Chatterbox feature enabling players to engage in banter with each other, and a pacer tool which shows how much ground users need to cover each day to complete the

game on time. Rewards can also be offered for an extra incentive.

How does it make money? Direct from consumers, who can choose from either a flexible monthly payment plan or an annual contract; from companies, who pay Fitbug to deliver corporate wellness programmes and team challenges; and from health club partners such as Holmes Place.

Where is it available? The games engine and new app are currently available in the UK and US and will launch in South Africa this year.

How successful is it? Fitbug works with some of the world's largest blue-chip employers, health insurers and incentives companies in both the UK and the US.

How can health clubs benefit? According to CEO Paul Landau, Fitbug enables operators to keep fitness at the forefront of their clients' minds at all times, while inter- or intra-club challenges are a great way to build community spirit and inspire loyalty. It can also help operators provide a new type of membership for those not attracted to the traditional gym-based model.



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TECHNOGYM'S MYWELLNESS CLOUD

www.technogym.com

What is it? Launched this year, the Mywellness Cloud is a suite of business applications that combines activity tracking with user profiling, programming, challenges, coaching and communications. Data can be accessed online, via a mobile app and through Technogym gym equipment.

Key features? The cloud is made up of seven apps, including Challenge, which enables health clubs to engage members and drive visit frequency through competitive challenges. Operators can create customised challenges for individuals or teams based on a number of measures: calories burned, moves completed, distance covered or gym attendances. Prizes can be offered for added motivation.

How does it make money? Operators purchase the solution from Technogym.

Where is it available? All over the world.

How successful is it? There are already more than 50 operators using Mywellness Cloud worldwide. According to Technogym network manager Alex Bennett, feedback has been extremely positive, with the Challenge app proving by far the most popular.

How can health clubs benefit? "The Challenge app engages members in two ways," says Bennett. "Firstly by creating in-club communities – research shows that compliance to exercise is increased where others are involved; and secondly by using competition to stimulate a natural desire to achieve."

More than 50 operators use the app worldwide



SWITCH2HEALTH

www.s2h.com



Participants receive a patented S2H pedometer which unlocks reward codes once they have achieved a certain amount of activity

What is it? Switch2Health (S2H) is a challenge-based online wellness platform that can deliver both corporate wellness programmes for corporate clients and loyalty programmes for health and fitness providers. Challenge participants receive a patented S2H pedometer that unlocks encrypted 'reward codes' once a set amount of activity has been achieved. Results are then uploaded to a customised Challenge website, either directly or via a mobile app.

Key features? Participants earn points, status medals and achievement badges for completing healthy activity, as well as real-world rewards from gift cards to special privileges. They can also join teams, climb leaderboards and compete with fellow participants. Social elements include online forum S2H Challenge Chatter and the option to connect S2H accounts to Facebook and Twitter.

How does it make money? Clients pay a monthly fee for the service based on the number of employees/members who are participating.

Where is it available? The US-based company has recently launched the platform globally and is currently seeking both clients and distribution partners.

How successful is it? Since launching early this year, the programme already has 'a few thousand' participants signed up, says co-founder, president and CEO Seth Tropper, and several more contracts are in the negotiation stage.

How can health clubs benefit? According to Tropper, an S2H loyalty programme increases member engagement through a combination of incentives, healthy competition and social recognition, while also enabling operators to track data and analyse results.

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FAST FORWARD

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How can the latest technologies be used most effectively by gym operators? Jon Nasta talks to a panel of experts for their best practice advice on incorporating the latest trends

“Have you released your inner geek?” – that’s a question that’s been asked by one of our industry’s most forward-thinking technology adopters, Steve Groves, at many industry events over the last 24 months. Have you and your business fully embraced the exciting world of technology, with all the opportunities that brings? How far is the fitness

sector going both in its adoption and its development of technology?

Each year, it seems more of us are prepared to give our inner geeks a little more attention, as apps, social media and the latest innovations from the mighty Apple permeate our everyday lives. Technology is increasingly a must for everyone, not just teenagers, and it’s all happening with so much ease that we no longer question technology’s growing role, not only in our personal lives but also in our industry.

Groves, the ‘chief geek’ at Canadian health club chain Goodlife Fitness, recently stated that there is a “rule of technology innovation suggesting that people over-estimate the impact of technology changes over a two- to three-year period, but grossly under-estimate the impact over a 10-year horizon”. The industry needs to be ready to undertake

real change, with genuine revolution in business models, to fully embrace the opportunities in the long term.

But how have we fared on this so far? Did you listen to your IT guy five years ago when he first nervously pitched the idea of using social media as a tool for customer engagement? Or did you dismiss the idea – in the same way that a marketing seminar panel at a leading fitness industry convention did just five years ago – as a way of marketing to teenagers?

We need to be ever more alert as the speed of technological progress continues to accelerate. If the fitness industry’s timeline so far is an indication of future adoption patterns, it’s likely that technologies we will be adopting in 2014 are already being widely used by other industries right now. Are we ready for the new business models this will bring? We ask the experts for their thoughts. ►



STEPHANIE JENNINGS
Director of sales,
MINDBODY

The way people interact socially has changed dramatically. It's all happening online via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest, to name just a few. Mobile allows people to connect simultaneously, at any time, from anywhere. And let's not forget text messaging. A phone call can take 20 minutes, but it only takes 10 seconds to send a text. In a time-poor society, speed is of the essence.

Perhaps that's why mobile technology is being adopted faster than any other technological advancement in history, with each new innovation embraced quicker than the last. According to Apple, iPad adoption is three times faster than that of the iPhone: over 112 million Americans

are expected to have an iPad by 2016.

For a client-based industry like health clubs, this social shift means that gym owners must adapt by being online in all the right places. Future clients are online investigating your facility. They start with a search that leads them to your website. They visit your Facebook page, read reviews on Yelp, view your location on YouTube, tweet to discover your latest promotions. And finally they book and pay for your classes and training appointments online. And they do it all from their mobile devices.

Today's consumer expects to be able to do business with you online. Make it easy for them and prove that you understand the importance of their time by adding



New clients are now more likely to check out your gym online before visiting

online booking pages to your website or embedding them in your Facebook page. Ultimately, ensure your client relationships survive and thrive in the mobile age by being where clients can find you, and offering them the convenience they crave.

FLORIAN / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



TOM WITHERS
Head of sales,
Gladstone Health
and Leisure

In today's busy society, the focus is on convenience. Clever companies are looking to offer quick, tailored solutions for the individual. Think Oyster cards, sat navs and the millions of mobile phone

applications that are designed to make our lives easier.

Apple's new iOS 6 software is a great example. Its new Passbook app will allow users to scan their iPhone to use a coupon or a concert ticket, and could be used by operators to promote an activity, special discount or even for members to access their leisure facility. The app automatically displays vouchers or passes based on time or location, so when you walk into your club, the relevant voucher appears and can be scanned for entry.

But hold off on purchasing your new iPhone just yet, as there's much speculation that the iPhone 5 could contain RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology, a non-contact system that transfers data from a tag attached to an object, like the Oyster card. Once RFID becomes a prominent mobile phone feature, customers could do away with their membership card altogether, accessing leisure facilities and interacting directly with your business – even swiping to pay for vending machine items – all via their mobile devices.

With this customer expectation of smart technology at your fingertips when you need it, the leisure industry needs to follow suit. It must create more specific software, linked to the wide range of individual job roles in the sector and enabling staff to achieve their tasks more effectively. Think of McDonald's, where staff are sent to the drive-thru with handheld devices so they are able to take orders during busy periods.

In the future, we can expect to see leisure technology centring around the right software for the right person, with the specific applications each role requires on a handy mobile device. Ultimately this will offer a more flexible, personalised working environment and allow operators even greater interaction with customers.



Smartphones may perform the role of membership cards in the future

TANAKI / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



KEVIN ANSON

MD, Clarity

While your customers expect great one-to-one service, they also want to be able to get things done simply and quickly themselves. By providing effective online access, your technology can free them to join a gym programme or book an activity themselves – from anywhere, 24/7.

Continuing the theme of empowering your customers with self-service facilities, equipping your gym with kiosk technology provides attractive, versatile and convenient member entry and service options. Those who have booked a session online experience continued service efficiency with a fast-track arrival experience, while you maintain full access control and free up staff resources.

It's also vital that gyms communicate effectively, in the ways that best suit their members. Increasingly, that means

digitally – via text, email or online social media channels. Use your technology's communication tools to create, manage and deliver targeted and engaging messages, news and incentivised offers. Effective digital communication will drive retention levels, can be deployed rapidly, and costs much less than usual methods. Make sure you use your system to track, evaluate and learn from campaigns too.

As part of this, targeted promotional and incentive-based offers are critical in driving member spend and growing gym revenues. Your technology should make the process easy for your customers too, maximising results by enabling them to redeem vouchers straight from their mobile phones when they book and/or pay for activities.

Finally, work with your technology provider to optimise the user interface based on fast system navigation and as few screens as possible. Equipping your gym staff with an intuitive, user-friendly system will make them more relaxed and more efficient – and that's key to delivering great service and enhancing member relationships. ▶

“Equipping your gym staff with an intuitive, user-friendly system will make them more relaxed and efficient – and that's key to delivering great service and enhancing member relationships”



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Baker believes smart membership cards and wristbands are the way forward. Gantner (above and right) offers such technology, with its systems enabling keyless locker access and cashless gyms



RICHARD BAKER
MD, EZ Facility

Using new technologies and 'smart' software allow gyms not only to streamline existing procedures, but also to provide better member experiences. It frees up gym managers and leads to an increased focus on customer satisfaction/retention and growth of new membership sales.

Software that links to direct debit/credit card processing, smart access control and social media (for marketing purposes) is the way forward, as is using smart membership cards or wristbands for locker access and cashless gyms.

Pin access, including pin reminders via text, allows gyms to provide staff-less check-in and make massive cost savings – a trend that's prevalent in the wave of new budget gyms. The preference for SaaS (software as a service) that consolidates many of the above features for the fitness market is here to stay.

We're already seeing operators use mobile technologies to fast-forward membership sign-up and speed up online class bookings. Using tablets and smartphones to sign up new members in a front-of-house scenario makes the process much more member-friendly.

Meanwhile, apps that feature the operator's logo, website format and colour scheme are much in demand: using these apps to promote the club and streamline sign-up at the same time is hugely advantageous.

Today's consumers are used to convenience and speed of service. Apps that offer class bookings, as well as gym information such as opening times, trainer profiles and so on – all on the go – will help drive retention and increase member satisfaction.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Enhancing Value

Is equipment availability actually the key determinant of member satisfaction? Kate Cracknell talks to Rory McGown, founder of GYMetrix, about what he calls the Higgs Boson of gym operations

Q You call your approach 'Lean Thinking' – what is this?

Lean Thinking is an established methodology used by a number of the world's leading businesses, including Toyota, Tesco and Microsoft. Lean focuses on enhancing value from the customers' perspective, and removing everything not adding value. The fundamental question is: 'Given the choice, would the customer pay for this specific element of our offering?'

Q How can this be applied to the fitness sector specifically?

