

health club management

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

INTERVIEW

ANASTASIA YUSINA

The president of Strata Partners on piloting a medical fitness concept

SWEET TRUTH

Just how much of a public health hazard is sugar?

EXERCISE REFERRAL

A new set of professional and operational standards



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A broader church

The challenge for operators and suppliers alike has always been how to connect with everyone, ensuring equipment meets the needs of all user groups, and that gym programming caters for all possible audiences. Yet today, as those audiences fragment even further – creating niche markets with ever more incompatible needs – that challenge is tougher than ever.

So how can we keep up, delivering an increasingly diverse offering within one facility? How can we remain relevant to a fitness-savvy audience that's getting fitter than ever, while at the same time encouraging sedentary people to take their first steps into activity?

In fact, there's always been plenty on offer in gyms to get the inactive moving, whether that's fun, social activities such as walking clubs or Zumba, or exercise referral schemes for the more seriously deconditioned. The main challenge with this group is getting them through the door in the first place.

Just as much of a challenge, however, is how to keep the very fit coming back for more, preventing them from getting bored and ensuring they continue to see the results of their gym-based efforts. Such members may previously have felt the only option was to increase the amount of time they trained; with this not always feasible, performance often plateaued and engagement levels fell. However, gyms have now latched on to the other key training variable – intensity – with a range of high-intensity programming (HIT) that's successfully re-engaging this group.

That's all great, but the problem is that HIT, as the latest hot trend, is dominating the headlines, potentially alienating sedentary audiences. And therein lies the problem. As needs become ever more incompatible, we risk putting people off before they've even entered the gym.

This was driven home to me by a recent feature on the *Telegraph* website, which outlined an array of high-intensity, high calorie burn and apparently increasingly popular workouts – from the US' Relentless to South Africa's Sweat 1000 and London-based Frame's Power Hour. These tough workouts were portrayed as mainstream offerings, with Frame's founder Pip Black acknowledging that clients' fitness levels had soared recently: "When we opened in 2009, our classes were so much easier than they are now." These are all pretty terrifying messages for a sedentary audience. Will we ever win round non-gym goers if their perceptions are that gyms are even less 'for them' than they were before?

It's not that we shouldn't talk about HIT. However, it's not only programming and equipment that must address the needs of all groups; communication, both in the sector's own marketing and in the media, must speak equally to all possible gym-goers, reassuring them that their needs will be met by whichever facility they choose to attend. A pilot being run at Fitness Club 24 in Poland offers a great example of this. Receptionists and trainers have been divided into teams, each focused on one training goal: weight loss, conditioning and so on. Clients are segmented by goal and all programmes tailored, with like-minded members working out together: Monday circuits for those who want to burn fat, for example. There's space for the new-to-exercise and the gym-savvy HITers in this model – and with staff segmented, each group receives not only targeted programming, but also tailored messaging and motivation.

Kate Cracknell, editor – katecracknell@leisuremedia.com / twitter: @HealthClubKate
To share your thoughts on this topic, visit www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/blog



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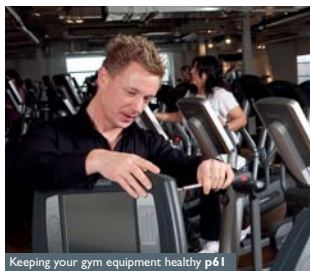
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Buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p78



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



Employee health should be a core corporate strategy for all businesses

Corporate wellness is evolving – and we must keep up

I was interested to read your feature on corporate wellness (HCM Oct 12, p82). I believe, if we're to improve productivity, absenteeism and employee health, we need to engineer activity back into the everyday lives of the whole population.

We need to offer 'whole population' solutions that support people across the wellness/healthcare continuum. The time is right for this to happen. The employee is ready, the employer is engaged with health as a core corporate strategy, and the government is driving prevention.

Employers are already changing their requirements, and the 'whole population' revolution has started. Network Rail has achieved 77 per cent engagement rates and a 63 per cent increase in physical activity; the UNO bus company has seen a 63 per cent reduction in blood pressure and 44 per cent reduction in cholesterol

among its staff; and Enfield Council has seen 73 per cent employee engagement.

These are not the only UK examples, but they are proof that the change is already happening. Employers want to engineer healthy habits back into the lives of their employees because it's good for their employees and good for the bottom line. Companies now require engagement across their whole population, with proof of increased activity rates and improved biometric results.

What we now need are the right offerings: simple behaviour change programmes that incorporate social media, rewards, incentives and game play alongside expertise, coaching and community support. We also need to embrace technology to create scale.

Peter Croft
EVP international, FitLinxx

Nuffield Health: Innovation in personal training

Further to your article Personal Touch (HCM Sept 12, p54), we believe further development and innovation of the coaching aspect of the personal trainer role will be critical to its future success. Within this, it's the development of the PT's skillset in building relationships, coaching and inspiring behavioural change that will have the greatest impact.

At Nuffield Health, our goal is to inspire and transform positive behaviour to benefit people's health and wellbeing is greatly reliant on our ability to communicate the real and long-lasting benefits of tailored, one-to-one health and fitness support. We have therefore created the new role of health mentor – an innovation in personal training and coaching support. Health mentors will offer PT and regular coaching, combined with opportunities to access services in nutrition, physiology and physiotherapy – all included with the membership subscription.

Our health mentors will be measured on the quality and health outcomes of the members they support, not just the number of sessions they deliver. They will be encouraged to think of how to personalise the experience for each member, allowing them to feel a greater sense of achievement. All of this should help reverse the high attrition rates for PT highlighted in September's feature.

Natalie Mumford
Fitness & wellbeing director, Nuffield Health



Nuffield's new health mentors will combine PT with coaching

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Please take 10 minutes to complete the survey by visiting the following link: www.surveymonkey.com/s/NQDN2R6

Thanks in advance, from the team at HCM, for your valued input.



Facilities include a 100-station gym by Pulse

Greenvale Leisure Centre opens to the public

The new multi-million pound Greenvale Leisure Centre in Magherafelt, Northern Ireland, has opened its doors to the public. Facilities include Northern Ireland's first 50m swimming pool and a health club with a 100-station gym – supplied by Pulse – and group exercise space. An exclusive children-only circuit gym has also been installed, featuring a fitness room with dance mats and interactive walls and floor.

The centre's thermal suite offers a sauna, steamroom, four heated loungers, two 'snail showers' and a feature ice station. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=f4V2H>

Cheshire East Council considers leisure trust

Cheshire East Council is considering converting its leisure services into a trust.

At a meeting on 15 October, the cabinet was asked to review the procurement of leisure and financial consultants to review the range of potential delivery models available and recommend a preferred option. The review will look at best value, reducing net operating costs, and will consider the advantages and disadvantages of a new model. The cabinet will review the report in December. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=k7b3M>

DLL launches 'DLicious' menu

Health club operator David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has unveiled a new 'fast fitness food' concept for members who are looking to improve their diets as part of a healthy lifestyle. The DLicious menu is one of the first of its kind to be launched by a large chain in the UK and has been developed by chefs, nutritionists and health and fitness experts.

Inspired by the Paleolithic diet and the 40:30:30 concept of healthy and balanced foods, DLicious aims to help members feel energised throughout the day, as well as getting results during their workouts.

Andy Lowe, DLL's head of food and beverage, says: "We're incredibly excited about DLicious. No mainstream operator on the high street is offering a truly healthy approach to eating and lifestyle. We're using ingredients that are more natural, pure and



The new 'fast fitness food' concept will be rolled out across the UK

therefore better quality, with less processed food, salt, sugar and additives. There are now fewer starchy carbohydrates and more good ones, and options comprising ingredients free from gluten are also available."

The menu will begin rolling out across the DLL portfolio of clubs later this year. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=s2F4N>

Leisure Connection gets cash injection

Management company Leisure Connection has announced a £9.3m re-capitalisation for the business.

According to a statement, the cash injection from investors will fund the group's "ambitious growth plans" as the company looks to add to its current portfolio of 70 managed leisure facilities.

Julian Nicholls, chair of Leisure Connection, says: "We have a very strong market offering both in the public sector as well as the private sector. The next 12 months are going to be very exciting for the business as we continue to enhance our proposition and encourage even more people to get active."



Leisure Connection has a "very exciting 12 months ahead"

Leisure Connection's managed sites range from fitness facilities to pools, encompassing leisure centres, private clubs, national sport centres and hotel health clubs and spas.

Forest Hills Pools re-opens after £8.9m redevelopment

Forest Hill Pools leisure centre in Lewisham, south London, has re-opened following an £8.9m redevelopment of its facilities.

Designed by Roberts Limbrick Architects and built by Hertfordshire-based Willmott Dixon, the venue is owned by Lewisham

Council and operated by Fusion Lifestyle. The improved facilities at the centre now include a 25m swimming pool with spectator area, a 16.7m learner pool, and a health and fitness club with two group exercise studios. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=W6D7y>

FIA appoints agency for rebrand

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has appointed Mr B & Friends to create a new brand for the association.

Set to be unveiled at the FIA Summit on 22 November 2012, the new brand will look to champion physical activity in all forms.

David Stalker, FIA CEO, says: "Our new brand will exist to accelerate the advancements of the sector and deliver our unchanged mission: to get more people, more active, more often. To achieve this, we need to develop more, innovate more and deliver more.

"As the sector's representative body, this is our promise to our members, stakeholders and consumers. Through our new brand, we hope to bring the sector together to generate new and sustainable pathways to achieve more than it can by acting individually.

"We're now working with Mr B & Friends to establish the detail that underpins the new brand and strategy to bring it to life."

Simon Barbato, managing director of Mr B & Friends, adds: "To help shape the brand of the FIA, which represents so many



The rebrand will include new logos and identity

important stakeholders and influencers in the sector, means we have an opportunity of helping set the tone for an increasingly broadening sector. Fitness, activity and wellbeing isn't just the reserve of a sector – it's something that's becoming part of everyone's everyday conversations."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=r0G4z>

The Gym Group acquires three new sites

Budget chain The Gym Group has continued its aggressive expansion in the UK by acquiring three new sites.

The new clubs are located in Gloucester (a 1,485sq m site), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1,580sq m) and Peterborough (1,395sq m). Cushman & Wakefield advised the company on all three sites.

Earlier this summer, The Gym Group reported an "outstanding year" in which it saw continued turnover

and membership growth despite a "flat market place".

In 2011, the chain expanded its portfolio from 10 to 16 gyms and has continued its expansion this year, with 24 sites currently in operation. It has more than 15 sites in its development pipeline.



John Trehan, CEO of The Gym Group, has overseen the expansion

Jeremy Phillips, property director at The Gym Group, says: "We're seeing landlords wanting to transact with a leading tenant who has a clear and sustainable business plan for future success. We only want to open sites which will still be successful in 10 years' time."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=t3ZoU>

New Grimsby leisure centre on track for 2014 launch

A new and improved leisure centre is set to replace the ageing Scartho Swimming Pool in Grimsby by 2014.

North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) has approved plans for the new facility, which will include an eight-lane, 25m pool, a

separate learning pool and a heath and fitness club. As part of the council's commitment to build a legacy following the 2012 Games, local disability groups have been consulted about the new pool to make it fully inclusive.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=k6W2g>

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£3m revamp of gym leads to increases in membership

A £3m expansion and refurb of Kingswood Leisure Centre in Gloucestershire has resulted in a 150 per cent increase in the number of visitors since it opened in May.

The revamp, funded jointly by South Gloucestershire Council and Circadian Trust, included a new gym and 20 new group cycling bikes and led to an 80 per cent increase in memberships over the past year. Swimming also saw a dramatic increase, with more than 26,000 people using the new 25m pool in July and August – 50 per cent more than in 2011.



YST will benefit from YMCA's network of clubs

Youth Sport Trust and YMCA join forces

Youth Sport Trust (YST) and YMCA have announced a new partnership designed to enhance both organisations' reach within schools and communities.

The joint venture will see YST being able to access YMCA's community network of clubs for young people. In return, YMCA will benefit from making its apprenticeships schemes, training and its awarding body more available for school leavers.

Speaking at the School Sport Conference in October, John Steele, CEO of YST, said: "This partnership allows us to extend our reach beyond the school gates." *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=C6zoV>*

Catholic priest deems yoga "not compatible with faith"

A Catholic priest has banned yoga from being practised at a church hall and has described the form of exercise as "not compatible with the Catholic faith".

A local independent yoga teacher, Cori Withell, was due to begin giving yoga and pilates classes at St Edmunds Church building, but was told her booking had been cancelled on religious grounds. Father John Chandler said yoga was "from another religion" and therefore didn't comply with the requirement of the hall being used solely for Catholic activities.

Roko invests £6.6m in clean energy

EuroSite Power, a clean energy provider, has signed a £6.6m contract with Roko Health Clubs to provide heat and power to four of its clubs.

The clubs – in Chiswick, Gillingham, Nottingham and Portsmouth – all have indoor pools with spas, saunas and steamrooms, as well as fitness areas. Under the 15-year agreement, EuroSite Power will install and operate combined heat and power systems at each of the health clubs. The company will produce clean energy in the form of electricity, heating and domestic hot water for each health club.

The projects will produce around 6.6 GWh of total energy – and save up to 694 tonnes of CO₂ – every year. The clubs will only pay for the energy used and will avoid all capital, installation and operating costs. EuroSite Power will handle all service, maintenance and repairs.



Roko Nottingham: One of the four clubs to benefit from the agreement

Neil Stanton, Roko Health Clubs' operations director, says: "We anticipate a material reduction in both our annual energy bill and CO₂ production.

"We also believe EuroSite Power's solutions address some of the financial challenges posed by the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme." *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=b4W6V>*

Council cuts to 'hit Welsh leisure centres'

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has warned that the country's Olympic legacy is being put under threat as local authorities are being forced to cut leisure provision.

In a report published last month, WLGA has revealed the bleak financial climate faced by local councils in Wales. Based on its findings, the WLGA said the financial situation for Welsh local authorities will be tough until at least 2020–21, with even the most optimistic set of financial assumptions meaning Wales could see a 1.6 per cent reduction in per person spending power in 2021 compared to 2013.

A far more pessimistic financial projection could mean that Welsh councils' spending



Welsh councils might be forced to cut spending on leisure provision

power will be reduced by as much as 18 per cent. This, the report says, will unavoidably lead to councils cutting leisure provision as they seek to protect key services such as education, care and waste management. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=A801w>*

£8m Life Leisure centre opens in Stockport

Woodley Sports Centre in Stockport, Greater Manchester, has re-opened its doors as lifeLEISURE Stockport Sports Village following an £8m development and refurbishment.

Facilities at the refurbished centre include a new 2,500sq m (27,000sq ft) health club with a

100-station gym supplied by Life Fitness, plus a number of football and tennis facilities.

Significant investment has been made to install floodlit Optima 3G football pitches – the same type that are used at Barcelona FC's Joan Gamper training facility.

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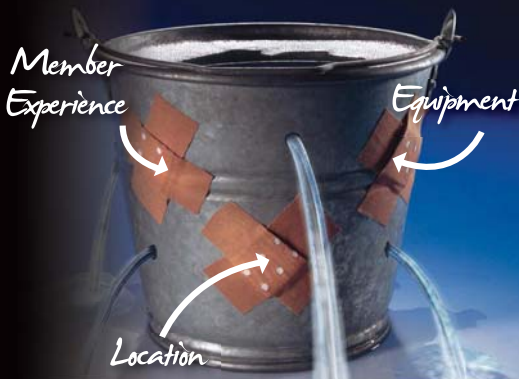
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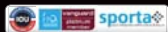
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Core Fitness: New gym space

Fitness entrepreneurs Helen and Tony Tite have launched a brand new gym space at their The Core Fitness and Wellbeing Centre in Falmouth, Cornwall.