Applying the Lean Cycle to gyms first involves identifying value from the customer's perspective. You then map Value Streams: as customers use the gym, what's the order of value-generating events? Customers should easily flow through their value stream without having to wait for anything – parking, equipment, water fountains, showers etc – as waiting inhibits them gaining value. They must also be able to 'pull' resources into the gym that add value for them.

This is an ongoing cycle, continually looking to enhance value for customers and eliminate waste. From an operator perspective, being lean means less financial



GYMetrix founder: Rory McGown

outlay – you identify and enhance only what is valued by your customers – as well as improved revenues, with happier customers driving business growth.

But the fitness industry is not currently lean, and a key problem is that it operates on an inefficient 'push' model: operators and suppliers push equipment into gyms with little data on customer demand.

At GYMetrix, our focus is on gym equipment availability as a key driver of added value, and in only 20 months we've identified over £1.8m-worth of

equipment that's either not used or under-used – an average of £36k for every gym we've worked with. At the same time, there are shortages of other types of kit, resulting in frustrated customers not being able to flow easily around a gym floor. Our recommendations show that the investment required to address these shortages averages out at £14k per gym. Gyms can save money and improve service at the same time.

Q How did you identify equipment availability as your key measure?

By being a gym customer myself – the frustration and loss of value I experienced while waiting to use equipment when there wasn't enough of it. I realised gyms were providing a bad service because they had no system of measuring and responding to demand for equipment; if you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

Q How directly is equipment availability linked to Net Promoter Score (NPS) results?

Based on the consolidation of over 14,000 customer surveys, they're very directly linked.

What are your favourite 3 types of equipment you like to use the most in the gym?

Treadmill A B C
TRX A B C
Free Weights Bench A B C

Please attach the statement that best describes how you feel about that equipment.

- A The equipment is usually free and I am happy
- B The equipment is usually busy but it doesn't bother me
- C The equipment is usually busy and it does bother me

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Figure 1: Users rate the availability of machines – A, B or C

Net Promoter Link to Equipment Availability

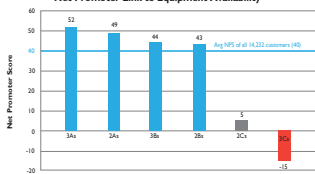


Figure 2: These availability ratings – A, B or C – impact NPS



Availability of kit in free weight areas is consistently low

We ask customers in our surveys how available they find their three favourite types of equipment, and also how likely they are to recommend the gym – the NPS question. When we grouped customers' responses regarding how busy they found equipment, and linked these to NPS results, we were amazed at what we found (see Figures 1 & 2, p62).

We've seen gyms' overall NPS double and even triple when equipment availability is improved, and drop by up to two-thirds when it has decreased. In these examples, only equipment availability changed – staff, location, changing rooms and so on all remained the same.

One great case study comes from Mark Tolley at Renfrewshire Leisure. He had a capacity problem at one of his gyms, The Lagoon, and in the first instance bought four more treadmills to solve an acute shortage. His direct debit income subsequently increased by £5k a month – an annualised ROI of 315 per cent. He then expanded the capacity of the whole gym, and his direct debits increased by over £25k a month – and still rising. He now has one of the highest NPS in the industry, up from 27 per cent in March 2011 to 76 per cent in April 2012.

Who do you work with?

GYMetrix began operations in early 2011 after two years of development at Edinburgh University's Informatics Department. We've worked with a range of operators, from trusts and universities to big private sector operators such as Virgin Active, Nuffield Health, Pure Gym and David Lloyd Leisure.

We generally do one- or two-week projects, attaching a variety of discrete wireless sensors to every piece of gym equipment to measure its usage/availability. We also conduct customer surveys on the gym floor,

asking customers how busy they find the equipment, how likely they are to recommend the gym, and why.

We also measure temperature and sound levels. We aim to objectively measure as many aspects of a gym customer's experience as we can.

What is the output of your surveys and tracking?

The output is firstly answering the general question: Does this gym have the right overall amount of equipment to cater to customer demand? We also address the specific questions: What equipment is in short supply, causing frustration and a loss of value to customers? And what do they have too much of, which is not adding customer value? (see Figure 3, below)

The answers to these questions can, of course, be influenced by instructors,

who can guide customers' choices and demand patterns to better fit with what's available. We therefore also advise where demand-side management and programming can be introduced or improved to benefit the customers.

How does your approach differ from the usage tracking already offered by equipment manufacturers?

Firstly, we work on a wider range of equipment – not just cardio but also resistance machines, cables, Power Plates, free weights benches, Smith machines, performance racks, punchbags, rowers, Powerbags and TRX. We can't currently track kit like dumbbells, kettlebells and Swiss balls, but we're working on this.

Secondly, we're able to time-filter our data to analyse peak periods, when the gym has to optimise its capacity,

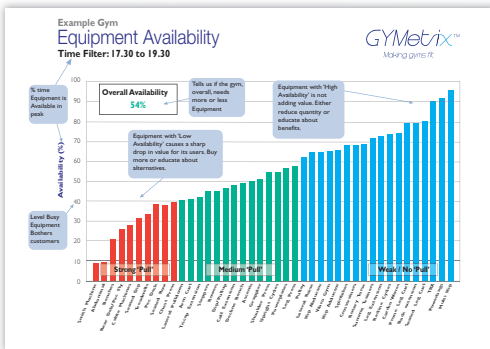


Figure 3: Does the gym have the right overall mix of equipment to meet demand?



At peak times, 40 to 60 per cent equipment availability is the sweet spot that operators should work towards



- and also look at the flow of customers using so-called 'heatmaps'. These show how available each piece of equipment is throughout the course of a day, quickly highlighting where the issues lie.

Most importantly, 'total time' use of a machine doesn't tell you what level of service you're providing customers – in terms of how available equipment is for them to use – and therefore whether you need more or less of that equipment type. Time-specific percentage equipment availability does.

Q What's the ideal peak time percentage availability?

Anything below 40 per cent availability represents a shortage for customers, bad service, congestion and frustration. There's a strong 'pull' for more of this equipment to enhance value for customers and remove waiting time.

Availability much higher than 60 per cent represents waste for the operator. There's little to no customer 'pull' for this equipment, so adding more – or even replacing it when it is traded out – adds little value.

During peak periods, operators want to be in the sweet spot between 40 and 60 per cent availability, where there are neither shortages causing a loss of value to customers, nor excesses causing a loss of value to the operator.

Q How can you work out exactly what equipment is required to deliver optimum availability?

The GYMetrix system is still patent pending – once we have our patent granted, I'll share that with you! Suffice to say, the system enables us to precisely calculate exactly what volumes of each type of equipment are required to achieve ideal levels of availability. It's turned setting up gyms from subjective art into precise science.

Q Can you also predict what would happen at other times of the year, or if the membership were to grow?

Yes. Whenever we undertake a project, we ask for front gate numbers for that week and the preceding 52 weeks. The system enables us to simulate increasing or decreasing customer numbers by whatever percentage we choose, and makes the appropriate calculations for what equipment availability and equipment requirements would be.

Q Have you made any general findings across the fitness sector as a whole?

We consistently measure low availability in free weight areas, which generates high levels of dissatisfaction in our surveys. We also notice lower NPS for male gym members compared to females, which appears to be related. This is an example of a 'pull' trend, where existing customer demand is not adequately catered for. We're not suggesting turning gyms into body-building clubs though: we generally suggest getting more 10–20kg dumbbells, and more benches.

Meanwhile functional training areas, offering equipment such as TRX, are mostly under-used. This is an example of a 'push' trend by suppliers and gym operators. That's not to say these areas aren't of great training value to the member, but more instructor education on how to use functional equipment is needed to increase demand and thus customer value.

We often point out that the information we produce is not the answer sheet – it's the question sheet. The answer isn't: 'TRX usage is low.' The question is: 'Why is TRX usage low?' Unless operators are asking the right questions, they'll never get the right answers.

Q Do you ever recommend pieces of equipment come out altogether?

We're very aware of the need to keep the gym floor balanced. When suggesting removing equipment where there's only one of that type – hence reducing availability to 0 per cent – the process has to be managed carefully by gym staff. Several weeks before its removal, customers seen using the equipment should be informed of its imminent removal, and shown how to work that muscle group using an alternative exercise.

Q The fitness sector generally sees its value as held in its people, with higher levels of staff-member interaction credited with improved retention. Do you agree?

Staff interactions are important, but we consider these to be a secondary value driver, with equipment availability a primary value driver – we believe using equipment is the primary reason members are on the gym floor.

We're not disputing the importance of staff interactions – operators need to be doing everything well if they want to delight customers. However, early evidence indicates that equipment availability will prove a stronger link to business growth and member retention.

Is there anything new in the pipeline for GYMetrix?

We're looking at a variety of additional technologies, including RF tags on dumbbells and other small pieces of equipment to measure usage. We're also looking at video analytics technology to measure how many people are in a given area. In addition, we've started using good old-fashioned observational data.



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How Health Clubs and Spa's can use electricity more effectively

Reducing energy use takes some effort but the rewards are immediate, with lower energy costs. Miele Professional's Les Marshall shares some pointers to ensure electricity is used as effectively as possible in your establishment.

Tip 1: Consider replacing old hot water systems

It costs money to heat water, so don't let cash run down the drain – replacing an inefficient hot water system can quickly reduce energy use, and your bills! Options to consider include point-of-use hot water units (smaller units that heat water on demand), solar hot water systems, energy-efficient gas systems, or heat pump hot water systems. You'll not only be more energy efficient, but you'll save money and never run out of hot water.

Tip 2: Upgrade your laundry appliances

Gyms and Spa's can process a considerable amount of laundry, which uses a surprising amount of energy and water resources. If your washing machine or dryer is more than a decade old, it's consuming a lot more electricity than it needs to. Miele Professional have put energy efficiency and minimising running costs at the heart of product development, any new appliance you buy



Les Marshall, Marketing and Sales Director

today will use less electricity than the model you're replacing.

There are energy-efficient machines such as Miele's heat-pump dryers, which require no ducting and are very easy to install. The heat-pump dryers offer energy savings of up to 60%.

Tip 3: Adjust the thermostat on your hot water system

Check that your hot water system is set to the temperature recommended by a registered plumber. Leaving hot water standing at elevated temperatures will increase energy losses. Reducing the temperature by just 1°C can cut heating bills by 10%.

Tip 4: Hot water fill reduces consumption

One effective but widely underestimated way of saving resources is to connect appliances to a hot water supply. Washing machines and dishwashers, in particular, require most electrical energy to heat up water. Through the use of pre-heated hot water, the opportunities to cut electricity costs are significant. Instead of heating water inside the machine using electrical

energy, machines take in centrally heated hot water instead. Here are some facts and figures: Electricity costs alone can be reduced on a washing machine by up to 47% and on dishwashers by around 36%. Savings are greatest if water is heated in a solar-thermal array by the sun's heat.

Unlike many competitors' products, Miele dishwashers can all be connected to a hot-water supply. A positive side-effect is that programme cycles are significantly shorter, as little as 18 minutes with Miele's new ProfiLine range of Dishwashers.

Tip 5: Choosing the right dishwasher for the job

If you don't have the right dishwasher suited to your business requirements, it can end up costing your business money. A wrongly specified machine could use a substantial amount of energy, which is why it's important to ensure you are using the most efficient product. Mydishwasher.co.uk helps you explore the options that will help your business the most, providing detailed information about a variety of dishwasher designs that might be the perfect fit for your business's unique needs.

Miele's new ProfiLine Dishwasher range features some machines with a category A+ energy efficiency label; consumption has been reduced on average by 10% compared with the previous series. In the 'Eco' programme, selected ProfiLine dishwashers are even 30% more efficient in terms of water and electricity than their predecessors..

For more information on
Miele Professional products call
0844 893 0777 or visit
www.miele-professional.co.uk



Miele Professional's new ProfiLine Dishwasher

A fitter WORLD

AMY SMYTH AND RADHA PATEL OF THE FUTURES

COMPANY OFFER A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE FACTORS

INFLUENCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

Globally, a third of all adults are insufficiently active – this in spite of physical activity's proven role in preventative healthcare, benefiting every aspect of wellbeing and substantially increasing life expectancy.

This worldwide lethargy can be partly attributed to the fact that many only think of physical activity in the context of weight control and obesity; inactivity is often overlooked as a key risk factor for other non-communicable diseases. In fact, inactivity is the cause of approximately 5.32 million deaths each year, and

32.1 million years of lost livelihood and productivity. Perhaps surprisingly, physical inactivity is a bigger threat even than smoking and obesity, accounting for 6 per cent of the burden of global mortality, against only 5 per cent for overweight and obesity. The failure to spend 15–30 minutes a day in brisk walking has been shown to increase the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes by 20–30 per cent, and shorten lifespan by three to five years.

But within that overall one-third figure, levels of physical activity vary hugely across the globe. The Middle East and the

Americas have high levels of inactivity, for example, whereas South-East Asia is considerably more active. There are real contrasts in terms of activity levels between countries: 69 per cent of adults get too little exercise in Saudi Arabia compared to 5 per cent in Bangladesh.

Many of these differences can be explained by cultural, lifestyle and environmental factors. In this feature, we outline those factors in a bid to understand the challenges that the global fitness industry really must address if it wants to get more people, more active, more often.



India: No sports culture beyond cricket



In some cultures, being overweight is a sign of affluence and status

1 Culture dictates the fundamental expectations as to who should be active, how and when

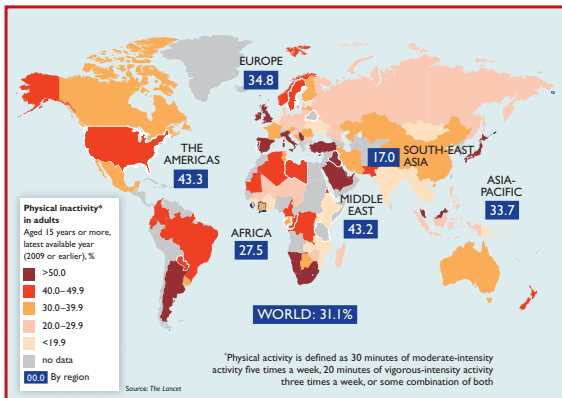
Women are less active than men overall, but there are big discrepancies between countries in terms of the number of women who are physically active.

In some cultures, women are discouraged from exercising; in more conservative Islamic societies in the Middle East, for example, women showing skin in public is frowned upon, making public exercise difficult. Women in Saudi Arabia have actually had to fight for their right to exercise. Since 2009, there have been drives to close women's gyms that are not felt to be sufficiently overseen and monitored.

But there are some positive signs. This year, Saudi Arabia finally agreed to send two women to the Olympic Games. Brunei and Qatar still refuse to allow women to compete, but as Ahmed al-Marzooqi, editor-in-chief of Saudi-based sports newspaper shesport.com, explains, London 2012 "showed to all people and religious authorities in Saudi that women in sports do not clash with Islamic tradition and Saudi society".

Meanwhile in Singapore – a multi-ethnic country encompassing Chinese, Malays and Indians – community-based physical activity programmes have been customised for specific ethnic groups, in collaboration with mosques, Malay Muslim organisations and Indian temples.

In the US, low-income Latinas are more likely to experience high rates of



Physical activity levels vary dramatically around the world, with the UK among the worst

inactivity compared with other members of the population due to lack of access to exercise locations and lack of affordable Spanish language programmes. A study discovered that "culturally tailored aerobic exercise intervention" can be instrumental in encouraging this group to participate in vigorous exercise several times a week.

In China, activity levels between the sexes are much more equal, with communist ideologies supporting the equal participation of men and women.

In Australia, women are actually more likely to participate in sport than men, as they have a greater reported commitment to keeping themselves healthy in the longer term. However, Aboriginal Australians face a number of challenges when it comes to exercise, not least that exercising can be seen as anti-social and against the principles of spending time with your family.

There are also low levels of activity in markets with rapidly ageing populations. Globally, people under the age of 35 were ▶



Saudi Arabia: Women fight for exercise rights

In China, activity is encouraged among both sexes





In countries such as Holland (above) cycling is part of the culture, while Australia's warmer climate (left) is conducive to outdoor exercise

- found to be 58 per cent more likely to participate in sports than older people, while in Poland, younger people were 170 per cent more likely to participate in sports. With a rapidly ageing population in many markets, the need to offer new, more relevant forms of exercise is becoming more widely recognised: New York City has created playgrounds specifically for adults, for example.

2 Culture shapes the type of engagement people have with sport and specific physical activities

Some countries have stronger cultures of physical activity than others, or are more engaged with specific sporting forms. Many Middle Eastern countries do not place a high cultural importance on sport or physical activity, and in many African countries, being overweight can be a sign of affluence and status, lessening the incentive to reach a healthy weight.

Physical activity has always been seen as important in China, where youngsters are encouraged from an early age to participate in sports and exercise regimens: morning exercise drills are a regular part of school life right up to senior secondary school.

One 2008 survey found Chinese consumers were globally the most interested in sport – 87 per cent said they were very/fairly interested in sport. This is set to increase further, as it's increasingly recognised that status and success can be gained from being a sports player. Indeed, some parents in China are now prepared to spend up to 300,000 yuan (US\$43,940) on golf lessons for their children. The Olympic medals board is testament

to the current surge of aspiring young Chinese sports players, who act as role models for younger ones.

In India meanwhile, compared to Western countries, there is a low level of emphasis on sport. Cricket is huge, but this is often at the expense of other sports and activities that don't get a chance to be offered or celebrated. "We don't have a sporting culture in the country. Most parents wouldn't want their children in sports. Sports in India is still a social activity. The country requires a conscious effort to promote sport," says Indian Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra.

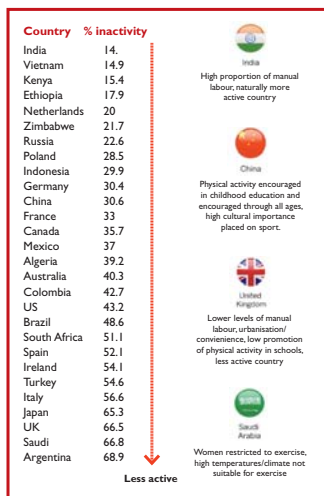
By comparison in Russia there is a great focus on, and appreciation of, great sporting achievement and the discipline of sport – though this can mean a fixation on high achievers, with less attention paid to the less able or to a wider celebration of activity among the population.

3 Countries have a different focus on sports participation versus spectatorship

In some places, physical activity is culturally celebrated via high levels of spectatorship of some sports – but with actual participation levels remaining low.

In Anglo-Saxon countries, there is more of a universal culture of sports spectatorship: there are fairly high levels of engagement with sport in the UK and US. But this is focused on spectatorship, with actual participation low: over 80 per cent of US consumers are very/fairly interested in sport, yet only 40 per cent of these actually engage in sport – one of the lowest rates globally.

The reverse can also be true – in China, physical activity and sports





In Anglo-Saxon countries, there tends to be a universal culture of sports spectatorship, while actual sports participation remains low



participation is comparatively high, but spectatorship is less of a focus. This is partly polarised by income, with only more affluent people able to regularly go to watch sports. Spectatorship is also much more of a focus for the younger generation, who have grown up with the rapid commercialisation of international sports in China since the 1990s.

4 Different working habits and lifestyles dictate activity levels across countries

Working habits strongly impact our levels of activity. Physical fitness used to be vital for society based around manual labour, but has fallen out of favour in the shift to more sedentary forms of manufacture and the growing 'knowledge economy'. In South-East Asia, less than 25 per cent of adults sit for at least four hours a day, compared to 64 per cent in Europe.

Urbanisation is also becoming an increasing threat to our activity levels. In Europe alone, more than two-thirds of the population live in towns and cities, and the convenience of urban living means we no longer have to walk as far to get to places. There are also fewer green spaces in which to exercise.

In China, urbanisation alone is said to have reduced daily energy expenditure by 300–400 kcal, while cycling versus driving to work determines another variation of 200 kcal. Nevertheless, the Chinese see weight loss as essential for personal success, as negative attitudes towards obese people at work persist. As a result of rising obesity, weight loss camps have therefore sprung up in many cities.

Some countries help promote and encourage exercise through

infrastructure, such as Holland with its designated cycle lanes. However, in many markets there remains a lack of facilities and provisions to be able to exercise.

Healthy cities must be designed that both encourage those living there to shun public transport and be more active, and that are in their very design more conducive to physical activity – legal requirements could even be introduced to ensure health needs are integrated into town planning. Bogota in Colombia offers an interesting case of a city where the built environment has been actively transformed in an attempt to reduce car dependency and promote more physical activity among its residents.

As cities continue to grow, there will also need to be more creative use of urban spaces – football under railway arches, exercises on rooftops and so on – to provide opportunities for those living in cities to be active. Locations may also need to be used with dual purpose – eg office by day, gym by night.

5 Climate can hugely influence levels of activity

The attractiveness of the external environment can hugely affect the desire to exercise outdoors – an important exercise environment, appreciating that not everyone will be drawn to a gym.

In some countries, the climate is well suited to physical activity – in Australia, for example, activity levels are relatively high due to the cultural values of being active and 'outdoorsy'. But in countries where air pollution is high, exercise can be unattractive and even viewed as a health risk, contributing to breathing problems and fatigue. And in Asian

countries where light skin tones are often the beauty ideal, some women purposely avoid exercising outdoors in the sun.

We are seeing attempts to overcome the challenge of climate, with some urban gyms working to bring the outside indoors: increasing natural light and connecting the gym to outdoor spaces through architectural features that maximise natural views, for example.

Final word

There are many contextual and cultural challenges to becoming a more active world. However, with the awareness of the social and economic costs of inactivity rapidly rising, and an acknowledgement that we need to address the issue, new opportunities for innovative solutions in this space are emerging.

Successful solutions will focus on meeting the current and evolving needs of different generations, inspiring young and old to translate their engagement as spectators into participation, as well as finding innovative ways to overcome the physical barriers to activity posed by urban environments and climate issues.