The expansion – with equipment supplied by Precor – includes a new space covering two floors of the town's Old Post Office Building. The project also included a facelift and rebrand of all existing interiors.

The new gym will complement the existing offering, comprising group exercise classes and functional personal training using equipment such as Total Gym (GRAVITY), Freeform, TRX and ViPR.

Helen says: "We see this as a natural expansion and the missing complement to our group exercise studios and personal training centre. We recognise that a great workout is the sum of many parts and we are dedicated to providing maximum flexibility to our clients



The new gym complements the existing group exercise and PT offering

to assist them in developing a health, fitness and wellbeing programme that hits their individual goals."

Helen is a specialist exercise therapist and – through her fitness consultancy strand of the business – works with Clinical Commissioning Groups (NHS) developing and delivering fitness services in falls prevention, long-term chronic health and neurological conditions.

Former boxer to open fitness club in York



The gym, located in the former Regent Cinema building, is set to become the largest boxing facility in York

Former British boxing champion Henry Wharton has announced plans to open his own gym and fitness centre in York.

To be called Henry's Gym, the new facility will open to members of all ages and is set to become the city's biggest boxing club.

The new 836sq m (9,000 sq ft) gym, once the Regent Cinema, will operate as a health and wellness hub in the local community, with exercise and fitness classes being offered to a broader section of the local community.

Wharton – a former European Super Middleweight champion – went toe-

toe with the likes of Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank in what was a golden era for British boxing.

He is now hoping his latest venture will help to develop a talented breed of young Yorkshire boxers, inspired by the heroes of this summer's Olympics and with ambitions of representing their country at the next Games at Rio 2016 and beyond.

The centre has already been earmarked by The Yorkshire Amateur Boxing Association as a possible venue for the Yorkshire finals in the national ABA championships.

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SUPPLIER & TRAINING NEWS

Green CV kit gets first order

The first UK order has been placed – by the Spectrum Leisure Complex at Willington – for a new cardio system that turns human energy into usable power.

The revolutionary Green System – by fitness supplier SportsArt Fitness UK – uses a 'pod' of elliptical trainers and cycles, attached to an inverter, that harnesses human-generated power from the exerciser and feeds this back into the power grid as usable energy. This can then be used to save facilities thousands of pounds in energy costs.

The system is, says SportsArt, the first 'plug and play' solution of its kind for health club owners who want to offset power costs by freely harnessing human energy.

Ian Hirst, CEO of Spectrum Leisure and Management, which operates the Spectrum leisure centre, says: "We strive to provide



The new equipment harnesses and re-uses human-generated power

innovation in the way we operate, and constantly look to reduce our carbon footprint where feasible.

"The new SportsArt Green System provides the technology to assist us in supporting the environment plus the community we serve, and we believe that our customers will appreciate the new equipment."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M6y4t>

RAPs launched for swimming professionals



The registry is for all aquatics professionals and will become the industry's single qualification framework

SkillsActive has launched a new professional register for the aquatics sector, designed to become the single qualification framework structure for the industry.

Called Register of Aquatic Professionals (RAPs), the scheme will be owned and operated by SkillsActive and developed in partnership with employers.

RAPs will look to provide verification that those working in the sector are fully qualified to perform their role.

The qualifications accepted by RAPs will only include courses offered by the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA), the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) and The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS).

The three industry bodies are now working together as equal partners to develop a new qualification framework for each aquatic role (teaching, coaching, maintenance and lifesaving), as part of efforts to provide consistency across the sector and clarity to employers.

The initial launch of RAPs, in 2012, will be based on existing qualifications from ASA, STA and RLSS. This will be followed by a transition to the new single qualification framework by 2014.

RAPs members will also have the opportunity to progress to The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) on obtaining relevant qualifications and experience.



Keiser equipment
provides maximum
versatility with
minimum footprint

First integrated sports medicine and diagnostic centre opens

Prime Health, a new sports medicine, diagnostic and performance centre opened its doors in August 2012. The first of its kind in the UK, the centre offers a broader vision of health; integrating the whole continuum of services

from diagnostics and orthopaedic consultations to physiotherapy, massage therapy, corrective exercise, personal training, strength and conditioning, nutritional therapy, life coaching and group exercise classes.

The brainchild of Justin Buckthorp, Performance Director, and Jonathan Shrewsbury, Clinical Director, Prime Health aims to be a complete resource for people who want to look after their health and fitness.

With Prime Health, everything is situated under one roof. This includes the latest technology in MRI scanning, digital x-ray and advanced ultrasound, as well as consultation rooms for the orthopaedic surgeons, physiotherapy suites, a private gym and mezzanine for classes. This creates a seamless integration of services and gives clients peace of mind that they are taking the fastest and most direct route back to health or sport. In total around 35 clinicians, therapists and

trainers will facilitate this process.

Justin Buckthorp explained, "Prime Health was created to fulfil a broader vision. Somewhere that a client could come to us and experience the entire 'healthcare journey' in a matter of days rather than months. With professional athletes we have on occasions been able to condense the process to one day – from MRI scan to diagnosis to treatment and initial corrective exercise. We want to support our clients 100% and give people access to this full range of services, should they need it."

In addition to facilitating the private healthcare 'journey', Prime Health has also been designed to be accessible to members of the local community. As Justin put it, "This centre is open to all. We have designed a range of services to suit every budget."

There is no joining or membership fee; instead clients pay only for what they wish to use one month in advance. Prices start at £10 per class and £45 per hour for personal training, and go up from there, based on the experience and education of the coach they are working with.

The state-of-the-art 10,000 sq ft site is contained in two units on a business village in Weybridge. A multi-million pound

project, the centre features 12 consultation rooms, changing rooms, shower facilities, cutting-edge technology and equipment for use by the sports medicine team, as well as an open-plan gym and mezzanine. The gym features an array of Keiser Air equipment including Functional Trainers, Power Rack, M3 Indoor Cycles and M5 Ellipticals.

Commenting on the decision to use Keiser equipment, Justin Buckthorp said, "We want to support clients wherever they may be in their health: from post-injury rehabilitation to fitness to sports-specific athletic development. With Keiser's equipment we can train across this continuum whilst minimising the footprint it takes up. The pneumatic technology also enables us to build speed and power in our athletes, which traditional weight stacks cannot match. We are incredibly passionate about what we do and Keiser's equipment provides us with the technology we need."

For further information about
Prime Health call 01932 504999.
To contact Keiser UK call
0845 612 1102 or visit
www.keiseruk.com



Prime Health state of the art gym

IN BRIEF...

In-Shape acquires Millennium

In-Shape Health Clubs has acquired the Millennium Sports Clubs network of five full-service health clubs, all located in California, US.

Millennium clubs are traditionally higher-end facilities than In-Shape clubs, offering a broad range of facilities including racquetball, tennis, indoor and outdoor pools, basketball and volleyball. However, the new owners do not currently plan to change the offering, and In-Shape members will need to upgrade their membership if they wish to use the recently acquired sites.

Nevertheless, a reported US\$7m has been set aside for upgrades and improvements at the five clubs where needed, on a club-by-club basis.

X-Fit launches FitStudio

Russian fitness club chain X-Fit has announced the launch of a new franchise club group, FitStudio – a chain of affordable fitness clubs. Igor Lukashov, X-Fit chair, says the new franchise is aimed at making “fitness affordable, beauty achievable, people healthy, life happy”. X-Fit is accepting both existing and new clubs into the franchise group.

ZigZag heads to Australia

Interactive fitness equipment specialist ZigZag has entered the Australian market, signing a distribution deal with The Fitness Generation. The Australian-owned company has a 20-year history of partnering with global brands. In 2009, it also launched Healthstream, its own range of CV and strength kit.

Andrew Cocks, national marketing and communications manager at The Fitness Generation, says: “We see the education sector, along with children’s group classes within gyms, as our main target market for ZigZag. As with the UK, some schools have gyms in-house, while others take their kids off-site for exercise programmes. However, schools and colleges are realising that child obesity is a huge problem and are investing in these areas to increase mobility and exercise.”

Technogym opens Wellness Village

Technogym officially opened its new company headquarters – the Technogym Village – at the end of September.

Located in Cesena, Italy, the new development houses the entirety of the Technogym business, from office space, through research and innovation, to production. There is also an extensive

wellness offering for staff, including a huge showcase gym and restaurant supplied with fresh local produce. Every member of staff is entitled to a personalised wellness programme, and the canteen serves only dishes that are low in salt and saturated fat.

Even break-out areas in the office are designed to encourage wellness, with

healthy vending and exercise equipment alongside coffee machines. Office and meeting room chairs are replaced by Swiss ball-style ‘Wellness balls’.

Designed by Antonio Citterio, Patricia Viel and Partners, the 60,000sq m of covered space sits within 150,000sq m of grounds. The design is highly eco-friendly, exploiting natural heat exchange to minimise the need for heating or air-con.



Technogym's new Wellness Village includes a huge showcase gym, which staff can access

Medical fitness for Strata Partners

Strata Partners has piloted a new medical fitness concept at one of its City Fitness clubs in central Moscow.

“In Russia, doctors never advise their patients to go to the gym. We wanted to do something to address that,” says Strata Partners president Anastasia Yusina.

“We’ve created a ‘club in club’ concept: a couple of extra rooms with medical fitness equipment for rehab, and three doctors on-site. Members have personalised programmes, paying extra to access these services. They also pay for PT sessions, attended by a doctor, in the main gym.

“In the first month of the offering being launched, turnover at the club doubled.”

For more information, see interview p30.



Strata Partners' new 'club in club' concept gives members access to medical services

Vital Balance partners with Pelikaan

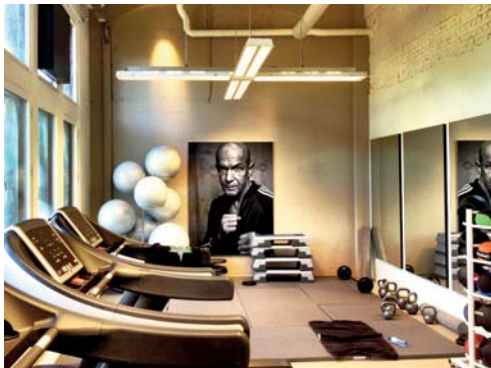
Netherlands-based Vital Balance Group has signed an agreement with local health club chain Pelikaan to roll out a new Vital Balance Centre ‘shop in shop’ concept.

The concept is based around use of the V-Check – an instrument that, rather than focusing on visible symptoms, monitors the underlying causes of illness, health and vitality. Based on automatically generated recommendations, clients are provided with a plan for exercise, diet, relaxation and behavioural change – a six- or 12-month programme that’s overseen by a Vital Balance coach via weekly sessions.

Linking in with Pelikaan’s aim to integrate more external professional guidance into its offering, where necessary coaches also interact with specialists such as doctors, physiotherapists, nutritionists, massage therapists and personal trainers.

Meanwhile, clients are provided with a monitoring kit – to measure weight, body fat, water and muscle mass – which sends all data wirelessly to a web portal.

Based on a rental model, the inaugural location – in Pelikaan Breda – launched in September. The concept will now be rolled out across other Pelikaan sites.



The Trainmore facilities in Utrecht are offered free to those training three or more times a week

Trainmore opens fifth club

Dutch health club operator Trainmore has opened its fifth facility, in the city of Utrecht, Netherlands.

The 1,700sq m club is located in an attractive historic building, with a fitness suite equipped by Technogym. Members also have free use of the sauna, changing facilities, showers, lounge and group classes such as yoga, group cycling, Body Pump, dance and boxing. There is also access to additional services such as personal training, physiotherapy and nutrition/weight loss consultancy.

The pricing structure at this fifth club is the same as at Trainmore's other sites. For the first quarter, membership costs €9.95 a week, but thereafter prices vary

according to how often members attend. If a member trains twice a week, they receive a 50 per cent reduction on their membership; those training three times a week can attend the gym for free.

"As an entrepreneur, I not only want to sell memberships but also a way of life," says founder and owner Han Doorenbosch. "People today need to move much more than they do; we dream of getting the world more active. From day one at our new club, visit frequency has averaged 1.8 visits per member, per week, compared to a national average of 0.9 visits."

The chain has plans for further expansion in the Netherlands, with two new sites already in the pipeline for 2013.

Goodlife's Australian expansion plans

Less than three weeks after its purchase of Fitness First's entire South Australian portfolio, Goodlife Health Clubs has announced the acquisition of Fenix Fitness Clubs for AU\$60.9m.

One of the newest players to the market, the Fenix estate encompasses 10 clubs throughout the Melbourne metropolitan areas in Victoria and the Gold Coast, with 35,773 members. The acquisition of the Fitness First and Fenix clubs positions Goodlife as the second largest full-service health and gym chain in Australia, with 63 clubs nationally.

Goodlife Health Clubs has been Ardent Leisure's strongest performing operating division, with a track record of above-market membership and profit growth.

CEO Greg Oliver says: "Our strategy in health clubs is to achieve leading positions in key markets. We are the leading player in Queensland with 19 clubs, South Australia with eight clubs and we're committed to growing our Victorian portfolio and building our network in Melbourne."

Goodlife clubs are kitted out with Cybex CV and strength equipment, alongside Stex and Synergy strength products.

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Active leisure consultancy Sports Solutions gets Grady

Active leisure consultancy Sports Solutions has strengthened its senior team, with the appointment of Richard Grady as director. He will be given responsibility for the development and delivery of leisure and sport facility projects.

Grady brings a wealth of leisure sector experience to the team, gained through the development and delivery of multi-disciplinary projects both with the private and public sectors.



Blythe will represent Gladstone in the Midlands

Gladstone further expands its sales team

Gladstone Health and Leisure has expanded its sales team for the second time this year following a territory-based restructure. Antony Davies and Deborah Blythe will manage the South West and the Midlands regions respectively.

Davies has a background in software, – having worked for Japanese company Amano – while Blythe has been in the health and fitness industry for 15 years, beginning her career with a small, independent chain before moving on to LivingWell as a sales manager.

New director of performance for UK Sport

Simon Timson, the current head of the England development programme and science and medicine at the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), has been named the new director of performance at UK Sport.

Timson will be tasked with the role of shaping the future of the UK's high performance system to sustain British Olympic and Paralympic success in Sochi 2014, Rio 2016 and beyond. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=d4d5Z>

Tuck and Tucker join the FIA

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has appointed Geraldine Tuck as its new operations director and added John Tucker to its public affairs team.

Tuck will lead the FIA's membership engagement initiatives, enhance the level of service provided and oversee sector-focused projects.

Meanwhile, Tucker has been tasked with strengthening the FIA's current partnerships, driving engagement with future partners, and implementing and managing key projects with major consumer brands.

Tucker joins the FIA from

London 2012 organiser LOCOG, where he was responsible for operational relationships with local authorities, emergency services and partner agencies around the country. He was also responsible for integrating LOCOG's operations with those of the co-host cities.

Tuck joins the FIA from D2F, where she was sales and marketing director. She began



Tuck has joined the association as its new operations director

her career as a fitness instructor and has since worked in sales roles at Technogym, Stairmaster and LivingWell.

FIA CEO David Stalker says: "John and Geraldine were outstanding candidates in our recruitment process and bring a great mix of experience, expertise and insight to the organisation."

Adam Bellamy named new Pure Gym CFO

Budget chain Pure Gym has announced the appointment of Adam Bellamy as the company's new chief financial officer. Bellamy joined Pure Gym in mid-September, during which month the company opened four new clubs, bringing its total to 33.

Previously finance director of night club operator Atmosphere Bars & Clubs, Bellamy's experience covers retail, hospitality and multi-site entertainment businesses. He is also a former finance director of upscale restaurant group D&D London.

Bellamy says: "Pure Gym has demonstrated a proven record of success in opening and managing affordable fitness clubs, and in a short period of time established itself as a market leader. I'm excited to be a part of the future success of this revolutionary business".