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the WELCOMING WINTER

From elite athletes to casual competitors, winter sports require specific conditioning. Lauren Applegarth takes a look at some of the ways in which operators and equipment manufacturers are supporting users to train for their particular sport

MEMBERS' SKI TRIP

Operator: Everyone Active

Everyone Active at Fareham Leisure Centre is one of the latest facilities to tap into the popular group activity holiday market, as the facility plans its second annual ski trip to Alp d'Huez next March. "The trip last year to Val D'Isère was a huge success," says Kim Cutler, assistant fitness manager at Fareham Leisure Centre. "The trip was organised through Ski World, who were excellent – members paid directly at a total of £698 per person, all-inclusive with a catered chalet, which meant all costs were covered by the members."

In the weeks running up to the trip, participants are provided with exercise programmes that specifically focus on fitness conditioning for skiing and snowboarding, targeting cardiovascular endurance, upper and lower body strength, balance and core stability. The ski training programme is also available via Everyone Active Online, an online resource for members.

"Our ski trip has already proved a fantastic way to create a community within our centre. This is not only



Last year's ski trip to the French Alps created a sense of community for members

beneficial for member retention, but is also a perfect opportunity to upsell not just our ski-specific classes but also a range of group exercise and personal training products on an ongoing basis," adds Cutler.

Ski Circuits classes are also available across numerous Everyone Active sites, to help members acquire the physical and technical skills that are needed on

the slopes. Free to all members but also available to 'pay and play' customers for a small fee, the classes run across a six- to eight-week programme. Sessions incorporate traditional circuit-based exercises, as well as weights and functional training equipment including ViPR, TRX and BOSU, which are used to vary the training or tailor the class to suit different abilities.

"Our ski trip has proved a fantastic way to create a community within our centre – and a perfect opportunity to upsell classes and PT products"

ALPINE RACING

Operator: Alpine Academy

As one of the most challenging winter sports, alpine racing is a fast, physically demanding discipline that can see top competitors making between 30 and 40 turns per run, six to eight times a day for six days a week during peak season. Consequently, athletes need to incorporate a combination of cardiovascular and strength training, focusing specifically on agility, core strength and co-ordination.

Alpine performance training group Team Evolution operates as part of a structured Alpine Academy programme, working with juniors to adults. Training programmes are tailored depending on the stage of the season; during race-time, athletes

spend a significant amount of time in the gym focusing on maintenance work and body conditioning to uphold high levels of overall fitness.

As part of their personalised programmes, Team Evolution athletes use Wattbikes and Concept2 rowers for a full body workout, increasing aerobic fitness levels through interval training. "Both Wattbikes and Concept2 rowers feature heavily in the programmes of our athletes

based at our Austrian training camp in Salzburg", confirms Yannick Green, coach for Team Evolution's alpine racing team. "We believe that higher levels of overall physical fitness will aid the athletes with their progression in a sport that's extremely demanding on the body as a whole."

The interval training approach also allows athletes to train more efficiently, helping create the necessary balance between time spent in the gym versus time spent on the slopes.

But it's not just elite competitors who can benefit from these type of programmes: "The Concept2 rowing machine is suitable for anyone, from first-time skiers to elite athletes, no matter what age or level of fitness," says Alex Skelton, commercial manager for Concept2. "It exercises all the major muscles with low impact and is recognised as an excellent full-body workout."



Team Evolution athletes train with Wattbikes and Concept2 rowers

FOOTBALL REHAB & PREHAB

Club: Moor Farm, Derby County FC

With a season that runs from August to May, football certainly falls under the description of a 'winter sport', but in reality it's a year-round pursuit, with pre-season training a key contributor to success on the pitch.

Training needs will vary depending on a player's position. Nevertheless, aerobic and anaerobic fitness are vital for all players, to ensure they are able to sustain 90 minutes of play, interspersed with high-intensity bursts of activity. Agility and flexibility are also key.

Matrix Fitness supplies equipment for Derby County FC's first team and academy players at the club's Moor Farm complex. The equipment – chosen to assist in the rehabilitation and conditioning of players – includes treadmills and functional training equipment designed to strengthen the core muscles and synergistic muscle groups not normally strengthened during match training.

Derby County's strength and conditioning coach Steve Haines says: "The gym equipment has enabled us to improve our rehab of injured players by allowing us to be more functional and specific to the demands of football. It reduces the length of time it takes to rehab a player, and plays a pivotal role in limiting the number of injuries sustained."

Although Moor Farm isn't open to the public, the kit that the players train on

– including treadmills, Ascent Trainers, cycles and strength equipment – is available at Matrix Fitness-equipped gym facilities nationwide. So whether users are training for a local five-a-side match or a professional game, it's possible to access the appropriate kit to prepare.

"The variety of Matrix equipment allows players at all levels of the sport to be specific and progressive with their training," adds Haines. ▶



The Matrix Fitness equipment is used for the rehab and conditioning of players

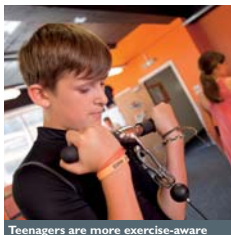
FOOTBALL FOCUS

Operator: SHOKK Youth Gym

Since its launch in April 2012, SHOKK Youth Gym in Bracknell, Berkshire, has provided a stimulating fitness environment tailored to the specific needs of young people aged between five and 16 years old.

Popular with a number of local sports clubs, SHOKK Bracknell has been working closely with youth footballers from local sides Aldershot Town, Bracknell Town and Reading, in preparation for the start of the new season.

"While training intensity levels differ between adults and young people, the specific training requirements for different sports remain the same," says Ryan John-Baptiste, personal trainer and co-owner of SHOKK Bracknell. "We have devised sport-specific programmes for footballers, tailored to their position, which combine a mix of speed, strength, core and agility training, while also incorporating key movements that replicate actions on the football pitch."



Teenagers are more exercise-aware

John-Baptiste has worked with players both in group and one-to-one training sessions, using equipment and non-equipment based exercises. "We have a wide range of cardiovascular, strength and functional training equipment at SHOKK Bracknell, which has been designed and manufactured specifically for our target demographic," he explains.

And it's not just young footballers who benefit from such training programmes; all members are invited and encouraged to take part in group sessions, which are provided free of charge.



Training at SHOKK is youth-focused

"Word-of-mouth is one of the most powerful promotional tools among young people and our involvement with local sports teams proves this; not only do our members promote SHOKK to their team mates, but parents are talking about it too," says John-Baptiste.

"Young people are increasingly aware of the benefits of exercise and, by offering sports-specific programmes, we've experienced greater interest and member sign-ups – team mates are seeing the improvements friends are making on the pitch and want to do the same."

SKI FITNESS

Operator: SportHouse

SportHouse, the Olympic training venue and elite training facility in Barking, is introducing its winter training programmes for the first time, following its high-profile opening in March.

"Ski holidays are very popular among SportHouse members. Our job is to make sure they're able to fully enjoy themselves by increasing fitness levels and reducing

the risk of injury," says Phil Daniels, fitness manager at SportHouse.

"Whether you're working with a new or seasoned skier, the physical requirements are very similar: stability and strength, particularly focusing on the lower body, core conditioning, flexibility and, importantly, muscular endurance."

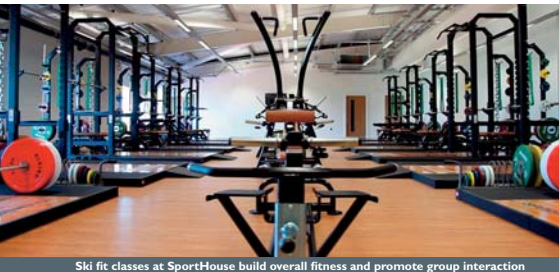
SportHouse will be running both small group-focused ski fit circuit classes and one-to-one training programmes. Says Daniels: "Ski fit classes are ideal for building overall fitness levels and encouraging group interaction, but for

the majority of members, they will see better results faster through one-to-one sessions. We hope a number of people who start in the group sessions will also take advantage of more intense one-to-one training as well.

"In fact, we've found members are more likely to engage with PT if they also participate in group training. Ski fit classes are a great way of showing the benefits of additional one-to-one training."

Key to both ski fit circuits and the one-to-one training is SportHouse's comprehensive range of strength equipment. Says Daniels: "We have more than 250 pieces of CYBEX equipment at SportHouse and we always encourage members to incorporate a wide range into their programmes – we find greater levels of diversity and interest mean members are more likely to stick to their training regime."

"CYBEX's cable-based Bravo functional trainer is central to this, allowing users to focus on their stability and core conditioning. Time-based programmes using the CYBEX Big Iron lifting platform also help build muscular endurance. This is vital for skiers."



Ski fit classes at SportHouse build overall fitness and promote group interaction



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TAKE TO THE FLOOR



The right flooring can not only instantly improve and update the look of your facility, but it can also play an integral role in improving the training experience for your gym members. Spanish company Pavigym is a global brand specialising in sports flooring, with almost 50 years' experience as a leader in flooring for gyms. Here, Esperanza Lorenzo, marketing director for Pavigym, explains why it's essential to choose the right specialist surface for your facility's needs, and make it a key part of the club experience.

THE FITNESS EXPERIENCE

The fitness centre is not only about machines. Nowadays aesthetics and design are increasingly important to attract and retain clients. The fitness industry is moving forward with big steps, and more and more operators have recourse to professional interior designers to convert conventional gyms into very distinctive places.

Equipping a centre with the best CV equipment and the latest in wellness and spa may not be enough to ensure customers enjoy the ideal fitness experience.

It's now easier than ever to conceptualise and create the ideal gym – to convert it into a reality to share with current and future customers while clearly differentiating your environment from other health and leisure centres.

The whole fitness experience will be influenced by what members do (machines), how they do it (activities and services) and where they do it (design and creation of the environment).

Transporting users to unexpected places, making them feel unique, maximising their enjoyment and helping

them achieve their goals are the keys to increasing the chances of success of your club – and none of these need a lot of extra investment.

IMPORTANCE OF FLOORING

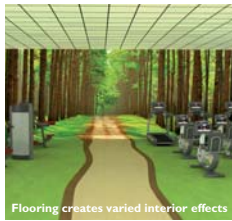
Something as seemingly simple as flooring can actually turn the club into a unique environment, where users work out, have fun, dream and want to spend more time.

Many operators typically expect a floor to be the same throughout the facility,

and so tend to opt for what's 'standard', 'trendy', 'cool', overlooking the technical aspects that ensure members' wellbeing and floor durability. Or else they solely focus on the technical aspects and use the most economical – and often least aesthetic – solutions, and so fail to stand out from the crowd.

The importance and significance, both aesthetically and technically, of the choice of flooring for sports facilities will be a key aspect of the final design outcome. The cleanliness of your facility is also one of the most important factors in the decision of a new member to join or renew. It is therefore not simply a matter of aesthetics.

Issues such as comfort, and health and safety must be considered. Traditionally, specialist flooring was only considered for competition sports, but fitness – with all its different activities – has specific biomechanical requirements that make the floor a technical tool to protect body and health. Club members are increasingly concerned and demanding over their safety and wellbeing (which is also a big focus area for all equipment manufacturers).