Tony Harris, CEO of Pure Gym, adds: "We are delighted to be able to announce the appointment of Adam as CFO. He has excellent and relevant experience that will



Bellamy has a long career in hospitality, including a stint at D&D London

complement our management team as we continue our rapid growth. It's testament to the Pure Gym business that we continue to attract high quality people."

James Jack, who has been finance director since the opening of the first Pure Gym clubs in 2009, will now step down from the role. Jack will, however, remain closely involved in the business, both as a director and a shareholder of Pure Gym.

Alliance Leisure appoints Foley

James Foley has joined Alliance Leisure as new business development manager, heading up facility development throughout the North of England, Scotland and Ireland.

His new role involves working closely with local authorities, leisure trusts and educational establishments, looking at innovative ways to improve facilities and meet the challenging and changing needs of the leisure industry.

With more than 15 years of experience in the industry, Foley has previously worked as operations manager responsible for a large trust portfolio, and as interim director for the launch of a new sports stadium. He has led directly on the project management and launch of over £50m of major new leisure projects, including leading the business planning and marketing campaign for the £26m Salford City Stadium.



At Alliance Leisure, Foley will "help transform under-performing sites"

Foley says: "My new role at Alliance Leisure will help transform under-performing sites into thriving new leisure centres, bringing better quality leisure and fitness facilities to local communities. I will ensure that all developments are given the time and expertise required to make them a success."

Ian Easton joins Mytime Active as FD

Ian Easton has joined social enterprise Mytime Active as finance director. He brings with him more than 25 years' experience in financial positions across several industry sectors, including engineering, property, hotels and hospitality.

Easton holds an MBA from the University of Warwick. He spent four years in Abu Dhabi as finance director for UAE-based Aldar Hotels & Hospitality, which developed, opened and operated eight hotels in less than two years, in time for the Emirate's first Formula One Grand Prix in 2009.

Easton will be based at Mytime Active's headquarters in the London Borough of Bromley. He says: "I was impressed by Mytime Active's vision for the future and found CEO Steve Price truly infectious in his passion and commitment to helping people achieve a healthier lifestyle through affordable leisure and community health services."



Easton will be based at Mytime Active's headquarters in south London

"I look forward to helping Mytime Active re-invest its surpluses for social good. Mytime's vision for a fitter, healthier future for all is one that I am proud to be a part of."

Commenting on Easton's appointment, Price adds: "Mytime is looking forward to a bigger, brighter future with another major appointment within our Health Division."

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How to lose – or keep – members

• Patricia Amend • Executive editor, *Club Business International*

In the last two decades, I estimate I've written 700 articles about the health club industry. Interviewing hundreds of club operators has taught me a lot about clubs. So has being a long-time health club member.

What I'd like to do here is point out some things that I think club owners often overlook – things which, I believe, mean a lot to members. I offer my opinions both as a journalist and as a customer. Take my advice as you will – it comes from a good place.

Hire good-hearted people: The staff at my current club (which I won't name) don't know my name. However, I don't care about that. What I do care about is that they greet me pleasantly, respond when I have a question, and bid me farewell when I leave.

If a member reports a problem, pay attention: In this same club, I made a point of letting the front desk know when my favourite piece of equipment wasn't working. While the staff was responsive, the manager wasn't, even after I followed up. Although I'd been on a first-name basis with her before this, she lost my respect when she

failed to acknowledge my correspondence and follow through on my perfectly reasonable request.

Don't ignore the details:

Another time, the music/TV system had problems – it was crackling and cutting out. I reported this to the front desk, yet it took weeks to get it fixed. This isn't a budget club by any means. I want to feel that I'm getting what I'm paying for.

Don't nickel and dime people:

At one point, I had an off-peak membership due to my flexible work schedule. Once that changed, I upgraded to a regular membership. A salesperson took care of it in just a few minutes. There was no charge, except for the bump in membership dues. However, when I inquired about a reciprocal membership, which would allow me to access other clubs in the company's estate, the salesperson told me I'd need to pay a US\$100 fee. That seemed unreasonable to me – especially since I wasn't charged a fee to upgrade before,



If a member at your club reports a problem, deal with it swiftly

I'd been a member for five years, and the economy remained sluggish.

Despite these issues, I've not yet cancelled my membership – but were the club not so convenient for me, I would have done. For now, I'm watching the market for another, more responsive club.

I urge you to listen to your members so you keep committed people like me – people who will bring in other members who are equally devoted to fitness.

Ask the experts: Websites on a budget

"Do you have suggestions on how to revamp a website on a budget? Or other alternatives to enhance our presence on the web?"

- Consider setting up your website as a blog. There are several that are very customisable and easy to manage.
- When posting content on your website or social media channels, use many keywords. Think about what your target customer is searching for online and use those words.
- Pictures tell a thousand words. Take pictures of workouts, equipment and people, and share them with a little blurb. Pictures can serve as content updates and help with marketing, so choose them carefully.



Jashinsky: Good websites don't need big budgets

- Take advantage of social media and apps that allow you to share content across multiple platforms. While it's ultimately better to have different types of content on different platforms, this is a way to make sure you're posting fresh updates.

• Look at outsourcing website help (try elance.com or odesk.com). There are many talented independent contractors who can put up a simple, quick website for very little money. Be clear on what you want. The more you can provide to the designer, the cheaper and faster they can get it done.

You don't need a big budget to have an attractive website. Have a clear idea of your message, the content, and the site's purpose. If you need more help with these things, be prepared to spend a little more money.

Karen Jashinsky – O2 Max Fitness founder and CEO

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



The former US president Bill Clinton (centre) gave the keynote speech at the conference in Italy

IHRSA attends Technogym opening

CEO Joe Moore and executive vice president of global products Jay Ablondi represented IHRSA at the recent Technogym Wellness Conference.

The event marked the opening of Technogym's new HQ in Cesena, Italy, and was attended by thousands of guests, dignitaries, press and employees.

Among those checking out the new laboratory, culture centre, library and more were the Italian Minister of Economic Development, Italian Minister of Health, and Italian president Giorgio Napolitano, as well as former US president Bill Clinton, who gave the keynote speech at the conference.

Events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

15 November 2012

Social media: Friend or foe? (webinar)

19–22 November 2012

ChinaFit / IHRSA China Management Forum - Shanghai, China

6 December 2012

Growth by numbers: Strategies to increase your non-dues revenue (webinar)

19–22 March 2013

IHRSA's 32nd Annual International Convention & Trade Show - Las Vegas, Nevada, US

Exercise apps don't always work out

Need to sculpt your abs, drop a few pounds or run a marathon? There's an app for that. On iTunes alone, there are more than 1,500 fitness software applications, or 'apps', from which to choose. In 2011, nearly 10 per cent of mobile phone users downloaded at least one of them to help track or manage their health, according to a 2011 Pew Research Center Internet survey.

To find out if any of these smartphone and tablet apps are actually effective, researchers at Brigham Young University in Utah, US, analysed 127 popular downloads and rated them for their ability to get users to change aspects of their lifestyles. Most apps fell short of this goal because, the researchers found, they weren't based on the sound scientific theories proven to spur real behavioural change.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Top award for Mrs.Sporty

Mrs.Sporty has been ranked year after year by *Impulse* magazine as one of the top 10 franchise systems in Germany, and after only eight years in operation, the chain of sports clubs for women has achieved the coveted top spot.

Each franchise concept is analysed according to five criteria: stability, dynamics, earnings, market and overall attractiveness. In the total analysis, 13 criteria are taken into consideration, including the number of partners, revenues of each location, age of the company, and the real as well as planned growth rate.

Mrs.Sporty was founded by tennis legend Stefanie Graf and Valerie Bönström, based around a 30-minute circuit training concept combined with nutritional advice.

Since the first club opened in 2004, the number of Mrs.Sporty clubs has grown steadily. More than 190,000 members now train in over 530 clubs, and the brand has spread beyond German borders into countries such as Austria, Italy and Switzerland. In the next five years, the brand hopes to have more than 800 clubs worldwide.



Mrs.Sporty has over 500 clubs worldwide

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

Who are our members?

IHRSA's latest health club consumer report is out now. Kristen A Walsh offers an overview

In September, IHRSA published *The IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report: 2012 Health Club Activity, Usage, Trends & Analysis*. This annual publication provides demographics and participation data on American health club consumers. This year's edition focuses on multi-year trends, covering the economic recession and recovery.

Club attendance

"Drawing from four years of consumer data, *The IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report* analyses consumer activity and behaviour relative to the fitness industry and interprets findings to help club operators identify profit centre opportunities," says Jay Ablandi, IHRSA's executive vice president of global products.

"As IHRSA reported earlier this year, health club utilisation reached an all-time high of 59 million consumers in 2011. The report analyses the characteristics of these health club consumers and provides credible data that club owners, developers and industry suppliers can use in their efforts to grow their customer base."

US health club member attendance also reached an all-time high with an average of 102.5 visits per member in 2011. From 2008 to 2011, the total number of members who visited their club at least 100 times a year increased by 17.6 per cent, from 20.5 million to 24.1 million.

New to this year's report is analysis of the fastest growing member segments, growing and declining in-club activities, and opportunities for growth.

The typical 'core' member, who uses their health club an annual minimum of 100 days, has the following characteristics:

- Slightly more likely to be male than female
- Average age of 42.9 years
- College graduate or higher
- Average membership tenure of 5.4 years



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While the average member is 42.9 years old, there are opportunities in the Baby Boomer segment

Market share

The IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report also covers the following topics:

Health club membership fees and market share by club type: In 2011, consumers paid an average of US\$42.55 in monthly membership fees, up from US\$40.94 in 2008. Club fees and market share for fitness-only, multi-purpose, non-profit, and corporate/business facilities are analysed.

Health club member participation rates: Roughly 18 per cent of Americans aged six and older are members of a health club. This section also includes member penetration rates for the 48 contiguous states and Washington, DC.

Health club member profiles: Health club members are broken down by activity and club type. Activity type breakdowns include group exercise, soft exercise, weights and resistance, and cardio.

Health club member usage: Also provided is an in-depth analysis of member attendance, club participation, and non-club activity participation.

Personal training consumers: A total of 6.4 million Americans used personal training services in 2011. Demographics of personal training users are included in the new report.

Growing segments

Findings from *The IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report* point to opportunities for growth within the Generation X and Baby Boomer segments. Along with other targeted strategies, weight management programmes and sports-specific training may help engage these two key groups.

The IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report is based on analysis of 38,742 online interviews that were carried out with a nationwide sample of individuals and households in early 2012.

This publication is available in PDF format at www.ihrsa.org/consumer-report for US\$79.95 (IHRSA member price) or US\$199.95 (non-members).

Please contact store@ihrsa.org with any questions.





WHAT'S SHAKIN' IN YOUR CLUB AT 1 PM?

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Counting down to exercise referral



FIA CEO David Stalker outlines the timeline for the production and publication of the Professional and Operational Standards for Exercise Referral, the changes that the new standards bring, and some of the challenges along the way

New standards are on their way for exercise referral. One only needs to read the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) review of exercise referral to appreciate the need for such standards. The review – *The Clinical Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Exercise Referral Schemes: A Systematic Review and Economic Evaluation* – clearly highlighted the problem, namely that nationally, no evidence exists for the effectiveness of exercise referral schemes.

There is a gap between academic research stating that exercise can be effective in the prevention and management of chronic disease, and the actual coalface delivery.

Firstly, I must explain that the standards are not yet completed – rather we are dotting the i's and crossing the t's of the final document. However, as this has been a long process full of challenges, I thought an update would reassure those running the UK's 1,200 exercise referral programmes that the standards are forthcoming, and also offer some clues as to what is in store.

Joint consultation

As a brief reminder, the Professional and Operational Standards have been the primary focus of the Joint Consultative Forum – a forum established between the medical community and the physical activity sector (see information box, p25). In other words, it's a forum between those who refer to and deliver exercise services.

The FIA has been represented by a series of members over the course of the last two years and thanks must go to the Wright Foundation, Nuffield Health, Lifetime Health and Fitness, Citypoint Club, UCL, and independent instructors such as Mike O'Donnoghue who are delivering referral schemes every day. The role of forum chair has recently been filled by the Royal College of Physicians, and particularly colonel John Etherington.

Special thanks must go to the former FIA chief medical officer, Dr John Searle OBE, who established the forum, reached agreements with the Royal Colleges, and chaired the group in its formative stages.

The forum believed that the issue – the evidence gap mentioned above – could be

changed by improving and standardising the service, so that all 1,200 exercise referral schemes across the UK work with a common evaluation framework. It will mean that, going forward, all schemes operate under a single 'patient inclusion/exclusion criterion', with programmes delivered by an agreed level of professional, collecting the same categories of data, and operating under a common referral process.

The British Heart Foundation Toolkit for Exercise Referral Systems previously demonstrated that there is huge variation in the qualifications and competencies of exercise professionals delivering exercise referral programmes, the data recorded, and the percentage of schemes actually adhering to 2001 National Quality Assurance Framework for Exercise Referral Systems.

Notable changes

Against this context, in late 2010 the Joint Consultative Forum assembled a drafting group to develop new Professional and Operational Standards for Exercise Referral, which will bring several notable changes to exercise referral.

Firstly, the standards define an exercise referral as "the referral of a patient by an allied healthcare professional to a service for the purpose of providing an exercise programme as part of the management of people with (i) stable and/or significant functional impairments/limitations related to a chronic disease or disability and/or (ii) with one or more significant cardiovascular disease risk factors".

Secondly, the standards acknowledge that a number of professionals are involved in an exercise referral. The 'referrer' is not always a GP, but can at times also be a physiotherapist, occupational therapist or nurse, to name but a few. Furthermore, a number of professionals may deliver exercise as part of the management of a chronic condition: a sport and exercise



We know exercise works, but don't yet have sufficient data on gym-based activity



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There are currently around 1,200 exercise referral schemes running in the UK; the new standards will apply to all of these

medicine consultant, for example, or a physiotherapist, REPs Level 3-registered exercise referral instructor, or a number of other professionals.

Importantly, by acknowledging the role of a number of professionals, we hope to establish physical activity as a vital part of numerous care pathways – be that for a type 2 diabetic patient referred by a GP, a patient with non-specific back pain referred by a physio, or a cardiac patient referred by a rehabilitation service.

Inclusion/exclusion

In layman's terms, the patient inclusion/exclusion criteria – or risk stratification – then determines which patient should see which professionals. The notable change within these standards is that patients who are identified as at 'low risk of an adverse event or decline during exercise' should remain within the exercise referral service, but may undertake a wide range of activities – programmed and monitored, but not necessarily supervised by the exercise referral instructor. This development changes the delivery of exercise referral services from one-on-one instruction to participation in any form of physical activity deemed suitable by a Level 3 exercise referral instructor – be that a walking group, a group exercise class, or simple changes to a person's everyday life.

Of course, medium-risk patients must be entered into an individualised, supervised exercise programme relevant

to their condition. Additionally, high-risk cardiac patients must be referred to a Level 4 cardiac rehabilitation professional, and high-risk non-cardiac patients to an appropriate multi-disciplinary team such as a falls prevention unit.

Part of a high-risk patient's exercise programme can be delivered by a REP's Level 3 exercise referral instructor, but the initial assessment and programming must be undertaken by the relevant multi-disciplinary team.

The first step

Lastly, the risk stratification leads me nicely to the goals of an exercise referral service, which fall into two main types – process goals and outcome goals – and also short- and long-term outcome goals.

Short-term goals will include condition-specific or clinical outcomes. However, long-term goals simply involve meeting a minimum threshold of physical activity, as set by the UK's chief medical officers, after a 12-month period. This once and for all clarifies that the ultimate goal has to be behaviour change, enabling people to exercise independently. The biggest criticism of exercise referral services has been that they do not support such behaviour change; this must now be the ultimate goal.