Flooring needs to not only ensure the health and safety of members, but provide a bright aesthetic for the club



It's very common to find carpet in fitness and sports centres: it's soft and comfortable underfoot, has a visually appealing finish and also cuts down on noise. But its nature requires continuous and expensive maintenance, and even with such maintenance, it can be easily stained or damaged and is very difficult to repair. This can be unattractive, and especially unhygienic for a modern health and wellness facility. With the use of dumbbells, studio bikes and other activities in the fitness room, carpet requires expensive yearly maintenance in order to keep its original look. Loose fibres from the carpet can even create a greater necessity for machine maintenance, as they get entangled in the motors.

TECHNICAL FLOORING

As a specialist flooring supplier, Pavigym fully understands the technical, comfort, health and safety requirements for different activities and can achieve a spectacular customised look for the sport centre. From the many possible materials, shapes, colours and styles, it's very important to select the right one for each activity and for each environment. Making the right choice can save operators money and trouble in the long run.

For example, Pavigym tiles are easier to install as they fit by interlocking and do not require glue or floor preparation. Pavigym tiles also protect the fitness machines and their performance, as they don't retain

"PAVIGYM HAS INTEGRATED FLOORING TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE A COMPLETE WORKOUT, USING THE FLOOR AS A TOOL"

dust that can get into the mechanisms and damage them, in the way that carpet does. The tiles also absorb sound and vibrations and prevent the sliding of the equipment.

The company not only offers Pavigym tiles, but also other products that deliver on specific technical and aesthetic requirements in each part of the facility.

FLOORING AS A FITNESS TOOL

Solutions that give flooring a new functionality as a training concept are now available. This kind of flooring enhances the image of the facility and enables new activities to be introduced or promoted.

Pavigym has integrated technology in flooring to create a complete workout using the floor as a work tool. Its Functional Zone product creates an exclusive, personalised and innovative area within the fitness facility, designed to enhance the experience of both functional training and personal training.

Integrating such solutions in the fitness centre is another way of attracting customers and making them feel the gym has something special.

The best way to make an optimal flooring choice is to collect and study as much information as possible before making the final decision. There's no need to study the details and technicalities of one solution or another in depth, but it's important to be clear about key operational and performance aspects of the various alternatives and manufacturers. That way, the solution chosen will be a source of satisfaction for you and your customers for many years to come.

As a leading company in technical flooring, Pavigym offers fitness clubs a complete solution – from the design of different areas through to the installation, backed up by a complete customer care service to guarantee the durability and longevity of the selected flooring products.

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DAVID BARTON

THE NEW YORK GYM GURU TELLS MAGALI ROBATHAN HOW WORKING OUT SAVED HIS LIFE, WHY FILING FOR CHAPTER 11 BANKRUPTCY HAS BEEN A POSITIVE MOVE, AND ABOUT OPENING HIS FIRST GYM WITH A BAG FULL OF CASH



PHOTO: MICHELLE HOOD

David Barton started his career as a personal trainer

David Barton grew up in Queens, New York, and opened his first gym in Chelsea, New York in 1992.

The fashionable, design-led club was an instant hit, attracting fans including Sandra Bernhard and designer Thierry Mugler with its tagline of 'Look Better Naked'. It was followed by a second club in New York in 1995, and a third in Miami the same year. Further clubs followed in New York, Chicago and Seattle, and celebrity clients included Renee Zellweger, Rachel Weisz and Daniel Craig.

However, last year David Barton Gyms' parent company, Club Ventures, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in order to restructure an estimated US\$65m of debt. The company emerged from Chapter 11 earlier this year, after teaming up with Meridien Sports Club in an operational partnership to open two new gyms in Los Angeles and one in Las Vegas this summer. Here, David Barton answers our questions about the highs and lows of his career so far.

How did you first get into health and fitness?

I stepped into my first gym when I was about 11. I went to a real hardcore basement gym with the boyfriend of one of my older sisters. It was a dank, sweaty basement; I could smell the iron rusting and muscles being ripped apart. It was just the most incredible place – cops working out next to drug dealers.

I fell in love with it and didn't ever want to leave. There was a real camaraderie in the gym; it didn't matter

David Barton
Miami South Beach
has 42,000sq ft of
fitness space

what you did on the outside, it was just a matter of how strong you were. That was an amazing sort of democracy, and a little counter-culture of people who were into lifting weights.

Going to the gym became very important to me. I was getting into quite a bit of trouble and I think working out really saved my life – that's why it means so much to me today. It made me healthy and gave me focus and discipline. Working out is a real foundation for my way of life.

Tell us about opening your first gym. How did that come about?

I graduated from Cornell University and got a job as a personal trainer, which paid me very little. I realised that I wanted to figure out a way to spend my time in the gym, so I started my own personal training business. I became very successful, worked all hours and saved all my money until I had a bag full of cash.

I believed there was a market for an alternative to the gyms that were out there at the time. In the early 1990s, there were a lot of people with more taste than money. It wasn't so much about a luxury product as something that people who had taste would respond to.

I pounded the pavements, called people, crashed parties and knocked on doors – I did everything I could for years to try to get a location and raise money. In the end, I saved most of the money myself through training people, got a couple of other people to kick in a few dollars and found somebody to rent me a space that he didn't know what to do with.

With the little money I had, I built a gym. I couldn't afford contractors or architects so I did it all myself. I bought light fittings from stores that were going out of business and spray-painted them. I found ways to get exercise equipment cheaply. I slept on the floor of the gym while we were building it so that every penny could go into the business. I just wanted to get the doors of that one gym open. I did, and it was a huge success.



PHOTO: DAN FORER

“I don't think it's about décor as much as about emotion. I'm trying to get an emotional response from members”

What did it offer?

My first gym – in Chelsea, New York – offered an alternative to the suburbanised, commercial health clubs around at the time. Working out was at the time considered to be very uncool; I opened it up to the fashionistas and the people who didn't like gyms, but who would go to one if it were cool and tasteful.

The design of gyms generally was really antiquated back then. I didn't have money to build anything palatial – it was very pared down, very simple – but it was

actually very beautiful in its simplicity. The music was great and we had great staff. I hired the staff myself, I trained them and dressed them and made them look cool. They were people you'd want to hang out with. It was also the first gym I'd seen that had trainers who could really change your body.

When did you open the next gyms?

Three years later, I opened a gym in Miami, in the Delano hotel, and another one on the Upper East Side in New



Barton is known for his flamboyance



David Barton Chicago was the fourth club to open

► York. Each market is different. The Miami club was really for the jet set [this later moved from the Delano hotel to the Gansevoort South]. The Chelsea gym really put me on the map. With the Upper East Side club I really wanted to build on the personal trainer business – attracting the Upper East Side clientele was quite a different proposition. I had more money to do that, so it really was another experiment in creating an environment that the neighbourhood would respond to.

How would you describe the décor of your clubs – and how important is their design?

I don't think it's so much about décor as about emotion. I'm trying to get an emotional response from members and trying to stimulate their imagination.

I try to get them to really focus on how they can look at the end of the process

[of getting fit]. I'm in the business of selling something a lot of people don't really like: they don't really want to exercise, but they love the results they can get and they love the idea of having a new body. When someone new comes in, they tend to imagine how they will look on day two. We really try to get their imagination stimulated, to help them think about how they will look three months down the line.

It's a sexy environment in our gyms, it's stimulating and it's fun. It's also comfortable and inviting – people want to stay there and hang out.

I've got to draw people in and make them have a good time while they are there, and also make them really want to exercise. They should enjoy doing it and feel good about it. I want members to think about those changes to their body and their goals, what they want to look like and what they are trying to achieve from working out.

Why do people love your clubs?

It's like going to a great party – my gyms have great people, great surroundings, great music. You get high on endorphins, but instead of waking up with a hangover you wake up and look in the mirror and you look better naked. Who wouldn't love that?

You went into Chapter 11 bankruptcy last year. Have you now emerged from this?

Yes, we emerged from Chapter 11 earlier this year after six months.

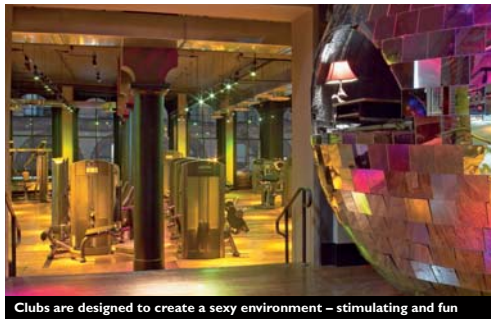
Why do you think you went into Chapter 11?

We were in part a victim of bad timing, expanding during a time when the economy was changing drastically. Chapter 11 was a difficult thing to go through, but we've come out with a much healthier business. It helped us to restructure. Luckily my members and investors stuck with me through the process, so in the end it was a very positive thing for us.

We teamed up with Meridian on the three new locations and we hope to do more with them. It's been a great partnership so far. Right now, it's just an operational partnership. Meridian is not a capital partner.

You've just opened a club in Las Vegas and are opening two more in LA this summer. What can we expect from the new clubs?

Our new club in Las Vegas is beautiful – people love it. Los Angeles is a great market for me. I'm a New Yorker but I've always dreamed of having gyms in LA – it's where the whole workout thing started. The new clubs will be more of



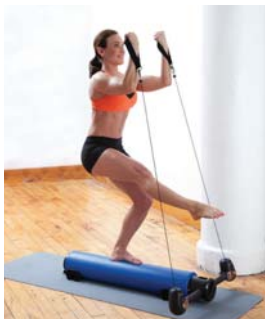
Clubs are designed to create a sexy environment – stimulating and fun



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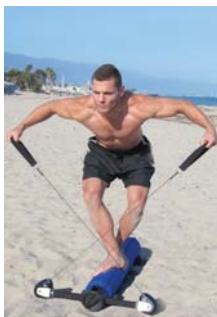
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- the same – I try to create gyms where people will feel sexy.

How have you funded the new fitness clubs?

Through our investors, who have been with us right from the beginning. I don't want to name them right now.

What are your plans over the next 12 months?

I'm looking for locations in Las Vegas, which I think is a great market and a great opportunity. I'm always looking in New York, but the real estate market here is a lot tougher than in LA. We're also looking in some secondary markets, including Chicago.

How many David Barton clubs would you like to open?

I think over the next couple of years we'll get to 15 and see how it goes.

Would you ever think about opening gyms outside of the US?

I get a lot of calls from real estate developers, investors and operators in

other countries. Certainly it's an exciting consideration and I'm open to it. I think there are a lot of places where the concept could do so well – it's just about finding the right deal and the right opportunity. I definitely think it's on the horizon.

How did you celebrate David Barton Gyms' 20th anniversary?

I had a huge workout and then threw a big party in one of my gyms. We're well known for great parties and this was no exception.

What motivates you?

My son is 18. The other night I went to a dinner for parents of kids who were about to graduate. I see this next generation and I feel that what we do is so important. Fitness will hopefully save the ever-declining health of my country. Here, food and inactivity is killing people. I'm really motivated to set the bar high and to make this business about quality and professionalism.

It's not out of reach for anyone to be healthy, to feel good and to have the body they dream of having. Our

trademark tagline is 'look better naked', and I'm not ashamed of how shallow that may sound. I really do believe that, when somebody works out in my gym and feels good in their body, they leave here and become a better lawyer or politician or artist or whatever their contribution to the world may be. I'm motivated by trying to make an impact on my little corner of the world.

How would your friends describe you? And your critics?

My friends would describe me as someone who loves to have a good time. I love what I do, probably because most of the time I do what I love. My life is filled with things I love; I love my business, I love being in the gym. I live a charmed life.

I don't know what my critics say, because I don't speak with them.

What do you do for pleasure?

I'm a musician – I play the drums. I've played in a lot of punk rock bands, and right now I'm in a band called the Liquid Blonde, which plays electronic rock. I think they're going to do really well.

I love hanging out with my son, and he'll still hang out with me, and I love spending time with my schnauzer, Bippy.

What's your favourite film and book?

I have to read so much about exercise science, just to keep up on it, as I still work a lot with the trainers. I read a lot on biochemistry, movement science, neuroscience and everything that relates to exercise. My all-time favourite book is *Crime and Punishment* though. I've probably read it 20 times.

My favourite movie ever is *Barry Lyndon*, Stanley Kubrick's epic period piece. It's really a film-making masterpiece – he used genuine antique costumes, and filmed the candlelit scenes without using any artificial light. It's a work of art.

What have been your highest and lowest points?

My highest point was opening my first gym. I fought so hard for it. I started out without two pennies to rub together, and there I was opening this gym, which was my dream. It was the greatest high.

As for the lowest point, I can't think of one. Since opening my first gym, there have been a lot of struggles, but there's never been anything I didn't think I could resolve. I'm a very positive person and I never get that down.



PHOTO: DAN FORSTER

The David Barton Spa at the Perry hotel in Miami features 10 treatment rooms



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FIT FOR WORK

Employee wellbeing programmes need to be inclusive, integrated and demonstrate a return on investment if they are to satisfy today's corporate clients, as Neena Dhillon reports

“An employee wellbeing strategy is an integral part of effective absence management, and employers can reap positive dividends from adopting a proactive approach to health promotion,” says Dr Jill Miller, research adviser for the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development).

She continues: “Our absence management survey found organisations that had seen a decrease in their absence levels were more likely to have a wellbeing strategy in place. Guarding employees’ wellbeing is particularly important during these uncertain economic times, with positive effects on engagement, job satisfaction and hence organisational performance.”

As figures emphasising the levels of ill health in the UK workplace have hit the headlines, there has been no better time to consider the subject of corporate wellbeing. According to a government-

instigated independent review, led by Dame Carole Black and David Frost in 2011, 140 million working days are lost annually to sickness absence, with employers paying £9bn in associated costs. The CBI estimates a higher annual number of lost working days – 190 million – with each employee averaging 6.5 days off sick, resulting in a yearly bill of £17bn to the UK economy.

Meanwhile, the link between employee wellbeing and productivity was made evident by a recent CIPD company study, which highlighted how the bottom 25 per cent of workers in terms of health are 18 per cent less productive than the top 25 per cent.

The most common reasons for short-term absence, including minor illnesses and back pain, hold no surprises. Yet work-related stress and mental health problems are figuring more prominently, as is ‘illegitimate’ absence (ie taking sick days to fulfil responsibilities at home).

Employers are also alarmed by the health conditions increasingly being caused by obesity. The added issue of presenteeism – ‘being present at work while feeling ill or being unable to work at normal capacity’ – is also being drawn into the debate, with calls for comprehensive UK studies to assess its impact.

JUSTIFYING SPEND

While the provision of corporate wellbeing is nothing new, more companies are looking at how they can enhance the quality of their programmes or justify meaningful spend in this area. The days of simply offering a discounted gym membership are numbered for those seeking to minimise the wide-ranging consequences of ill health.

The motivations for making an investment are varied. Dr Andrew Jones, MD of Nuffield Health Corporate Wellbeing, observes: “The obvious and common reasons are the management

Reducing stress is now a key driver of corporate wellness worldwide



VICTOR GLADNY / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Absence levels are likely to drop where a wellbeing plan exists

of absence costs, productivity and staff turnover." Falling under an umbrella of economic benefits, these cover not only the costs associated with getting employees back to work, but also staff retention levels and engagement.

For blue-chip businesses, a robust wellbeing programme is also crucial in the war for talent, helping to attract and retain leading individuals. Some employers, meanwhile, invest primarily to meet health and safety regulations governing their industry sectors, while others believe it is key to social responsibility, in line with an employee-centric culture.

A SPECIALIST SECTOR

Corporate wellbeing is therefore a growing business, but providers are identifying challenges that call for specialist understanding of the sector if successful programmes are to be implemented.

iGlobalWellness, which has been supplying corporate wellness to clients such as GSK and Panasonic for four years, is evolving its offer in response to a period of review. Says founder and CEO Paul Tomlin: "As a result of listening to our customers, we have seen that companies want inclusive programmes, not just those benefiting senior executives. In addition, they shouldn't be overly intrusive or prescriptive, and should be flexible enough to work across a business nationally."

"Companies want to learn about the health of their general populations, yet at the same time employees want to ensure their private information is protected. Programmes should also be underpinned

THE US PERSPECTIVE: KEY TRENDS

- Corporations are getting serious about sustaining employee engagement in wellbeing. Without real cultural change, participation in programmes tends to drop precipitously once initial excitement wears off. Companies are therefore experimenting with personal coaching, web- or app-based fitness competitions and social networks to track and reward healthy behaviour.
- Studies are showing that without incentives, employees will not participate. A MasterCard/Harris Interactive survey found that 61 per cent of employees would participate in a wellness programme if incentives were offered, versus 26 per cent without. In the US, around US\$60bn is spent annually by employers and health plans to motivate workers to engage in programmes. Examples include gift cards, health insurance discounts, gym membership, personal trainer coupons, time off, cash and even health-focused travel. But employers need to ensure their incentives align with their overall wellness goals.
- A 'one size fits all' approach is not effective; programmes require multiple entry points to target the hardest-to-reach through to exercise junkies.
- Moving beyond weight loss or smoking cessation, companies are digesting how programmes can address the massive impact that stress is having on their employees' bodies. Reducing stress is now considered a main driver of wellness programmes worldwide.
- Large US corporations are offering biometric screening, fitness centres, personal coaching, clinics, healthy cooking programmes, psychological support, pilates, yoga, massage and alternative medicine – all on-site.
- Companies are tracking how programmes work across diverse measures: not just the ROI in decreasing costs, but also their ability to create long-term employee participation, improve productivity, reduce absenteeism and impact positively on retention rates.

Source: Sallie Fraenkel, EVP corporate development and industry relations, SpaFinder Wellness

by motivational support, including online, while showing a measurable return on investment and sustainability."

Phil Olding, MD of New Leaf Health, has 17 years' experience in the field. Consulting with companies so they can integrate wellbeing into their policies,

he has seen the mistakes made by other providers – including high street health club operators – which don't have the necessary skills or appropriately trained staff to work in the sector. He explains: "Any organisation that wants to get involved must understand the ethical



KEENON / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

"WHERE THE DIY HEALTH CHECK POINT HAS BEEN INTRODUCED, WE'VE SEEN A 60 PER CENT UPTAKE BY EMPLOYEES"

- considerations. The workplace is a community setting, so the ethics of public health are paramount.

"The number one rule is not to do anything that could hurt people from a mental or psychological perspective. I've seen an incident where a local gym sent a personal trainer with scales and a blood pressure monitor into a company to run a weight-loss programme among a small group. The only person who was overweight out of the 10 employees ended up being unduly targeted without the correct support, in defiance of the wellbeing principle."

Corporate clients are also increasingly demanding the provision of integrated services that complement existing areas of big spend, such as private medical insurance. "We provide everything from a small gym to a fully integrated site linking nutritional advice, health assessments, fitness centre, occupational health team, physiotherapists, physiologists and GPs," confirms Jones of Nuffield Health.

"While the confidentiality of information between employees and our clinicians is sacrosanct, we can give employers general measures as to how fit their population is through combined data, such as average blood sugar levels or the number of referrals to GPs after health assessments.

"Corporate clients never ask for less – they always want more. One of our clients has a pathology lab embedded within its wellness centre, for example. Your average fitness club is simply not in a position to manage such a network of complex services."

MOTIVATION TO ACT

Initiatives that are engaging the UK workforce vary from the educational to the all-encompassing. Chester & District Housing Trust (CDHT) recently entered 180 staff into iGlobalWellness' Stay Active Challenge. Participants were divided into groups of five based on weight, fitness, gender and age. Everyone was provided with an iAM – a wireless activity monitor incorporating accelerometer technology to measure calorie burn, speed of movement and metabolic information – with results uploaded to a website.

Following an assessment week to track normal individual activity rates, participants were challenged over an 11-week competitive period to gain points by increasing their activity levels, supported by online information including an e-newsletter, motivational sessions with a wellness coach and advice on healthy eating from the head of nutritional support at iGlobalWellness.

A sustainability review, carried out for CDHT after the challenge, noted that participants had increased their daily activity levels by an average of 64 per cent; those who were overweight achieved a higher increase than those of normal weight (77 per cent versus 49 per cent). Not only that, but 67 per cent were maintaining their new activity levels.

"We're not forcing people into organised behaviour, but rather encouraging them to be aware of how activity can be integrated into their daily lives – whether that's by skipping between meetings or trying a Zumba class," says Tomlin. "By taking part in the challenge, companies have an understanding of their populations through aggregated data based on age and gender, giving them the tools to decide where wellness investment may be required."

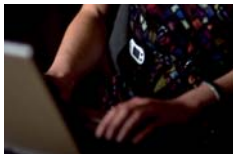
Taking more of a DIY approach, New Leaf Health has launched a cost-effective piece of health-monitoring equipment, available to hire or purchase, which can be installed by companies in a private room or designated area, with the flexibility to be moved around sites if they have multiple locations. Employees are invited to check their own health status at the DIY Health Check Point, using simple visual guides, to gain an assessment of their metabolic age calculated through BMI and/or other tests such as visceral fat, hydration and blood pressure.

On completing the tests, individuals receive a print-out with results and guidance on what they can do next to improve their wellbeing. "This is all about empowerment through awareness," says Olding. "Where the DIY Health Check Point has been introduced, we have seen a 60 per cent uptake by company employees because they respond to the privacy and DIY features. We also encourage firms to recruit volunteer wellbeing champions from their workforce, who are trained to assist staff members in using the equipment and promote health by handing out information on monthly wellbeing topics, such as sleep or hydration.

"Small groups are effective in motivating one another, and the wellbeing champion is a sustainable way ahead. We believe in equitable wellbeing policies. If firms are thinking of installing a gym, for example, this will usually only engage 20 per cent of the population."