I hope this will see a greater number of low-risk patients being referred to REPs Level 3 exercise referral instructors for all forms of activity, and even simple physical activity counselling.

I cannot of course outline the entire standards in this short article. However, I hope I have given you a flavour of what is to come, and the opportunity that the standards represent for our professionals and facilities to improve their services and support patients to get more active.

The standards mark the first time the medical community has supported exercise referral, but the work won't stop there. I look forward to seeing the FIA Research Institute conducting the first academic review of a scheme adhering to the standards, or possibly the forum developing a kitemark to demonstrate that a scheme is meeting the standards. When the standards are published later this year, please read them, and watch this space.

Membership of the Joint Consultative Forum

- British Association of Sport & Exercise Sciences
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
- College of Occupational Therapy
- Faculty of Public Health
- Faculty of Sport & Exercise Medicine
- FIA (Fitness Industry Association)
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal College of Nursing
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Reindeer Run

The Reindeer Run, set in the beautiful grounds of Woburn Abbey, is held to raise funds for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

Every entrant will receive a free T-shirt and pair of reindeer antlers with a red flashing nose and can take part in one of three events. There's a 10km run (for ages 15 and above) and a 5km run (for ages 10 and above). For those who want to join in the fun, but don't want to run, there's also a 1km Santa Saunter, open to all ages. Hot drinks and mince pies await on the finish line. Entry prices are £7.50, £16 or £18, with the shorter events costing less. Details: <http://rnli.org>



Runners get a flashing nose

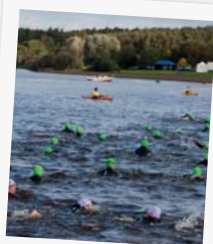
THROUGHOUT 2013

Swim for Macmillan

Cancer support charity Macmillan has a number of UK outdoor swimming challenges to sign up for in 2013.

Part of the Great Swim series and other independent events, the challenges are open to children and adults, with distances ranging from 500m to 10km. Participants can choose from a range of locations, from London's River Thames and Manchester's Salford Quays to the scenic setting of Lake Windermere in Cumbria and Loch Ness in Scotland as part of the Monster Swim challenge. Events usually run from May to August, although exact dates haven't yet been confirmed for 2013.

Details: www.macmillan.org.uk/swimming



Swims go from 500m to 10km

The race starts in Arizona



22-28 SEPT 2013

Grand to Grand Ultra

Early bird registration is now being accepted for the US Grand to Grand Ultra race, giving participants just under a year to train for this self-supported 268km challenge.

The six stage, seven-day event starts at Arizona's Grand Canyon, one of the seven natural wonders of the world, and culminates at the summit of the Grand Staircase – an iconic geological formation in Utah. The route takes in a desert landscape of sand dunes and red rock canyons.

Details: www.g2gultra.com



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The 17th annual Spatex show takes place in Brighton next February

DECEMBER

12-13 | The Sports
Facilities ExpoVenue RAI Convention Centre,
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Summary

A global sports expo and conference featuring six events. It's anticipated to be one of the largest shows for the sports industry in 2012. It attracts sporting and fitness clubs, communities and government organisations, as well as federations/associations, operators, developers and suppliers.

Web www.sdmworld.com

JANUARY

24-26 | UK Pool & Spa Expo

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK

Summary

This event has been designed to strengthen the UK pool and spa sector. It includes a trade-only event on the first two days, opening out to the public on the last day.

Web www.ukpoolspa-expo.co.uk28-29 | The Facilities
Management ForumVenue Radisson Blu Hotel, Stansted,
London, UK

Summary

In its 13th year, this event will offer facility managers and directors access to free seminars and networking opportunities.

Web www.forumevents.co.uk

FEBRUARY

3-5 | Spatex

Venue Hilton Metropole, Brighton, UK

Summary

The 17th annual event showcasing the pool, spa and lifestyle industry. It will include a three-day programme of workshops organised by the Institute of Swimming Pool Engineers (ISPE).

Web www.spatex.co.uk

21-23 | ForumClub

Venue Bologna, Italy

Summary

International congress and expo for fitness, wellness and sports clubs with products, technologies, informative meetings, lessons and awards. The ForumClub event will be held alongside ForumPiscine, which caters for swimming pool and aquatic centre operators.

Web www.ncforum.com28-3 March | IDEA Personal
Trainer Institute

Venue Alexandria, Virginia, US

Summary

This is one of the longest running conferences aimed at a limited number of personal trainers and has sold out for the last few consecutive years. It includes four days of pre-conference sessions, lectures and workshops. The event also features a number of in-depth, focused lessons with world-class trainers and presenters.

Web www.ideafit.com/ptrainer

Everyone's talking about . . .

Olympic Legacy

The summer of sport – why did it have to end? Both the Olympics and Paralympics ignited a positive spark which swept across the UK. So can the health and fitness industry help keep it alight?

London won the chance to host the Olympics with the rather grandiose promise that it would use the Games to create a legacy to encourage more people to get more active, for life. The massive spikes in interest reported by many National Governing Bodies of Sport during and post-Games is encouraging, but as the memories of the Games fade, how do we make sure the enthusiasm doesn't also wane?

At the moment there's still momentum to capitalise on. The government launched its 10-point legacy plan in September, including the pledge of £125m a year of UK Sport funding

for elite sport, and £1.5m to the English Federation of Disability Sport to increase participation in sport by disabled people. Over the next five years, £1bn will be pumped into the Youth Sport Strategy, linking schools with clubs to build lifelong sporting habits.

This is the point at which the health and fitness industry needs to reach out assertively. Speaking at Leisure Industry Week in September, FIA CEO David Stalker threw down the gauntlet, encouraging the sector to work in partnership to bring strategies together. He said the aim of all legacy plans should be to make the UK the most active nation in the world.

"To all businesses in our sector, I say that if you don't have a legacy strategy, in a few years we will have missed the biggest opportunity, and it will all come tumbling down," he said. "We will lose the chance to be seen by the government as the people who can make a difference. There is lots that we can do, but we need the whole sector to get behind it. Together we can achieve more."

So what practical steps can gyms be taking now to ensure they are maximising the legacy. More programming? (Ennis Abs anyone?) Partner sports clubs? Perhaps more sessions for kids? We ask the experts.

HOW IS YOUR GYM CONTRIBUTING TO THE LEGACY? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

Greg Searle

Men's eight rower • Olympic medalist



"What made London 2012 special was that we all had a common goal: to 'inspire a generation' and host the greatest show on earth. We came together and we did it. To achieve the legacy potential, I believe gyms need to make their members feel part of a team.

Health clubs need to create activities that bind members together – for

example, taking on another gym in a swimming, rowing or cycling challenge. Or organising a fun game of handball or volleyball using a badminton court or dance studio.

Team GB set targets: British Rowing wanted 20 medals and I wanted one of those, which motivated me to get out of bed at 6.30am to train, as well as eat and drink healthily. It's the fact that it's hard which makes it worthwhile: if it's easy, there's no satisfaction. Gyms need to help individuals define their goals, and encourage them along the way to keep pushing themselves. For me, the next step was the Olympics, but for others it could be taking part in a 10k run, or rowing 2k under a certain time.

The feeling of crossing the line and winning a medal is the same feeling as putting your all into a tough training session and completing it well: it's hard, but it's worth it. "

Jean Watson

English Institute of Sport • Performance operations manager



"Many of the athletes in our talent/development pathways are good at their sport, but lacking in strength. They need gym-based training to improve their performance. If the health and fitness industry could become involved, it would help ensure the legacy.

In my role at Bisham Abbey, I have frequently had to go out to health

clubs to negotiate free access for athletes, because the sports clubs they train with don't have access to appropriate gym equipment. This arrangement can work well for both parties. For example, a club in Cambridge has given rowers free access to the gym, and in return the rowers have taught correct use of the rowing machine to members. This could be taken further, with free or discounted sessions offered at the athletes' club, whether that be rowing, canoeing or hockey. This would add value to the gym membership.

Adopting a team can create a buzz at the gym, which is great marketing. Rubbing shoulders with athletes is inspiring for members too. In my experience, people love being on a cross-trainer and having the likes of a future Katherine Grainger next to them. It also makes them work that bit harder. "



Building a legacy: Clubs should encourage a team atmosphere among their members and help them set goals

Sophia Warner

Paralympian, and Technogym and Virgin Active ambassador



I think the Paralympics showed there is a need for sporting opportunities for everyone, and I don't think this is yet being addressed by the health and fitness industry. You still don't see many under-20s, elderly people or disabled people at gyms, and I think the industry needs to remove the barriers and welcome them in.

As a disabled person, being stared at in the gym is intimidating – it's helpful to have a private environment in the gym for those who are less confident. The equipment also needs to be easily accessible for wheelchair users, and instructors need to be trained to give suitable programmes and to be able to adapt to people with varying abilities. For example, elderly people are often put in the pool for aqua aerobics, but they should actually be doing some gentle strength work in the gym too, to keep the muscles working.

I also think there needs to be more communities built within the gym – for example, doing group inductions so beginners can meet and then have the opportunity to train together.

Finally, running activities for children would free up busy mums to work out, while also getting their kids active. ”

Mark Sesnan

GLL • Managing director



One of GLL's biggest challenges with taking over two of the venues at the Olympic Park, on behalf of the LLDC, is to ensure we balance community use with elite use. So while we are preparing athletes for Rio, we must also give locals access and make sure there is a talent pathway.

At the Aquatics Centre, we're working with British Swimming to ensure the pools give opportunities to get into different aquatic sports, such as synchronised swimming and diving. With two 50m pools and one 25m pool, all with moveable floors, we can be flexible about offering fun, fitness and learn-to-swim sessions. GLL is the UK's largest pool operator, and we know if kids can't swim they won't be our customers, so there will be also be an emphasis on teaching.

Meanwhile the Copper Box is a versatile space. At the weekend it will be an arena, hosting events with up to 6,000 spectators, and during the week it will be divided into sports halls for local sport. Many different sports will be offered, as well as disability sports. The anchor tenant is going to be the London Lions Basketball Club; hopefully they will be at the top of their game and encourage more young people to start playing. ”



ANASTASIA YUSINA

THE PRESIDENT OF STRATA PARTNERS TALKS TO KATE CRACKNELL ABOUT MEDICAL FITNESS, AND DRIVING PROFITABILITY THROUGH PERSONALISATION

"It's a permanent challenge to strike a balance between financial imperatives and creating good clubs you can be proud of," says Anastasia Yusina, president of Russia-based health club operator Strata Partners.

"We started out with no money and built this business from scratch. Now the estate has grown and external investors are involved, but I still feel very personally involved and it's hard to feel you can't control everything. I still want to make decisions I feel are right ethically as much as financially, taking the business in a direction I can feel proud of."

She continues: "For me, money isn't the only thing in life, and my decisions aren't always purely commercial. I believe we have to deliver on our promises to our members, both in terms of the quality of our facilities but also, more importantly, in terms of results – even if that doesn't immediately mean more profit. And sometimes that can create issues with external investors.

"But for me, particularly in this industry, you have to be passionate about what you do. Fitness isn't just an investment project. I can see the opportunity in budget clubs, for example – there may even be more money to be made in that market segment – but it doesn't interest me. Getting results for people is what I care about, and to do that you need to supervise your members, with higher levels of staff-member interaction."

Both of the brands Yusina oversees are therefore full-service models – the higher-end Orange Fitness, which offers a broader range of facilities including swimming pools, and mass market City Fitness – although neither are at the luxury end of the market. "The very high-end sector is limited in its capacity here. People tend to have their own gyms in their houses, with personal trainers making home visits," she explains.

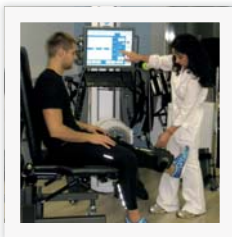
Hands-on, hands-off

A journalist by training – she previously worked as a sports journalist in Russia

and a financial journalist in Paris – Yusina then moved to a research company, followed by 10 years in marketing. But she had always been interested in sports and fitness, having herself been a professional cyclist, and in 2000 decided to launch a fitness consultancy business in partnership with her husband Alexey Kashirin, who had previously worked for the World Class and Gold's Gym chains.

The launch of the couple's first health club – the inaugural City Fitness facility – came in December 2001, with the first Orange Fitness site opening as a franchise in March 2002. "Although we do now own some Orange Fitness clubs ourselves, we had to launch it as a franchise originally because the model needs more investment, and we didn't have any money at the beginning," says Yusina.

In 2006, they sold shares to an international investment fund, but ultimately bought these back when the fund was looking to sell. "We just weren't ready to sell the business," explains Yusina.



Club within a club: The company has launched a medical fitness concept which allows members access to doctors

Many customers in Russia are daunted by gyms and willing to pay for personal attention

Today the business is divided in two: Kashirin runs Fitness System – a distribution business for brands such as GRAVITY, gym80 and Multipower – while Yusina oversees the health club operations. There are currently 15 Orange Fitness clubs and 18 City Fitness sites across 12 cities in Russia, plus Bulgaria and Armenia, with 10 of these corporately owned; the rest operate as franchises, and franchising will account for the majority of both brands' expansion from now on. "I think it's realistic to predict that we'll open five new clubs each year," says Yusina.

So how does this further shift towards franchising sit with Yusina's hands-on, personal approach to the business? "Again, you have to strike the right balance. I want to grow the chain, but I want to keep manageable the number of clubs I actually own so I can still be very involved with individual members.

"Also, while I want to embrace external investment, the business is still my baby and I need to make sure the partners we choose are the right people. Our franchisees must all have a passion for the fitness industry, and part of the deal is that they have to

“ We soon realised that what prevents people in Russia from working out is not the price, but rather a lack of understanding of fitness ”

manage the clubs themselves – they can't simply view it as an investment and get someone else in to run it for them.”

Offering guidance

So has the offering evolved at all since the brands first launched? "We've done many good things and made many mistakes in the 10 years we've been operating. In a changing market like Russia, it feels like 30 years!" says Yusina.

For starters, City Fitness originally launched at a budget price point of US\$1 a day, but as Yusina explains: "It wasn't financially viable, but neither was it really right for the market: we soon realised that what prevents people in Russia from exercising is not the price, but rather a lack of understanding of fitness.

"With budget clubs, you need to know what you're doing: you come in, work

out, leave. But in Russia, nobody knows what to do in a gym – only 4 per cent of people in Moscow work out, and 60 per cent of our customers have never used a gym before. They're afraid of feeling alone in the gym and looking stupid. And gym equipment can be very daunting to new members. Most people are willing to pay for personal attention and advice.

"Our members pay around US\$60 a month at City Fitness, and around US\$120 a month at Orange Fitness, but a good personal trainer will get 100 PT sessions a month. In fact, any good PT will be fully booked – our challenge is getting enough qualified staff, with the right people skills."

Medical model

Another challenge, explains Yusina, are the low levels of public awareness around ▶



Steady growth: There are plans to open five new clubs a year, plus a first US club in Miami



► the health benefits of exercise. "If you ask people whether exercise is good for them, of course they say yes, but they don't have any real knowledge to back this up. We ran a marketing campaign a couple of years ago that focused on the health benefits of fitness, but ultimately we can't educate the whole population – we're a commercial organisation and that's not our remit.

"One big problem is that, in Russia, medical community involvement is missing entirely. Doctors never advise their patients to go to the gym. In fact, they tell people with conditions such as high blood pressure to take it easy. We wanted to do something to address that.

"We've always been into fitness ourselves, and as we've got older – worrying about losing our own physical capabilities – we've started to appreciate the need for medical fitness even more. So Alexey joined the Medical Fitness Association in the US to really study this area, and we've worked with specialist doctors to create a 'club in club' medical fitness concept – medical professionals

who've worked with elite sports teams in athletes' rehab, for example, or who have expertise of working with older people, people with illnesses and so on.

"We launched our first site at one of our City Fitness clubs in the middle of Moscow in August – it didn't need to be in an Orange Fitness site, as it's less about diverse facilities and more about personal attention.

"There are a couple of extra rooms with medical fitness equipment for rehab, and we have three doctors on-site for members to refer to at all times. Members have personalised programmes and they pay extra to access these services. But they also pay for personal training sessions which take place in the main gym – crucially with a doctor coming along for a few minutes during the session to check everything's going OK.

"Where personal training would normally cost US\$70 an hour, with that small level of doctor involvement people pay US\$150. And they're happy to pay it because they feel supervised. In the first month of the medical fitness offering being launched, the turnover at the club doubled. We've found that people who already have a medical problem are willing to pay more than those who are simply coming for fitness or even for preventative healthcare.

"But the benefits go beyond member satisfaction and club profitability. It's also good for our trainers, who now really see the value in what they offer. So often, trainers don't perceive themselves as real professionals and they feel guilty about charging people for their services. But when they're helping people get measurable results, that all changes.

"Based on the first month and a half, the model is proving very successful, and in the long term I'd like to roll it out to all clubs in our estate. But we can't replicate it immediately. One key problem is a lack of doctors who buy into this approach – we need to work with people who have the same beliefs as us. But we also want more evidence. We want to be able to prove our ongoing success over the course of a full year, so we can go to the government with solid evidence of health improvements among our members.

"We tried to talk to the local authorities about this before, but nobody wanted to listen. We hope the government will start to appreciate the need to keep the population healthy, not least in terms of cutting the national expense of healthcare. There's a good new minister of health, and we're hopeful attitudes will start to change – perhaps introducing tax breaks for fitness businesses, or introducing state education programmes for fitness professionals. At the moment, everyone working in fitness is privately educated."

International expansion

As if launching its new medical fitness concept weren't enough of a challenge, the company is also looking to open a City Fitness club in Miami, US. "There are 300,000 Russian expats in Miami and we plan to test the ground by opening one club out there, probably in about 12 months' time.

"We'd need to change the model a bit, although I don't know exactly how yet. Very probably it will involve a lot of personal attention, with medical fitness and nutritional advice, rather than being a particularly big or upmarket club. ►

“People who have a medical problem are willing to pay more than those coming just for fitness”

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- ▶ We travel to the US a lot, as my son studies there, and we've found that – as soon as people know what we do for a living – they're very keen to ask for our advice on what they should do, what supplements they should buy and so on.

"In the US, most people have tried gyms before, but the experience hasn't always worked for them. What they really want is to be able to talk to people and get expert advice."

Yusina is also trying to get a Russian trade association off the ground – a project she's been spearheading for several years now. Progress has been made in that most operators are now, in principle, on board, but the sticking point of who will head up the association remains. "I think everyone's waiting for me to say 'I'll do it,'" she says. "But I just don't have time." It is though, she explains, vital that all operators in Russia come together: "We need stability in the sector to drive credibility and trust."

She is also hoping to get international accreditation for Strata Partners' FitSchool, which currently delivers CPD training to around 2,000 people a year – "free or very cheap for our own staff, but also available to everyone in the industry".

But while Yusina very much hopes to roll out the medical fitness offering, which will most likely cater to a slightly older audience, she sees little opportunity in kids' fitness. "The standards of education in Russia are so bad that anyone who can afford to send their children abroad for their schooling does so," she explains.

Club in club

Other plans for 2013 include the launch of a second Orange Fitness club in



Bulgaria as well as, ideally, the launch of another 'club in club' concept – namely small group training. "You have to create products that people are willing to pay for," says Yusina. "We've put five Total Gym units into the club where we're trialling our medical concept. At the moment, those are used to capacity for rehab, but we'd like to use them to offer GRAVITY small group training.

"Ultimately, I believe 'club in club' will be one of the big trends going forward – whether that's medical fitness or simply creating exciting new formats that offer personal attention for those who either don't know what they're doing or who have lost motivation.

"The fitness industry has to get back to basics. Why are people joining? What do they want? And if they're not getting what they want, what can we do about it? I believe it's about information and education. Members need more advice from staff: instructors could run lectures, for example. There's a wealth of information online now, but I believe

There are currently 15 higher-end, Orange Fitness-branded sites

people need supervision too – by which I mean communication in person rather than all online. In fact, I think we've moved online too much, just because it's so easy to communicate that way.

"Clubs also have to make real 'third places' of themselves: home, work, and the club – a place where people can get all the advice they need to live longer, healthier lives. We've been talking about this for years, but how many clubs have actually achieved it? It tends to be only the very high-end clubs, but all clubs should be able to do this. I don't think it requires much more upfront investment. It's about people, not facilities.

"You might then have to invest more to get good staff, but I genuinely believe – not just in Russia but in every country around the world – the public is willing to pay more for personal attention from really good trainers." ●



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gymBUG's CV stage will look exactly like the stages at existing FX Leisure clubs

GETTING THE BUG

There's a new premium budget operator in town, and it's really delivering on both pledges: premium and budget. Kate Cracknell visits the inaugural site in St Helens, north-west England

"It's probably a sign of our age that the best word gymBUG MD Alun Peacock and I can come up with to describe the offering at the new club is 'funky'. But to be fair, provided you're not a teenager with a whole new set of adjectives to describe what's cool and what's not, that's precisely what it is.

I'm being shown around what is, at the time of my visit a month before opening, still pretty much a shell, but which will open as the premium budget operator's inaugural site in November. The CV stage has already been built – a raised area that will host 65 pieces of CV kit, clustered in front of a wall that's currently awaiting its huge screen – and spotlights are now being set into the perimeter board above it. But other than that, it's still a 1,022sq m (11,000sq ft) building site on a retail park in St Helens.

So how can I already visualise how 'funky' gymBUG will be, other than the obvious excitement on Peacock's face as he describes the sound system, lighting, bold colour scheme, graffiti wall, functional area? Simple: it's because I've

effectively been exposed to the design ethos already, at the sites operated by gymBUG's sister companies, FX Leisure and Hale Country Club & Spa.

EXPLORING NEW MARKETS

Now is probably a good time to backtrack to the beginning of the story – the tale of how FX, Hale and gymBUG came to be.

Peacock was at school with brothers Stuart and Andy Taylor, and indeed played junior golf with Stuart before their sporting paths diverged: Taylor to become a professional golfer and Peacock to play professional rugby.

But their careers outside of sport also had a striking symmetry. As manager at JJB, Peacock opened the operator's first club – in Warrington – in late 1998;

Taylor opened the first FX Leisure site with his brother and father a few months later, and just a few miles away.

While JJB subsequently expanded into a large estate of health clubs – a chain which, in 2009, became DW Sports Fitness, with Peacock by this point associate director overseeing group operations – the Taylors quietly grew their portfolio to seven FX Leisure sites, all owned on a freehold basis and all, while mid-market by price tag, highly innovative and design-led. Several years down the line, on leaving DW, Peacock joined the Taylors as a consultant on both their FX brand and their new high-end project: Hale Country Club & Spa.

"We're a small family business and we were actually very happy just continuing

It helps that, as a family-owned company, we don't have to produce monthly numbers for shareholders – we just stay true to our long-term vision



▲ gymBUG's Livestrong group cycling studio features a vibrant, high-energy design

▼ All gymBUG interiors will offer members an upmarket feel

▲ The fitness floor at gymBUG will look just like Hale, with its bold colour scheme

to grow the FX Leisure brand," says Taylor. "Fundamentally, that's what a large percentage of the gym-going population will always want. But there are some interesting niche markets out there, and ultimately we always wanted to do something high-end – from a personal, lifestyle perspective as much as anything, creating somewhere special to spend time with our families.

"Then the opportunity came at Hale, on a site that formerly accommodated the British Airways staff sports centre. Before we saw it, we'd imagined we might do another FX club here, but as soon as we arrived we knew it was our chance to try out our high-end concept."

That decision was driven, in large part, by the sheer demographics of the area. The new-build club sits on a 10-acre plot right in the middle of an area whose affluence is matched only by the likes of Kensington & Chelsea in London, and whose residents – and therefore now club members – include a number of top professional footballers.

But in spite of the demographics, buying the site around three years ago

and opening in May of this year – with the UK's financial troubles still far from over – was, I suggest, still a bold move. "Recessions come and go," shrugs Taylor. "If we hadn't built this club, we'd have built other FX facilities during that time. It helps that, as a family-owned company, we don't have to produce monthly numbers for shareholders – we just stay true to our own long-term vision."

FIVE-STAR OFFERING

The cost management expertise of all involved also helped, as Peacock explains: "We micro-manage the finances and act as the main contractor on all our projects – we design, oversee the build, buy everything ourselves right down to the fixtures and fittings. Then we just get someone in to put it all together. And that means serious cost-savings." Indeed, while visiting architects have guesstimated a price tag of £15–20m for Hale, in fact total expenditure on the build was nearer £7.5m.

But it's easy to understand the architects' estimates. Understated from the outside, other than the glass-sided infinity spa pool on the roof, once you

get inside it's high class all the way, with an intimate, boutique feel and amazing attention to design detail.

The five-star restaurant on the ground floor is, according to Taylor, "the best in Manchester", while the top floor encompasses an ESPA day spa, accessible to all members, alongside a champagne bar for those holding Country membership only. Unsurprisingly, at just £120 a month, Country memberships sold out fast, but with Club membership costing just £65 a month – and giving access to everything except the champagne bar – a little bit of luxury is affordable for all.

Although the club has a strong focus on family, the atmosphere is very grown-up and sensual, from the choice of materials – marble floors, granite-tiled swimming pools, walls lined with padded velvet or smooth black pebbles – to the subdued, atmospheric lighting in the pool, the six tasteful treatment rooms in the spa, and the fire pits in the Veuve Clicquot-sponsored, granite-paved patio area. Going back to our adjective of the day, it's much funkier than your average ►



- high-end club. Peacock agrees: "We're not vanilla – we're rum and raisin. We won't be to everyone's tastes, but those who do like us, love us." Indeed, the club has already reached 3,000 members on word-of-mouth alone.

Nowhere is the 'rum and raisin' approach more evident than in the predominantly Technogym-equipped first floor gym, with its black and red colour scheme and emphasis on audio-visual – massive screens, a jukebox for members to select their own music, Livestrong bikes with MyRide, and a separate cinema room equipped with 40 cross-trainers and bikes that shows a different film each day, as well as big sporting events. The whole space has huge energy, while each of the three studios has been designed to create a different mood, from tranquil – with views out over the surrounding land – to bright and buzzing in the Livestrong cycling studio.

"It's a great gym, and pretty much it's what gymBUG will look like," says Peacock as he shows me round. "The only real difference is that at gymBUG, the gym will be our sole focus. We won't have the restaurant, coffee bar, spa, pool, tennis courts and so on to worry about. We won't even have studios other than our 25-bike Livestrong cycling studio – all our other group exercise will be delivered on the gym floor.

"But the gym itself will be amazing, and not just compared to other budget clubs. Membership might cost just £14.9 a

month, but there's been no compromise on the concept. For us, low-cost doesn't mean low budget. We've invested in things that will deliver a wow factor – we'll spend extra on those elements – and then used our cost-saving expertise behind the scenes, on things that won't affect the member experience. The gym will also be well staffed at all times, including using PTs and apprentices.

"We don't just want to be good, in brackets 'for the price'. We want to be good, full stop. If we can't be the best in town at any particular element of our offering, we won't offer it at all."

GOING BUDGET

But why, given the success of Hale and the ongoing success of FX Leisure – as well as Taylor's very open acknowledgement of his contentment with the status quo – did they decide to dip a toe in the low-cost market in the first place?

"We thought about going into budget clubs years ago, but knew we'd need to expand rapidly to succeed in that segment. We chose instead to focus on what we were already doing very well," says Taylor. "But then Alun approached us and was also looking at low-cost. We decided the time was right and entered into an equal partnership – me, Andy and Alun – to launch gymBUG, with a leasehold model that means we can move quickly and expand rapidly."

Peacock adds: "But the sites have to be perfect – it took us 18 months to

High-end: The Hale club includes a rooftop spa, with steamrooms, saunas, pool and treatment rooms

find this one in St Helens. You need the right demographics, the right rental price, allocated car parking, high visibility. And if you get all that... We've already smashed our pre-opening business plan.

"Ideally I'd have liked the site to be 20–30 per cent bigger, but we're fitting a lot in: 140 stations, cycling studio, zones for functional training, free weights and core/stretching, great changing rooms. And we only need to hit a capacity of 3,000–4,000 members."

A BOLD VISION

So what are the plans going forward? While Hale could be repeated "if the opportunity were to arise", gymBUG is the focus for both Peacock and Taylor over the next 12 months, as Peacock explains: "Of course the appetite will be swayed by the success of the first few clubs. However, the aim at the moment is to open at least 10 sites in three years, all in the north-west for now.

"The biggest challenge is our 'no compromise' approach on location. We're bold in our vision for the brand: being the best gym in the area, perceived as a star rating above our price point. But location is the one thing we're not in charge of. Once we have the site, though, we know we can create a gym we'd all want to work out in." ●



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SWEET TRUTH



A spoonful is said to help the medicine go down – but according to a growing body of research, sugar may in fact be the key culprit behind the current global epidemic of obesity and chronic disease. Rhianon Howells takes a closer look at the evidence and asks what our industry can do about it

Sugar. Whether you add it to your tea, sprinkle it on your cereal or devour it in desserts, there are few of us who can entirely resist its allure. We know it's not good for our teeth or our waistlines, but it tastes so nice that we tell ourselves it can't really do us much harm – after all, it's not as high in calories or as likely to clog our arteries as fat, is it? All of which makes recent news reports about the very serious dangers sugar poses to our health a bitter pill to swallow.

Last February, three American scientists led by Robert Lustig, a top endocrinologist and professor of clinical paediatrics at the University of California, published an article in the journal *Nature*, blaming sugar not only for the global obesity epidemic but also for a whole host of non-communicable chronic diseases. He compared its effects to those of alcohol, and called for governments to regulate sugar-rich products through measures such as taxation, sales restrictions and age limits.

Although there's not yet a consensus, Lustig and his colleagues are not alone in casting sugar as the main villain in the obesity/chronic disease debate. They may differ in the detail, but an increasing number of leading scientists on both sides of the Atlantic are concurring on this one fact: beyond merely adding calories, sugar is also a toxin that is seriously damaging our health.

But what's all this got to do with the health and fitness industry? According to Phillip Mills – CEO of group fitness provider Les Mills International, author of the book *Fighting Globesity* and self-confessed anti-sugar evangelist – the answer is: absolutely everything. “The fitness industry is becoming an alternative health industry. If we really want to provide a solution to the terrible health crisis we have in this world, we have to take on the food side of things – we can't just be places where people come to pump iron and run on a treadmill,” he says. “As an industry, I think tackling this issue is both a responsibility and an opportunity – an opportunity to grow our brand and get people interested in being part of our movement.”

THE CASE AGAINST SUGAR

So should sugar really be the primary target in the fight against obesity and chronic disease? And if so, why? The most obvious argument is one few people would challenge: it's high in calories and has little nutritional value. “I think it's hard to mount a specific case against sugar except in so far as it contributes to obesity,” says Dr Susan Jebb, head of diet and population health at the Medical Research Council (MRC) Human Nutrition Research unit in Cambridge, UK. “But in a country where two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese, we need to eat fewer calories

while maintaining our intake of essential micronutrients. That inevitably implies cutting back specifically on those items which add calories but few micronutrients – and this tends to put sugary products high on the list of targets.”

Lustig's case against sugar, however, is built on far more than the ‘empty calories’ argument. To quote the *Nature* article: “There is nothing empty about these calories. A growing body of scientific evidence is showing that fructose [a sugar molecule found in sweeteners added during food processing] can trigger processes that lead to liver toxicity and a host of other chronic diseases. A little is not a problem, but a lot kills – slowly.”