HSBC: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

HSBC's headquarters in Canary Wharf, London, does include a 3,114sq m, FIA FLAME Award-winning fitness facility. In



Clockwise from top left: The iAM tracks activity, with data then downloaded; New Leaf's DIY Health Check; HSBC's 'My Health and Wellbeing' scheme and gym



addition to its gym, with 75 studio classes a week, it also offers physiotherapist support, all managed onsite by Nuffield Health. All employees are invited to join the gym for a monthly fee, which incorporates a Nuffield Health MOT so individuals can gain an understanding of their current wellbeing, with pointers for improvement.

But as Peter Robotham, head of performance and reward at HSBC, points out, this is the tip of the iceberg: "Wellbeing today for our 8,000 staff ranges from healthy living – access to fitness facilities and onsite food preparation – through regular health assessments and medical cover to curative solutions. This is why we've looked at ways of joining up and leveraging all the functions of our wellbeing providers.

"If an employee is visiting one of our physios for treatment, for example, we ask whether he or she has spoken to the occupational health team for a desk-based assessment focusing on posture. We also encourage individuals to talk to our occupational health team through our confidential Open Line service if they are unhappy at home or work, to identify psychological issues before they turn into long-term absence. This is about helping employees to deal with problems such as

bereavement, marital break-ups or work-related change at an early stage."

Under the banner of 'My Health and Wellbeing', HSBC also offers local and national events and outreach initiatives designed to evoke a sense of community. These include fitness challenges supporting charities, triathlon competitions and sports clubs run by Nuffield Health. Nuffield's 'Meet the Expert' events, which disseminate educational material about an array of wellbeing subjects, are proving popular at lunchtimes, while a health and wellbeing microsite includes a regular e-newsletter with 7,000 subscribers.

There are also fitness centres and programmes, as well as discounted gym memberships, for the network of HSBC offices and employees across the UK. "Different things push different people's buttons, so you need plenty of ideas and activities," says Robotham. "We do concern ourselves with how we can appeal to those who aren't yet switched on. We've been recognised for travelling in the right direction, but we still have work to do to reach all employees."

As a result of its health and wellbeing programme, HSBC has seen a drop in psychological-related absence from 26 per cent in 2010 to 20 per cent in 2011.

The 2011 employee engagement survey showed that 71 per cent of staff believe they have a good work/life balance, while 69 per cent agreed that HSBC is a great place to work – both figures representing year-on-year increases.

STRONG EVIDENCE

Other case study-based evidence is coming to light. As a result of a two-year organisational People Strategy, the British Library saw staff absence drop from an average of 10.2 to 7.5 days per annum, with an associated yearly saving of £160,000. Staff turnover halved from 12 per cent to 6 per cent.

Danone UK introduced an Active Programme that returned a reduction in staff turnover from 20 per cent to 15 per cent, and a 22 per cent rise in employee engagement with the business. Danone was subsequently named London's healthiest workplace by the BBC.

This body of evidence will continue to proliferate as the case for investing in employee wellbeing strengthens. But providers must ensure programmes are informed, inclusive and integrated if they are to succeed on a sustainable basis.

 **neena dhillon**
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research round-up

Meditation and exercise could significantly reduce sick days due to respiratory illnesses such as colds and the flu, shows a new study

the cold war

While the common cold may be considered a mild illness, it costs society billions every year – especially in terms of reduced workplace productivity due to days off sick.

Previous scientific studies have highlighted the fact that people who work out more or have lower stress levels aren't as likely to get ill. But now research published in the *Annals of Family Medicine* in July* has also suggested that positive thinking – via mindfulness meditation – as well as exercise can result in less severe symptoms of acute respiratory illnesses (ARI), such as colds and influenza, or may even prevent them altogether.

a mindful study

Dr Bruce Barrett, associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, US, and his colleagues tested 149 participants aged 50 years and over by randomly assigning them to three groups.

One group took part in an eight-week meditation programme based on one 2.5-hour group session a week and daily, 45-minute at-home practice. The programme was based on mindfulness meditation – the idea that an increased awareness of your own body, thoughts and emotions may lead to a healthier mind-body response to stress.

The second group underwent an eight-week exercise programme: one 2.5-hour group session a week and 45 minutes' moderate intensity physical activity every day – mostly workouts on stationary bikes, treadmills and other equipment during the group sessions, and brisk walking or jogging at home.

The third group was a control group.

The researchers then observed participants from September to May –



DAVID HAZELBYN / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

It's thought the meditators and exercisers can better cope with cold symptoms

the US cold and flu season. Via bi-weekly calls, they kept track of when people reported having a cold/flu, the severity of symptoms, number of days' work missed and number of visits to a doctor.

healthy results

During observation, 40 bouts of ARI were reported in the control group, compared to only 27 cases in those who meditated and 26 in the exercise group.

Meditators also reported less severe symptoms. The symptoms were measured using the Wisconsin Upper Respiratory Symptom Survey, which rates 24 ailments – from a runny nose, sneezing and sore throat to headache/congestion, body ache and fever – on a scale of 0–7 for severity. The symptoms weren't singled out, but overall the average score in the meditation group was only 144, compared to 248 for

exercise participants and 358 in the control group.

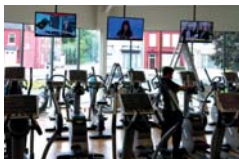
"I suspect this is because [meditators] are better able to cope with the symptoms," independent mindfulness researcher James Carmody told Reuters. "[With mindfulness] people learn to redirect their attention so they don't stay stuck on unpleasant thoughts."

People in the exercise and meditation groups felt sick for five days on average, while those in the control group felt sick for an average of nine days. Those in the meditation and exercise groups also took less ARI-related sick days off work during the study: the meditation group as a whole missed a combined total of only 16 days' work due to ARI; the exercise group took 32 days off, and the control group 67 days.

There was little difference in the number of doctor visits for ARI.

*Barrett, Bruce et al. Meditation or Exercise for Preventing Acute Respiratory Infection: A Randomized Controlled Trial *The Annals of Family Medicine*, July/August 2012

Club entertainment



Installations by AV:Activ

AV:Activ Ltd recently installed media systems for Lifestyle Fitness in Barnsley and Darlington, UK. The installations included multi-zoned music systems with new speaker pods, amplifiers, DAB radio and MP3 music players; wall/pole-mounted TV displays running Freeview HD and wireless cardio systems; wall-mounted media racks and speakers; and MP3/CD players and amplifiers in the cycling studios.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
av:activ



Zoom Media products to feature at DC Leisure

High definition media products including digital signage and overhead entertainment by Zoom Media Corp will be featuring at DC Leisure centres in the UK, following the renewal of its media and advertising partnership. Zoom Media will operate privately branded, bespoke digital audio and video member communications tools across media networks at DC Leisure's 100+ sites. Zoom will also represent all external digital advertising opportunities on behalf of DC Leisure.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
zoom

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Cybox E3 View lets exercisers choose



screen, gives exercisers three different viewing options so they can watch what they want.

The Exercise view shows distance, calories, time and BPM; the Entertainment view lets the user watch videos from the TV, their iPod or iPhone alongside their exercise stats; and the Escape view fills the screen with video from the TV, iPod or iPhone.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
cybox

Cybox is introducing its E3 View monitors which fit onto the new Cybox 625 and 770 cardiovascular series. The entertainment console, with its 15.6" high-definition embedded



Precor P80 console for The Cloisters

Precor's new P80 console has been installed at the The Cloisters Spa and Heath Club, at the Parsonage Country House Hotel in North Yorkshire, UK. The 200sq m (2,152 sq ft) fitness suite opened recently, along with the opening of a 1,000sq m spa facility.

As well as the console, the Precor fitness equipment – which includes AMTs, treadmills, upright and recumbent bikes – have also been fitted with Preva Net, Precor's networked fitness solution offering exercisers access to popular web content and a web browser while they work out.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
precor

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PREMIUM BUDGET

Client: Metro Fitness
Supplier: CYBEX International UK

July 2012 saw the official opening of Metro Fitness, a brand new 930sq m (10,000sq ft) gym situated in Stockport, Cheshire.

Positioning itself as the UK's first premium budget gym, Metro Fitness is the latest venture from Ray Hatton, sports industry expert and father of professional boxer Ricky Hatton. As an existing CYBEX client, Ricky already has a range of premium CYBEX equipment installed at his home, as well as in his own public facility, Hatton Health and Fitness.

Installed at Metro Fitness are over 70 pieces of CYBEX cardiovascular and strength training equipment, including more than 30 pieces from its brand new 625 cardiovascular range, made up of treadmills, total-body and lower-body Arc Trainers. A number of upright and recumbent bikes from the 750 series have also been installed.

The new gym also offers a number of pieces from CYBEX's VR1 and VR3 strength ranges of selectorised equipment. Members of Metro Fitness will also be able to work out on CYBEX's Bravo functional trainer, complete with Bravo Lift, Press and Pull stations, which were awarded the FIBO Innovation Award 2012 for their patented progressive stabilisation features.

Metro Fitness was also one of the first UK facilities to incorporate CYBEX's wireless audio receivers, a new solution designed for customers who have wall-mounted screens. Members using the cardio equipment will be able to plug their headphones into the CYBEX console and select the audio from any wall-mounted TV. This feature is also compatible with the CYBEX 770 cardio series.

Commenting on the relationship with CYBEX, Metro Fitness director and fitness industry consultant George Stylianou says:



There are over 70 pieces of CYBEX kit, including Arc Trainers

"The service provided by CYBEX, from the initial site survey right through to the equipment installation, has been fantastic. While we offer our members budget gym prices, we pride ourselves on providing premium facilities and this is certainly supported by our fitness equipment – our CYBEX Arc Trainers are proving particularly popular with members of all ages."

Full membership at Metro Fitness is available from just £19.99 a month, as part of a non-contract agreement. As well as over 150 pieces of exercise equipment, members have access to designated functional training and free weight zones, and more than 35 free-of-charge group exercise classes each week.

Alan Ellis, CYBEX key account manager, says: "Metro Fitness is a fantastic facility, providing members with a premium training environment at budget gym prices. We've worked closely with George and Ray to ensure their members are provided with a comprehensive range of equipment – and based on initial feedback from members, Metro Fitness will continue to be a fantastic success."

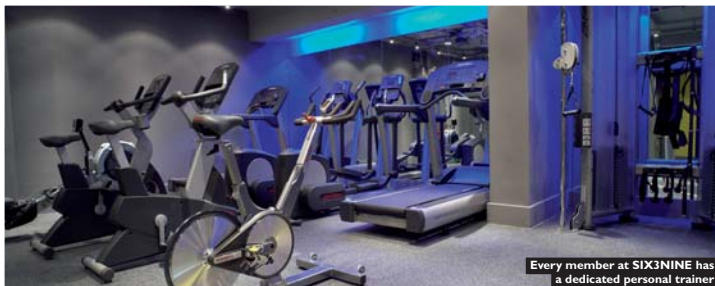
For more information: www.cybexintl.com



The facility offers CYBEX's wireless audio, allowing users to tune into any gym TV



Metro Fitness is positioned in the market as a premium budget gym



Every member at SIX3NINE has a dedicated personal trainer

PERSONAL FOCUS

Client: SIX3NINE
Supplier: Life Fitness

State of the art personal training practice SIX3NINE has opened its doors in London's fashionable Covent Garden, working in conjunction with Life Fitness.