Fructose in itself is not inherently unhealthy. It is, in fact, commonly found in fruit where, surrounded by fibre, it digests slowly and helps keep blood sugar stable. The problem lies with the fructose in the refined sugars so liberally used by today's big food manufacturers, not only in cakes, chocolate and soft drinks, but also in all sorts of dietary staples, from bread and breakfast cereal to cheese and sausages – including, ironically, many low-fat items marketed as health foods.

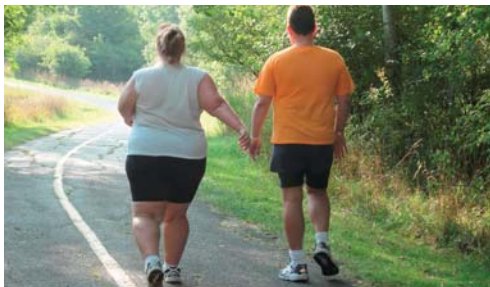
In the US, the number one sugar additive is a mass-developed product called high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), while in the UK and most other developed countries, sucrose extracted from sugar cane or sugar beet is the additive of choice. But what both have in common is a



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The fitness industry is becoming an alternative health industry. If we want to provide a solution to the health crisis, we must take on the food side of things

There is growing evidence that foods containing sweeteners such as fructose can trigger processes in the body that lead to chronic disease, as well as obesity



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high level of fructose (55 per cent in HFCS and 50 per cent in sucrose) and a ubiquity of which most of us are blissfully unaware.

Lustig and co's beef with fructose is not its calorie content, but the way it is metabolised within the body. Unlike glucose, fructose is metabolised almost entirely by the liver, where it is converted into glucose and other sources of energy. However, studies have shown that when fructose is consumed in large quantities, our liver struggles to cope, leading to many of the problems associated with metabolic syndrome: hypertension, inflammation, build-up of abdominal fat,

abnormal fat levels in the blood, insulin resistance, and glucose intolerance. Left unchecked, it all points in one direction: chronic disease, ranging from non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and type 2 diabetes to heart disease and stroke.

Nor does the case against sugar end there. Many experts point to the sweet stuff's addictive qualities, which some studies have shown to be similar to those of nicotine and heroin. Researchers at the National Institute for Physiological Sciences in Japan, for example, found that when mice anticipate a sugary treat, their brains release a chemical called orexin.

This triggers the body to use up any sugar already in the bloodstream to pave the way for the expected influx. But if the sugar is not forthcoming, energy levels dip and powerful cravings follow.

Lustig and his allies also highlight the effect of sugar on appetite controls. In short, they argue that the negative impact of too much fructose on our body's insulin-producing mechanisms interferes with both production of the hormone leptin, which tells us when we're full, and suppression of the hormone ghrelin, which tells us when we're hungry. The end result? We can't stop eating. ▶



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Some studies show that sugar's addictiveness may be similar to that of nicotine or heroin

▶ A STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Stacked up like this, the arguments for targeting added sugar in the battle against obesity and chronic disease certainly seem compelling. But what, if anything, can we do about it?

Jebb remains unconvinced that sugar should be singled out for attention. "Obesity is caused by eating more calories than you need; you can't generalise and say it's caused by one type of calories more than another," she says. "Plus other conditions sometimes attributed to sugar, such as diabetes, are a consequence of obesity." She is, however, very much in favour of reducing the population's overall calorie intake, to which sugar is a major contributor – and, as chair of the Food Network of the government's Public Health Responsibility Deal, she believes that working with, rather than against, the big food companies is the best way to achieve this.

Set up a couple of years ago, the Responsibility Deal is a UK Department of Health initiative aimed at encouraging businesses and other organisations to improve public health by taking action on food, alcohol, physical activity and health in the workplace, through both

their actions as employers and their commercial and community activities. To become partners, food manufacturers must sign up to at least one of a number of pledges. These range from clearer calorie-labelling, to helping to reduce overall calorie intake through steps such as product/menu reformulation, reviewing portion sizes, education and shifting their marketing focus to lower-calorie options. Companies signed up to date include big names such as Coca-Cola, Mars, Nestlé and Subway, all of which have made specific commitments to cut and cap calories across a range of products.

Another organisation committed to the Responsibility Deal is the UK's Fitness Industry Association (FIA), led by chair Fred Turok and CEO David Stalker. Although acknowledging "the good evidence of the role of sugar in obesity", Stalker, like Jebb, is wary of targeting sugar specifically. However, he agrees that collaboration with 'Big

Food' can influence companies to improve the overall health profile of their products. Stalker also believes there is great potential for the fitness and food industries to work more closely together and, to this end, is already in talks with a number of manufacturers about the possibility of marketing health club opportunities on fast-food packaging. "In the past, operators might have put a guest pass on a pack of muesli, which is rather like preaching to the converted," he says. "It's the people eating junk food we need to target, so we can show them how to lead a healthier lifestyle."

Not everyone is convinced that collaborating with the food industry can work, however. In the *Nature* article, Lustig and his colleagues shun such ideas in favour of legislative controls that curb the availability of sugar in the same way as tobacco and alcohol. Their proposals include tightening licensing requirements on vending machines and snack bars in

In the past operators may have put a guest pass on a pack of muesli, which is preaching to the converted. It's the people eating junk food we must target

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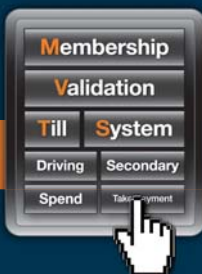
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Could the fitness and food industries work together to promote healthier options?

- schools and workplaces; introducing zoning ordinances to limit the number of fast-food outlets and stores in low-income communities and around schools; restricting sales of sugary products during school hours; setting a lower age limit of 17 on the purchase of such products; banning TV advertising of such products to children; and introducing a 'sugar tax' on all foods containing added sugar.

In the US, there have been numerous attempts by state and city authorities in recent years to introduce just these kinds of measures – ranging from a penny-per-ounce tax on soft drinks to marketing restrictions on sugar-laden foods – though almost all have come to nothing when faced with the vast lobbying power of Big Food. Earlier this year, however, the anti-sugar advocates gained a small but significant victory when New York's mayor Michael Bloomberg successfully introduced a ban on the sale of super-sized soft drinks across the city. Meanwhile, in Europe, a soft drink tax approved by the French government is approaching its first birthday.

These measures may sound draconian, but Mills for one is convinced that nothing less will have the desired effect of reversing the world's downward



spiral into obesity and chronic disease. "Collaboration with the food industry is all very well in theory, but history shows that self-regulation just doesn't work," he says. "Do we allow tobacco companies to self-regulate? No. It's one of those areas where governments have to lead for the greater good of society."

TO TAX OR NOT TO TAX?

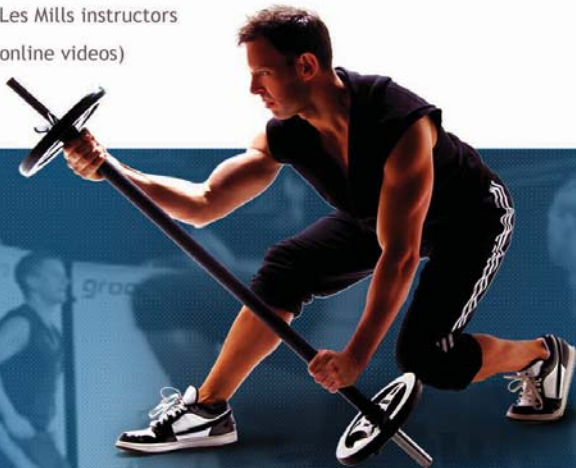
One of the thorniest issues in the debate is whether or not a sugar tax is a workable idea. Mills has no doubt it's the only way forward and believes it's a cause the fitness industry has a duty to get behind. "If you look at tobacco, education programmes and smoking bans are great, but it's tax that has made the difference," he says. "Research shows that every 10 per cent increase in the price of cigarettes causes a four per cent drop in consumption."

But unlike tobacco, sugar is found in so many products, including staple items as well as junk food. Isn't there a danger that, instead of incentivising people to give up sugary foods or motivating food companies to reformulate their recipes, the cost of such a tax will merely be passed onto the consumer? Mills admits it requires careful thought. "There's a lot of detail that needs to be looked at, such as whether you tax the core ingredient or tax it at a retail level, and what kind of levels you set in terms of sugar content – but it's do-able," he says.

However, not everyone accepts this argument. "The evidence for food taxes is limited," says Jebb. "Most data comes from modelling studies, not actual experiments. These suggest that, if people behave in a totally rational way, then a tax would reduce intake, but with such complex behaviour as eating and with so many

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- choices available, it's by no means clear that the predicted effects would occur."

EDUCATING THE INFLUENTIAL

But whatever the approach at a national level, what can individual gym operators do about any of this? According to Stalker, one of the most important steps health clubs can take to alert the public to the potential dangers of sugar is to focus more on member education. "Sugar is complicated, and part of the problem is that not everyone understands how the refined sugar that's added to food is different from the sugar in a piece of fruit, or how that's different from the sugar in a juice or smoothie," he says. "To really become wellness hubs, health clubs need to look at upskilling fitness professionals so they're able to give good advice on nutritional issues like this, as well as on physical activity."

But can this kind of 'nudging' really make a difference when up against the marketing spend of Big Food? Stalker believes so. "OK, we don't have the marketing budget in this sector to compete with what the food companies are doing," he says. "But we are getting a lot more national press coverage encouraging people to make healthy lifestyle changes, and those people need somewhere they can go to get professional guidance – not just on how to do a press-up but also on how they can eat well."

Mills adds: "It's important to remember that we have some of society's most affluent and influential people coming to our facilities too, and that's a very important group to educate. If you educate these people, you can start to



Health clubs should aim to eliminate junk foods from their F&B operations

change society. Once they understand the issues, they will not only be motivated to change their own behaviour but they can also help us to lobby government on these issues."

However, one issue that currently makes it harder for the fitness industry to take the high ground are health clubs' own food and beverage offerings. Mills does not mince his words: "It's completely wrong for a health facility to be selling junk food. And unfortunately a lot of the sports supplements and sports drinks still have a lot of sugar in them. I think it's a disgrace. The supplements industry has to start making healthier products."

Stalker is somewhat more forgiving. "When I'm talking to the government or the health sector, I'm conscious of our record of selling sugar-rich products leaves us a little exposed. But I understand that health clubs are businesses, and that food and beverage is an important part of the profit margin. What I will say is that it's important to offer healthy options alongside those other choices."

TALKING IT OVER

For the time being, then, the debate over the perils of sugar looks set to continue. The body of evidence that sugar is indeed the single greatest contributor to chronic disease appears to be growing. Nevertheless, there's not yet a consensus on this point in the international scientific and medical communities, with many experts arguing that the key to improving global health outcomes remains tackling obesity through the simple equation of calories in/calories out. And while most health commentators agree that over-consumption of sugar is an issue, there appears to be just as much conflict about how to tackle the problem.

What is certain is that these questions are not going to go away, and if the health and fitness industry wants to be taken seriously as a player in the modern health paradigm, we need to be at the debating table. As Stalker says: "We can only become a priority sector by talking in the same language as the medical community, and that includes becoming more knowledgeable about nutrition." ●



Operators could be doing more to educate their members on health and nutrition

To really become wellness hubs, health clubs need to look at upskilling fitness professionals so they can give good advice on nutritional issues

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Segregation of men and women is not necessary, but women must feel welcome

FREE: for all

ONCE THE DOMAIN OF YOUNG MALES TRYING TO GET BIG, MORE PEOPLE ARE NOW VENTURING INTO THE FREE WEIGHTS AREA. HOW CAN YOUR CLUB MAKE THE MOST OF THIS KIT? KATH HUDSON REPORTS

According to IHRSA, one of the hottest fitness trends right now is exercise involving the core and stabilising muscle groups – so free weights areas, with their focus on functional-style equipment, are right on the money.

However, despite the growing interest in free weights, this section of the gym can still be rather intimidating: massive

weights, black rubber and young guys grunting. Any women who are there look like they're in the know, and are therefore equally intimidating.

But it's an important part of any workout: free weight training allows for creative programming that gets results. A good weights session can incorporate resistance and cardiovascular training, as well as helping with back trouble,

improving muscle tone and boosting weight loss. Health clubs need to help reluctant members get started in this important area of the gym.

Fortunately there's loads of help at hand: suppliers are developing innovative equipment, as well as programmes and classes with free weights as the main focus. So what's the next step? We ask the experts for their thoughts...

ANTTI KOHVAKKA

York Fitness:
Sales director



Making a change that you think is needed is not as important as talking to members and seeing what changes they'd like. Every club is different, so seek members' opinions and react accordingly.

It's vital to get female members involved. According to our research, the key barriers to women using the free weights area is that they feel the weights may be too heavy, they don't

know how to use the equipment, or it may be full of men. Ensure you have a selection of smaller weights that are suitable for simple arm exercises.

Education is very important. Simple instruction posters are an easy way to educate members, while incorporating free weights into exercise classes encourages use under supervision, thereby building members' confidence.

Focusing on new fitness trends helps keep members motivated to come to the gym. It shows you're in tune with what they're reading in magazines and what's at the forefront of the fitness industry. Introduce high-intensity interval training with simple workout instructions, or reshuffle the layout of your free weights area to form functional training zones.



Cater for novice females as well as heavy lifters

Weights availability is also vital, as no-one wants to be waiting around. Double up on popular weights: 15kg and 17.5kg are often favourites with men, but also look at 5kg and 7.5kg for women.

ALLAN COLLINS

Jordan:
Director of education



We need more female-friendly images and posters in the free weights areas, but I'm not a believer in segregating males and females. I think that, if they're doing the same exercises, they should be able to work out alongside each other.

The area should have a mix of free weights and functional training kit, and

enough space for people to do what they choose. The space should be open, rather than broken down into smaller areas.

One way of breaking down the barriers between the sexes is through small group training sessions, especially those incorporating free weights into exercises that require some flexibility – the windmill, for example, which is like the triangle pose in yoga. Generally speaking, males are stronger but less flexible than women, so having a class that incorporates both strength and flexibility creates more of a level playing field.

One of the clubs we supply in the US, the Art of Strength, runs group training sessions that are 70 per cent women.

There's no segregation and they run great programmes. They use vintage dumbbells, which look retro and are more appealing to women.

Jordan is now combining vintage dumbbells with vintage training, which uses long-forgotten but very effective techniques from 100 years ago: lifting weights above the head, one-handed drills and Turkish get-ups, for example.

Staff are also key to improving usage. They must be well trained – I'm amazed by how many clubs will spend £2,000 on weights, but won't invest £40 to get an instructor trained in using them. Staff must be on-hand at all times, to offer advice and ensure equipment is used correctly. ▶



Classes that combine strength and flexibility are well suited to women



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FREE WEIGHTS

MATTHEW JANUSZEK

Escape Fitness: Customer solutions director



Free weights, and free weights areas, are frequently intimidating to women; partly because of big guys pumping iron and partly because the weights themselves are intimidating. However, IHRSA research shows free weights are now the third most popular thing to do in the gym, and their popularity continues to grow; with more women wanting to get involved, clubs should offer something to attract them. For example, Escape has designed weights aimed at females, with soft curves and lines, less intimidating in appearance and racks with smaller footprints.

Weights get a lot of heavy use, so make sure you at least double up through the light to medium weights, and look for a supplier with some kind of quality assurance - and ideally a two- to three-year warranty. Split or wobbly weights are off-putting to beginners.

We advise clubs to zone the free weights area to make each user type feel comfortable. Beginners' and intermediates' zones should offer lighter weight ranges, softer colours and smaller racks. Then have a zone with heavier weights and racks for the serious lifters.

Education of trainers is key, and it's important to identify good training



providers that can demonstrate usage in a functional way. Programmes need to incorporate more than just single bicep moves - they need to encompass whole body training. It's not just about lifting weights, but about using lighter weights and controlling them, so the body can support the user in their everyday life.

To add interest to the free weights area, think about incorporating other functional tools like TRX, core boards or medicine balls, so members can vary and progress their workouts.

TOMMY MATTHEWS

Optimal Life Fitness:
Managing director



Education is key to improving the uptake of the free weights area. Very often instructors lack confidence themselves, and so are unable to train members effectively. Any uncertainty when a trainer is teaching exercises is not going to fill the members with confidence, so gyms need to ensure that all their training team is well versed with free weights, and that they use them constantly to build experience.

When a trainer enters the industry, they generally have an understanding of strength training using machines and a basic knowledge of compound

movements with barbells and dumbbells. However, this isn't always enough to give trainers the confidence to take their clients into the free weights section for a workout. Once trainers and PTs completely understand the technique and coaching skills for compound movements, they can teach the members correctly.

A group training session is a great way to teach all members how to use weights correctly and perform exercises safely, with good technique. Working in a group will also help make the member feel more comfortable working in the free weights area, so they are more likely to return individually at a later date.

Finally, clubs need to make sure they have enough dumbbells. Every club should have one complete set of dumbbells for every 1,500 members.

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Active AGEING

Elderly people represent a large, and growing, section of the population who need to exercise – but who are currently being largely ignored by the health and fitness industry.

Kath Hudson reports

Of the 28,000 trainers registered with REPs, only 1,243 have the training to be able to prescribe exercise for an older population with age-related diseases. This means that, for every 8,000 elderly people in the UK, there's just one qualified fitness instructor – a decline of 31 per cent over the last five years.

This in spite of statistics from Nuffield Health which show that members aged 60 years and over visit the gym more often than teenagers. They also have higher levels of disposable income, and previous studies have shown them to be more loyal customers than other age groups. Older people also have, arguably, a more pronounced need for guidance when at the gym: performing unbalanced, inappropriate routines could in some cases exacerbate health conditions.

So there's a growing demand for well-structured exercise among this population. There's also a vital need.

According to The Keiser Institute on Aging in the US – which is dedicated to improving the quality of life for older adults – we lose around 50 per cent of our strength between the ages of 30 and 80 years. Addressing this can help individuals maintain an independent, fulfilling lifestyle for longer.

Exercise also boosts the body's immune system to help ward off flu and sickness, reduces the risk factors of illness and chronic disease, and helps improve brain function – including helping in the prevention and management of Alzheimer's and dementia. With many older people isolated, the social element of any exercise plan is also of great value.

So why isn't the sector more geared up to cater for this population, with trained staff and appropriate programming? Older people are a hard-to-reach population – any initiative targeting them is likely to need outreach in some form – but the rewards are there.

We take a look at a selection of existing schemes which offer food for thought to operators looking to enter this area of provision.

LIVEABILITY PROJECT

Liverpool, UK, is one city that's realised spending money on keeping seniors independent and healthy is a sounder investment than paying for their healthcare. If current trends continue, by 2024 half of Liverpool's population will be aged 50 or over, which has prompted the Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust to look for effective ways of helping older people improve their health, fitness, quality of life and reduce the risk of falls.

The Liveability project is an example of this: it involves community nurses engaging with those at risk, such as widows and elderly people living alone, and encouraging them to come to a leisure centre. There they take part in exercise such as tai chi, line dancing,



Older people visit the gym more often than teenagers

Findings revealed that taking part in regular exercise reduced falls among elderly people by 17 per cent, while overall fitness levels rose by 80 per cent

vibration training or resistance work on Technogym's Easyline circuit.

"To start with, they might just have a cup of tea, but eventually they see others exercising and are inspired to give it a go themselves," says Technogym's business manager for health, medical and sport, Mark Jones.

The programme has been assessed through a year-long research study undertaken by the trust in association with Liverpool John Moores University. The study measured the impact of participation in instructor-led gym-type activities, for two hours a week, on the physical fitness, strength, flexibility, balance and aerobic endurance of participants over 12-weeks. Participants were measured at the start and end of the programme, and at six and 12 months after to assess longer-term impact.

Findings unveiled by the trust at the end of September 2012 reveal that taking part in regular exercise has reduced falls among elderly people by as much as 17 per cent. Results also showed an overall 59 per cent improvement in the group's fitness levels immediately after the programme, and an 80 per cent improvement after six months – after 12 weeks there were no drop-outs, and after six months only two.

"Local authorities are realising that the cost of Easyline, which can help prevent a fall, is less than the cost of an operation to fix one fractured hip," says Jones. "The industry should be aware of the NICE guidelines for older people, which shows they should do five 30-minute sessions a week and two strength sessions."

The good news is that the message is slowly starting to get through. Having seen the benefits of weight training in care home-based projects – in terms of mood, mobility, stability and strength of residents – Aberdeen City Council is currently installing the Easyline system into its sixth care home.

BONE CLASS

Sarah Dickson is one of the few REPs-registered personal trainers who has elected to specialise in exercise for older adults. A Level 3 personal trainer, she also has a Level 4 Frailer Older Adult qualification. She runs four Bone Zone classes a week for the over-60s, held in Cambridge, UK.

Bone Zone focuses on the areas that are most important in older clients, including general fitness, mobility, flexibility, strength, and danger areas such as hips and wrists. "Exercising keeps the key wear and tear areas – the hips, wrists, spine and knees – moving and agile, which is especially important for older people as strong bones are less susceptible to osteoporosis," explains Dickson.

Participants are encouraged to work at their own pace and adaptations are available for all exercises. The core of the class is based on a circuit, with an extended warm-up at the start, tai chi and relaxation at the end, and a constantly refreshed middle section.

"The middle section usually involves the class working together on something different, such as shadow boxing," says Dickson. "The class changes on a two-weekly basis, which helps keep it fresh."



The Care Home Games are now an annual event in Sheffield

She concludes: "It's essential for an instructor to know what exercise is suitable for elderly clients, to reduce the risk of long-term damage, and it's worrying to see so few instructors in the UK trained in teaching the elderly."

NIFTY AFTER FIFTY

Brain Aerobics and Reviving Your Driving are just a couple of examples of the programmes on offer at US health club chain Nifty After Fifty, which is aimed specifically at seniors, to help them retain their strength and independence.

Launched in California in 2006 by Dr Sheldon Zinberg, Nifty After Fifty has since expanded into five states, with 29



Technogym's Easyline fitness circuit is designed to give the older client a safe and effective workout



- centres and 15,000 members. Fourteen clubs were opened in 2012 with more planned for next year. There's also talk of the brand expanding internationally.

During his years of medical practice, Zinberg noticed many diseases came about through the deterioration of activity. So, as head of CareMore Medical Group in the late 90s, he started taking older adults to a local health club twice a week. "We saw dramatic improvements and a drop in health costs," he says – all of which motivated him to launch the first Nifty After Fifty club.

Nifty After Fifty uses Keiser's pneumatic system, as Zinberg noticed that seniors had difficulty with weight stack machines. Zinberg also put together a tailored workout to address the specific health issues faced by older people. This combines high velocity concentric muscle training with slow eccentric muscle training: Zinberg believes this combination of slow and fast muscle training, over a period of several repetitions, helps develop strength, endurance and power.

Between sets, members wear headphones and respond to a series of problem-solving questions. "What affects seniors most is cognitive decline," says Zinberg, who has incorporated these mental exercises into workouts to ensure the brain is firing on all cylinders.

Now nearing 80, and himself still a regular exerciser, Zinberg is perhaps the best advert for his chain. He is actively seeking funding and researchers to further test his theories.

CARE HOME GAMES

The Care Home Games have become an annual event on the Sheffield sporting

It's essential for an instructor to know what exercise is suitable for elderly clients, to reduce the risk of long-term damage

calendar. The fifth successful Games were held in July and they will remain an annual fixture providing funding can be secured – they cost £1,200 to run. Held at Don Valley Stadium, they are run by Activity Sheffield in conjunction with Sheffield PCT/teaching hospitals. Funding is provided by Sheffield City Council, Sheffield PCT, The British Heart Foundation National Centre, Unison and the care homes.

The event aims to promote activity for older people living in care homes, to support positive relationships between residents and carers and promote links between care homes in the city. The event was inspired by a similar initiative that had previously run in Plymouth, UK.

Competitors warm up with 'chairrobics' (seated aerobics) before taking part in bowling, skittles, mini golf, target throwing (throwing bean bags at a target), dominoes and a general knowledge quiz. After a refreshment break, there is always a dance before the winners' presentations. Activities have all been selected based on the specific needs and abilities of those taking part.

Twenty care homes across Sheffield currently take place, each sending three residents and three carers. According to event organiser Kelly Riley, it brings the

spark back to older people: "Afterwards they say things like: 'It made me feel as if I am still in the world.'"

YATES COURT

A care scheme for the elderly in Evesham, Worcestershire, UK, now uses a Power Plate to keep residents active and mobile after one of the nurses witnessed how vibration training aided her daughter's rehabilitation after an accident.

One-third of residents at Yates Court – owned by Extracare Charitable Trust – now use the Power Plate pro5 on a regular basis. Some are able to use it independently, while others need assistance. In the two years since it was installed, there have been many successes, including one resident who was confined to a wheelchair who is now able to walk short distances after regular sessions.

Yates Court gym instructor, Charlene Dillon-Cambridge, explains that every user has an individual programme that involves the Power Plate as well as exercises on CV equipment. For example, the lady in the wheelchair comes five days a week to the gym, spending 15 minutes on a bike and then undertaking three sets of four minutes on the Power Plate: a set of bicep curls with straps, one set of toe tapping and one relaxing. ●



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Clubs should
train staff
to think of
themselves
as hosts



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Welcome TO MY HOUSE

Richard Ekstrom,
president of Retention
Management, shares
his thoughts on a very
personal approach to
customer service

I like to believe that the majority of gym owners and managers have a good grasp of the importance of providing good service to their members – of the impact it has on retention and thereby their clubs' overall success. However, while great customer service definitely starts at the top, it ultimately has to reach your members through your frontline staff.

In light of this, I'd like to share with you a different perspective regarding customer service and the impact it has on retention. At face value it's a simple, 'back to basics' perspective – and yet,

of all the topics we've covered on our blog, this has led to by far the highest levels of positive feedback. So much so, in fact, that we've been invited to deliver training days and seminars on the topic. Here's how it works.

DELIVERING THE INTANGIBLES

When a business provides a service or product to its customers, there's an exchange taking place. On the surface it can be a very simple exchange, but running beneath are a tremendous number of intangibles, and these are

very important factors in the customer's decision about whether to continue with the exchange in the future.

So what are you exchanging with your members? State of the art equipment, convenient hours and location, quality instruction, a clean facility – these are the basics of the exchange for a typical gym. However, if a club opened up next door and offered the same for less, you would lose members. This is happening everywhere, every day.

It's the intangibles that keep your customers from taking their business elsewhere, and these are very much



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IT'S THE INTANGIBLES THAT KEEP YOUR CUSTOMERS FROM TAKING THEIR BUSINESS ELSEWHERE, AND THESE ARE VERY MUCH RELATIONSHIP-BASED

► relationship-based: friendships, opportunities to socialise, personal interaction, a sense of belonging, feeling wanted and cared for, feeling good and secure when in the club... The old saying – that people will easily walk away from a business, but not a relationship – is very true in the fitness industry.

I do not know of another industry in which these intangibles are more important and seemingly so easy to deliver. However, without the day-in, day-out co-operation and support of your entire team, their successful delivery breaks down.

The perspective I mentioned earlier helps ensure this sort of day-in, day-out delivery of the all-important intangibles. It offers a simple thought process to engage every member of your staff – even those to whom great customer service does not come naturally. And

that perspective is very simply to encourage each member of staff to think of your club as their home. How would they treat a guest in their home?

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

If I were to come to your house, when I came to the door you would welcome me. If you knew me, you would use my name. If you did not know me, you would ask what my name was and introduce yourself. Does this happen at your health club?

You would ask: "How are you doing?" If you knew something particular was going on in my life, or I had a certain area of interest, you would ask about it: How was your holiday? How are you feeling? Is your spouse feeling better? How's the knee? Did you see the Chelsea match at the weekend?

Does this happen at your club?



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Members are more likely to stay with clubs if they have fostered friendships, enjoy a good social scene and feel cared for by staff

You would ask: "Is there is anything I can get for you?" In a club setting, this translates into: "Is there anything I can do or show you? Are you sure? If you change your mind, be sure to let me know." Does this happen at your club?

And now I'm in your house, your responsibility for me is not over. Let's say I'm in the living room. Do you stay in the kitchen (equivalent to a club's back office or fitness desk) and leave me alone while I'm visiting? Maybe for a little while, but at least some of the time you will be with me, your guest.

You'd talk to me during my visit, even if it were just small talk: How's it going? Good job! Cool haircut! Are those new shoes – how do you like them?

Or maybe you'd turn the topic to something more serious: Have you seen it done this way? Is it time to get you in for a tune-up? Are you getting the results you're looking for? Need someone to spot for you? Or perhaps it'd just be a nod and a smile – but you would never fail to acknowledge me.

Does this happen at your club?

A FOND FAREWELL

And then, when my visit is over and I'm leaving your house, you'd say goodbye and thank me for coming. You'd ask me

to come back soon so we could do this again. Does this happen at your club?

When I look back on my experience at your house, do I feel as though you cared about whether or not I had a good time? Did I feel welcome? Do I feel that you were a good host? How will I feel about coming back for another visit?

The most valuable elements of your club are the relationships you and your team build with your members. The bottom line is that we're in the hospitality business. Training your team to think of themselves as hosts, and treating your members as guests who are visiting your house, will ensure your members look forward to their visits year after year. Make the 'if I were to come to your house' concept a part of your next staff meeting. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Ekstrom is president of Retention Management, which has as its company mission to positively impact clubs' bottom lines by improving retention.

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A STITCH IN TIME

Why should operators bother with preventative maintenance on their equipment?

Kay Glover reports

Preventative maintenance is a way of looking after your equipment to ensure it works to its optimum capacity at all times. It's not always our favourite task – no more than going to the dentist for a check-up or topping up the oil in a car – but once you understand the benefits that being proactive with your

maintenance can bring to the health of your business, you'll wonder why you didn't embrace it sooner.

With the right approach, small changes can be made that add a big difference to the value of your estate, the overall financial health of your business, and member retention. We investigate.



Life Fitness runs a maintenance training workshop for its customers that will soon be REPs-accredited

THE PARTNERSHIP EXPERTS

“We're all about partnership,” explains Margaret Vane, UK service manager at Life Fitness. “A collaborative approach and regular maintenance is the best way to protect your investment. I would encourage managers to look carefully at how they are measuring the success of their maintenance support. Most suppliers offer speedy call-out services and fix rates, but is this enough? What is your supplier doing to work

with you to understand and solve the cause of the issue?

“Equipment is more technical than ever and needs our specialist support, but there are many things the gym can and should do to minimise problems, and prevent unnecessary downtime and unwarranted technician call-outs. We believe so strongly in the benefits of empowering the gym to share ownership of this area that we even have a maintenance training workshop that will soon be REPs-accredited. We're not training staff to replace technicians, but giving them the knowledge to look after their estate and minimise problems.

“The sophistication of our equipment also means that the diagnostics, together

with our dedicated service call systems and performance reports, ensure we get to the bottom of any underlying issues. This data is used to create bespoke maintenance programmes and service interventions for our customers, which help prevent future issues and positively impact a club's bottom line.

“Our aim is to help clubs recognise the importance of regular maintenance, show them how to do it, and ensure it becomes an integral part of their business. In the short term, customer retention and the overall member experience is improved because the risk of equipment downtime is reduced. In the long term, the equipment estate lasts longer and holds its value.” ▶

► THE INDEPENDENT ADVISOR

Servicesport is an independent company that maintains, repairs and estate-manages fitness equipment to optimise its performance and measure its value.