The thinking behind the venture is brand new: at SIX3NINE, personalised one-to-one training is at the heart of everything the facility offers, with exclusive membership limited to just 200 people. Every member has a dedicated personal trainer and is led through specially tailored programmes under their expert eye, meaning the emphasis really is on the exerciser and their workout.

Bringing to the table a wealth of experience spanning more than 10 years, as well as a military background and expertise in nutrition and self-defence, the facility's founder, James Conci-Mitchell, explains: "At SIX3NINE we don't buy into fads or quick fixes. Our members are assured of targeted training that provides long-term, realistic solutions and brings a positive change to their entire lifestyle. We know time is precious, so we've taken a much-needed, fresh approach to fitness and created an area specifically designed with personal training in mind. We offer a time-effective, focused programme in which people can train smarter and reach beyond personal goals."

Each of SIX3NINE's team of trainers applies an individual approach to training their clients, with knowledge and proficiency covering areas as broad-ranging as boxing, weightlifting and athletics through to dance, gymnastics, nutrition and osteopathy. With that in mind, equipment selection was key.

Life Fitness worked with SIX3NINE to supply the centre with premium cardiovascular machines, as well as strength equipment from its Hammer Strength brand, in order to facilitate and promote the varied types of training on offer.

Paul Nugent, Life Fitness account manager, is delighted with the outcome: "The Life Fitness and Hammer Strength pieces we've installed at SIX3NINE have been chosen because they underpin the facility's values. We worked hard to ensure that the products selected were the right products, and that they complemented perfectly the ideas behind SIX3NINE."

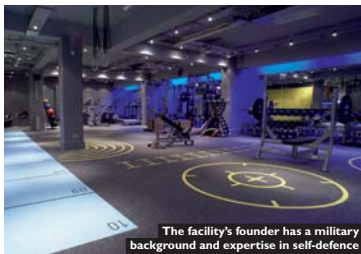
"We always work closely with customers from the very outset – we listen to and digest their objectives, research the ways in which we can best meet those requirements, and then present back a number of different concepts and solutions that we feel will create a truly exceptional fitness facility."

"SIX3NINE is an excellent example of how innovative thinking, backed up by a strong collaborative approach and the right level and range of fitness equipment, can produce a forward-looking facility that really delivers the results its members want."

For more information: www.lifefitness.com



The club is in London's Covent Garden and membership is limited to just 200



The facility's founder has a military background and expertise in self-defence

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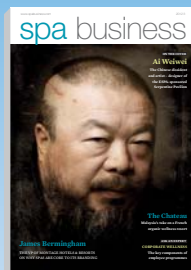
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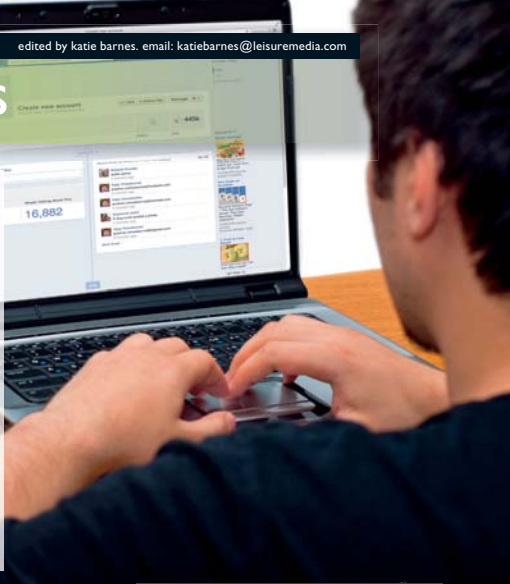
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SHAMED INTO FITNESS BY FACEBOOK PICS

Uncomplimentary images of overhanging bellies, saggy under-arms and double chins on social network sites are making UK people more concerned about their bodies.

In a survey of 2,000 Britons – commissioned by activity tracker company Fitbit – 17 per cent said the shame of seeing such pictures on Facebook was just what they needed to get them to the gym. And a 33 per cent admitted to de-tagging themselves from photos which made them look fat. Meanwhile, 40 per cent said they were more likely to post photos if they felt they looked good.

Facebook pictures even came (just) in front of the traditional weight-loss trigger of not being able to fit into summer clothes, which 16 per cent of people said spurred them on to lose weight. Other weight-loss triggers included partners (14 per cent) and healthcare professionals (11 per cent). Details: www.fitbit.com



COUNTING CALORIES VIA PHONE APP



Using your mobile phone to take pictures of food could be a handy (and different) way of keeping track of calorie and food intake – and hopefully lead to weight loss.

With the Meal Snap app, currently available in the US for US\$2.99, people can take pictures of what they're eating. The app then uses photo recognition technology to compare the meal with images on a database and calculates the approximate calories.

Meal Snap isn't entirely accurate, but it does provide a more visual, digital and interesting kind of food diary. Details: <http://mealsnap.com>



SHARPEN UP EXERCISE WITH SWORD WORKOUTS

For those bored of core workouts like yoga and pilates, a Japanese swordsman's training camp last month showcased a great alternative to Londoners.

Delivered by the Battodo Fudokan training school, there were two classes a day for six days in September. Participants were able to try out stances and swinging movements with a wooden sword to help increase their strength and flexibility.

The practice of the sword has been used for centuries in Japan, for health, co-ordination and concentration purposes. 'Batto' refers to the quick drawing of the blade, while 'do' relates to the path of development. Details: www.battodo-fudokan.co.uk

fitness pensioner in pop video

Dr Charles Eugster, a pensioner originally from the UK, has been picked to star in a German pop video because of his outstanding levels of fitness.

The 92-year-old is featured rowing in a video for the latest hit by Silbermond. The song is called *Für Dich schlägt mein Herz* (My Heart Beats for You) and the premise behind the video is to demonstrate a passion for something that makes your heart beat faster.

Dr Eugster has won 36 gold medals at Poland's World Masters Rowing Regatta over the last 15 years, as well as many other fitness titles.

In his late 80s, he began a career as a motivational speaker, but he's also been a dentist and a publisher. Aged 90, he signed a contract with Germany fitness chain INJOY to help promote the benefits of fitness training for older people. Details: www.charleseugster.net

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SCOTLAND EAST

Pure Gym Aberdeen GOLD
Pure Gym Edinburgh Ocean Terminal SILVER
Aberdeen Sports Village BRONZE

SCOTLAND WEST

The Peak GOLD
Pure Gym Glasgow SILVER
Energie Fitness for Women East Kilbride BRONZE

NORTHERN IRELAND

Pure Gym Belfast GOLD
Fit4less Club Lisburn SILVER

NORTH WEST – North

Energie Fitness for Women Preston GOLD
Pendle Wavelength & Inside Spa Nelson SILVER
Energie Fitness for Women Blackburn BRONZE

NORTH WEST – South

Pure Gym Warrington GOLD
Thornton Hall Country Health Club SILVER
Pure Gym Manchester Urban Exchange BRONZE

NORTH EAST

Fit4less Club Hartlepool GOLD
Exercise4less Stockton-on-Tees SILVER

YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER

Crown Spa GOLD
Pure Gym Leeds SILVER
Pure Gym Sheffield BRONZE

WALES

Pure Gym Cardiff GOLD
Fit4less Club Port Talbot SILVER
LivingWell Newport BRONZE

WEST MIDLANDS – North

Pure Gym Stoke on Trent GOLD
Pure Gym Wolverhampton SILVER
Sandwell Leisure Trust, Smethwick Swimming Centre BRONZE

WEST MIDLANDS – South

Pure Gym Coventry GOLD
Pure Gym Birmingham City SILVER
Chesford Grange Hotel BRONZE

EAST MIDLANDS – North

Nuffield Health Mapperley GOLD
Energie Fitness for Women Long Eaton SILVER
The Nottingham Belfry BRONZE

EAST MIDLANDS – East

Forest Pines Hotel Broughton GOLD
Everyone Active West Lindsey Leisure Centre SILVER
Everyone Active Cleethorpes Leisure Centre BRONZE

EAST MIDLANDS – South

Loughborough Leisure Centre GOLD
Pure Gym Leicester SILVER
LivingWell Leicester BRONZE



OFFICIAL WINNERS 2012

GRAND PRIX CATEGORIES

BEST CLUB IN THE UK (less than 2,000 members)

Energie Fitness For Women Eastbourne GOLD
Thornton Hall Country Health Club SILVER
Crown Spa BRONZE

BEST CLUB IN THE UK (2,000 members or more)

Pure Gym Southampton GOLD
Pure Gym Aberdeen SILVER
Everyone Active Spelthorne Leisure Centre BRONZE

SPONSORED BY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



EAST OF ENGLAND

Everyone Active Stradbroke Leisure Centre GOLD
Energie Fitness for Women Ely SILVER
One Leisure Huntingdon BRONZE

SOUTH WEST – South

Pure Gym Bournemouth GOLD
Energie Fitness for Women Teignmouth SILVER
David Lloyd Leisure Exeter BRONZE

SOUTH WEST – North

The Fitness Hub GOLD
Centurion Fitness Centre SILVER
Anytime Fitness Bristol BRONZE

SOUTHERN – North

Fit4less Club Chesham GOLD
LivingWell Reading SILVER
LivingWell Newbury North BRONZE

SOUTHERN – South

Pure Gym Southampton GOLD
David Lloyd Leisure Southampton SILVER
Energie Fitness Club Andover BRONZE

LONDON – North

YMCA Central London GOLD
H2 Bike Run Soho SILVER
The Laboratory Spa & Health Club Muswell Hill BRONZE

LONDON – South

Wavelengths Leisure Centre GOLD
Pure Gym London Wandsworth SILVER
Pure Gym London Oval BRONZE

SOUTH EAST – North (Essex)

Everyone Active Central Park Leisure Centre GOLD
Everyone Active Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre SILVER
Everyone Active Basildon Sporting Village BRONZE

SOUTHEAST – North (Herts & Middlesex)

Everyone Active Spelthorne Leisure Centre GOLD
Everyone Active Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre SILVER
Everyone Active Farnshaw Leisure Centre BRONZE

SOUTH EAST – South (Surrey & W. Sussex)

Nuffield Health Surbiton GOLD
Pure Gym Walton on Thames SILVER
Energie Fitness Club East Grinstead BRONZE

SOUTH EAST – South (Kent & E. Sussex)

Energie Fitness for Women Eastbourne GOLD
David Lloyd Leisure Maidstone SILVER
Ashford International BRONZE

NATIONAL CATEGORIES

BEST BUDGET CHAIN (5+ clubs)

Pure Gym GOLD
Fit4less SILVER
Fitness4less BRONZE

BEST SMALL CHAIN (3-9 clubs)

Fitness4less GOLD
YMCA London South West SILVER
One Leisure BRONZE

BEST MEDIUM CHAIN (10-30 clubs)

Pure Gym GOLD
QHotels SILVER
Fit4less BRONZE

BEST NATIONAL CHAIN (30+ clubs)

Everyone Active GOLD
David Lloyd Leisure SILVER
Energie Fitness for Women BRONZE