"Because we understand that many gyms hold equipment from different suppliers, we offer independent advice and support on maintenance and repair," explains Susie Marriott, commercial director for Servicesport.

"Looking after your equipment – ensuring it maintains its reliability and maximises its life expectancy – is a really important part of protecting your estate. We audit our clients' equipment, hold detailed records of each piece, refurbish and redeploy where needed and create a service log booklet that tells a gym what checks they need to do on equipment daily, weekly and monthly. We then supply an engineer to train the gym on how to use the log, ensuring equipment is being looked after in a way that continues its optimum performance.



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"Any issues with equipment are given a priority rating, which helps the gym owner decide how to spend their money on putting problems right.

"The estate management side of our business has grown in the last couple of years, as many clubs are holding onto their equipment for longer. Regular

maintenance is one of the best ways of ensuring that the equipment holds its value and reliability.

"We want to ensure our clients extract the full value and potential from their estates before they need to invest in new equipment. We can tell our customers how much their existing estate is worth to them and what they could spend to improve it and drive its value higher.

"In these difficult financial times, it's more important than ever to be proactive and as efficient as possible to get the most out of your equipment and make the right investment decisions."

"WE WANT TO ENSURE CLIENTS EXTRACT THE FULL VALUE FROM THEIR ESTATES BEFORE THEY NEED TO INVEST IN NEW EQUIPMENT"

THE MAINTENANCE MENTORS

FitnessEMS is a cloud-based tool that provides users with a platform and integrated methodology for reporting, scheduling, storing and manipulating data gained from equipment. This information helps clubs make informed decisions about how best to look after their equipment and invest their money.

"Our mission and our products focus on health club profitability by saving technicians time, saving owners money, and reducing the time equipment is out of action – thereby retaining members," explains Tom Strickland, president of FitnessEMS. "We're passionate about preventative maintenance and believe clubs should be too. Performed properly, it can help retain up to 15 per

cent more members. And we believe that monthly maintenance can decrease equipment downtime by around 25 per cent over its lifespan.

"To determine the value of a service like ours, managers must ask themselves what value they would put on a number of elements: members lost due to 'out of order' equipment; the time gym staff spend logging and transferring information to technicians; and the peace of mind of recording maintenance, especially in the case of accidents, where demonstrating recent maintenance would assist with any legal case.

"In addition, to make the right business decisions, knowledge is vital. For example, you need to understand that treadmill X, although cheaper to purchase, may cost 25 per cent more over two years in service bills. There are also tangible benefits of knowing your equipment history – without it, you are bound to repeat past mistakes.



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FitnessEMS is a cloud-based tool

"Having the right systems in place ensure you have a tight control on your business. Gym managers should know everything that's going on in their club – in seconds, and at any moment in time."

THE GADGETS

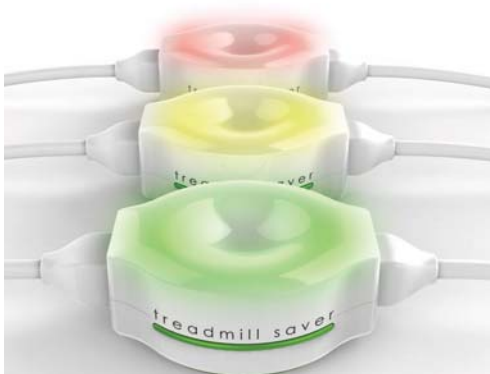
US-based The Green Fitness Equipment Company encourages gyms to take control of their maintenance and has developed a number of tools to help them do precisely that.

Its Treadmill Saver is a little device that attaches to any treadmill to monitor its performance and let the operator know in advance when it needs attention. By measuring amps, it can tell when a treadmill pulls too much electricity, resulting in excess heat that can be damaging, costly to repair and dangerous to the user. Like a traffic light, the Treadmill Saver shines green, yellow and red to alert you to any issues.

The company also has a compact and versatile gymTOOLKIT with over 200 manual and power tools that enable gyms to preventatively maintain cardio and strength equipment on the spot. It also supplies Gympo's Gymflix – a series of light-hearted, online, animated films on maintenance in which Gympo walks through the process in 'how to' videos.

Meanwhile the Precor Preva Business Suite uses a web-based platform that enables it to check the real-time status of equipment from any location, helping an operator to look after the value of their estate. For example, it can show what equipment is being used, when

**"AN OPERATOR CAN
SEE HOW MANY TIMES
EACH MACHINE HAS
BEEN USED AND FOR
HOW LONG, AIDING
WITH ROTATION"**



The Treadmill Saver (above) attaches to the machine to monitor performance, while the gymTOOLKIT (below) allows gyms to perform basic maintenance



it's being used, and whether it needs servicing or inspecting. It also reports on cumulative use, so an operator can see how many times each machine has been used and for how long – helping with equipment rotation to improve

lifespan. In addition, equipment that is networked to systems like these benefit from remote software updates, ensuring it performs better – as well as offering the exerciser the best, most up-to-date workout experience.



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LIW 2012

Laura Dagg rounds up some of the highlights from this year's event



LIW will have a new, more inclusive layout in 2013



Weisure Industry Week (LIW) 2012 took place at the NEC Birmingham on 18–20 September and provided a fantastic showcase for the health and fitness industry. Visitors from across the UK and beyond were treated to an array of equipment demos, hours of free education and a number of exciting product launches, some of which are outlined below.

Next year, LIW will move from halls 17, 18 and 19 to the NEC's bigger hall 4, resulting in a completely different and more inclusive floorplan that will focus on the synergies between the different sectors. The health & fitness and pool & spa sections of the exhibition will run along the left-hand side of a four-metre runway, with leading suppliers forming the front row of this new format. The right-hand side of the runway, opposite

health & fitness, will incorporate the eat & drink, play & attractions and leisure facilities exhibitors. This means that the products which cross the entire leisure industry and represent secondary spend – food, drinks, facilities etc – will be closer to health & fitness and play & attractions, making the show more inclusive and representative of the whole industry.

2012 NEW PRODUCT LAUNCHES

ESCAPE FITNESS – various

Escape showcased a range of new products, including Plyo Soft Boxes (see p72), a Fitness Bulgarian Bag – made from synthetic leather, so more hygienic for gyms, with different colours to denote

weight – and Eleiko Competition Kettlebells, again colour-coded by weight.

JORDAN FITNESS – free-standing punchbags

The brand new Jordan Fitness designs are solid, portable, durable and, unlike other bags, can be punched, kneed, kicked and elbowed for a full combat workout.

LIFE FITNESS – SYNRGY360

The modular design of SYNRGY360 combines several popular total body, dynamic exercises into a system that helps personal trainers more effectively train individuals and groups, giving users unlimited ways to exercise. Gyms can choose four customisable exercise spaces – for example, a boxing space, rebounder space, cable motion space and versa cable space. The frame also features a monkeybar zone and TRX training zones.

MATRIX FITNESS – ClimbMill, Ascent Trainer & Suspension Elliptical
The ClimbMill – in which you effectively climb stairs – offers step position software to ensure that steps lock at the

lowest possible point, meaning users can easily step on and off the equipment.

The A7xe Ascent Trainer has an integrated 15" screen, plus built-in Matrix Fitness Virtual Active programming. This allows users to see their destination in the video content displayed on the console, feeling gradual terrain changes underfoot and hearing ambient sounds through headphones.

The Suspension Elliptical features a patented design that eliminates friction, resulting in a smooth and efficient motion. The pedals allow the user's ankles to flex naturally, therefore reducing the foot-tugging sensation sometimes produced by other machines, while the dual-action handlebars provide a total body workout that strengthens core muscles.

OCTANE FITNESS – LateralX

A unique variation of the traditional elliptical cross-trainer, the LateralX offers a smooth, 3D motion that goes from a vertical elliptical stepping motion to an active side-to-side motion that adjusts electronically. Combining low-impact elliptical and lateral motion, ▶



Octane showcased its new LateralX



Visitors were able to view new product launches, as well as enjoying a host of demonstrations and speakers at the show

- ▶ the machine's total body workouts give movement in three planes (front to back, side-to-side and rotational) for customised, functional exercise that builds stamina, muscular endurance, co-ordination and balance.

PRECOR – Discovery Series Selectorised Line

This range encompasses 19 machines that combine commercial robustness and reliability with new design elements to ensure it's as approachable and intuitive as possible for exercisers who are new to strength training, while also providing a fulfilling experience for those who are more accustomed to using strength equipment.

RE:CREATION FITNESS – Nexersys

The Nexersys mixes martial arts training with a high-intensity interval cross-training programme. Providing an interactive workout with 'exergaming' capabilities, it offers an online interactive platform with multi-player modes, allowing users to compete with friends and family.



Health & Fitness: A key zone at LIW

RELAY FITNESS – Evo Fitness Bike

This new-look indoor cycle leans on its axis to offer an experience that reflects real cycling. This also ensures it offers core as well as cardio workouts.

RUNNING UNLIMITED – Zone

The world's first personal running dome – a large concave screen that sits in front of a treadmill – transforms indoor running into a global outdoor adventure. Delivering a multi-sensory, lifelike experience using the latest technology, users feel as though they are running in some of the world's most inspirational destinations – from the Tanzanian Serengeti to Australia's Outback.

PHYSICAL COMPANY

– Physical EX:CEL

This new service from Physical Company packages equipment and programming together, ensuring those using equipment – such as BOSU, The Human Trainer, freeFORM, kettlebells and medicine balls – are kept up-to-date with the latest training methods via an online education platform. Physical EX:CEL delivers constantly evolving, REPs-accredited programming with online theory content, video uploads and multiple choice worksheets.

SAQ – AeroFloor

This air-filled mat reduces impact to the joints when exercising, allowing for both rehab programming and high-intensity endurance workouts (see p72).

SPORTSART FITNESS

– Green System

SportsArt Fitness's revolutionary new Green System features a pod of CV equipment attached to an inverter to

harness human-generated power from exercisers, feeding this back into the power grid as usable energy. This is claimed to be the first 'plug and play' solution of its kind, allowing health club owners to offset power costs by freely harnessing human energy. Calculations based on a typical health club that replaces all its ellipticals and cycles with SportsArt's Green System suggest there could be annual savings of £1,500–£2,000 on electricity bills.

TECHNOGYM – mywellness cloud

Technogym's online Wellness platform provides businesses and end users with a complete Wellness solution: mywellness cloud. This offers a range of new business applications to create an Wellness ecosystem around a facility, from personalised programme design and member challenges to club management tools.

TORQ-KING

Looking like dumbbells, in fact Torq-King are rollers for the hands or feet, which roll in any direction. They deliver a full body functional fitness workout for all levels, with an almost limitless range of movements (see p72).

SPOTTED!

- James Cracknell and Dani King checking out the new products on the Matrix stand
- Christine Ohurugu displaying her medal on the Technogym stand
- Greg Searle and Gail Emms trying the range on the Precor stand
- Beth Tweddle talking about Total Gymnastics at LIW Live
- Frank Bruno signing autographs on the TKO stand

SHOW FLOOR ACTIVITY



REPS NATIONAL CONVENTION



This year, the REPs National Convention took place over all three days of LIW, with three keynote speakers and a choice of 40 practical workshops. Delegates had complete flexibility and could attend anything, from one session to the full programme on all three days.

The keynote speakers were Pete Cohen (Weight Loss Guru), Tim Fearon (The Extraordinary Coaching Company) and Bob Laventure (Later Life Training). Eight workshop sessions each offered five

sub-options: two lecture/theory-based workshops, one group exercise workshop, one functional training workshop, and a workshop on training varying user groups. These sessions included understanding 3D motion, physical activity and cancer, ZEN-GA™, Just Jhoom, programme design for back pain, underground circuit training, post natal exercise, kettlebell training for sports conditioning, and numerous TRX sessions.

Each day was worth four CPD points, with one CPD point available for individual sessions.

LIW LIVE



In an effort to showcase even more live action on the show floor, LIW Live was launched for 2012. This new feature was a live stage with bite-sized demonstrations and personal appearances. Many faces of London 2012 were featured, sharing their experiences of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and their training. The line-up included Greg Searle and Gail Emms with Precor; Beth

Tweddle with Total Gymnastics; and Daniel Greaves and Kate Dennison with Elite Sports Performance.

LIW Live also offered class demos from Unikurve, Just Jhoom, Bokwa and Powerhoop, alongside a swimwear fashion show from Zoggs and appearances from *The Biggest Loser's* Kevin McLernon, boxing legend Frank Bruno, Aquabatique star of *Britain's Got Talent* Zoe Cooper, and *The Apprentice's* Stephen Brady and Adam Corbally.

BOKWA ARENA



The new group exercise phenomenon Bokwa was showcased in the brand new Bokwa Arena, bringing even more buzz to the busy health and fitness section of the event.

Bokwa participants draw letters and numbers with their feet while

performing an energising cardio workout. The universal sign language used by instructors and participants means everyone can take part, from children to senior citizens – all in the same class. This inclusive class was demonstrated throughout the event, while instructors attended to become certified Bokwa teachers.

INNOVATION TRAIL



Exhibiting organisations with products new to the market were given the opportunity to feature in the Innovation Trail, a new element

to LIW resulting from visitor feedback that new products are of paramount importance to the attendee experience. More than 100 exhibitors submitted products and were signposted with the Trail logo.

LES MILLS GROUP EXERCISE ARENA



The brand new Les Mills Group Exercise Arena saw the launch of The LES MILLS GRIT™ SERIES. Hooking into a broad consumer market constantly looking for results, the GRIT SERIES promises different

benefits for members through high-intensity interval training, backed by solid science and variety that will keep them coming back.

The Les Mills team was on-hand throughout the show to showcase a range of Les Mills classes and equipment including CXWORX®, BODYPUMP® and SH'BAM®.

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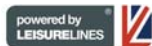


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The FIA's David Stalker gave a keynote on the 2012 legacy, while Olympic gymnast Beth Tweddle spoke at LIW Live

► LIW EDUCATION VILLAGE

For the second time this year, the majority of the LIW seminar content was grouped together in the Education Village on the show floor. The result was a programme that encompassed all sectors of the leisure industry – from facilities management advice and play centre launch advice, to health and safety and fitness for people of 80 years and over – with more than 100 hours of free education.

KEYNOTES

In his keynote, David Stalker, chief executive of the Fitness Industry Association (FIA), called for the entire active leisure sector to play its part to ensure a successful legacy from the 2012 summer of sport. He said the aim of all legacy plans should be to make the UK the “most active nation in the world”. To achieve this aim, he said the industry needed to work together through partnerships, bringing together strategies that have a greater impact than the sum of their component parts.

“This is not the FIA’s legacy to deliver, but the sector’s,” Stalker said. “The FIA is the facilitator, creating partnerships and pathways to help deliver more people, more active, more often. To all businesses in our sector, I say that if you don’t have a legacy strategy, in a few years we will have missed the biggest opportunity and it will all come tumbling down. We will lose the chance to be seen by the government as the people who can make a difference.

“There is lots we can do, but we need the whole sector to get behind it. Together we can achieve more.”

INDEPENDENT OPERATORS UNITE

LIW once again played host to the largest annual gathering of independent operators at the fourth Independent Operators Unite (IOU) forum. The forum was a must-attend education programme for independent gym owners and operators seeking inspirational and practical ideas to help their business grow.

Expert-led sessions included: practical ideas that work for the UK independent operator; making money for your club from the ‘other stuff’ (secondary revenue); and easy ways to use the internet to make more money.

FEEDBACK FROM THE SHOW

WHAT THE VISITORS HAD TO SAY...

“We had a great few days at LIW 2012 – thanks for having us! Watch this space for fab new ideas in our club!”
The Warehouse Health Club, Aberdeen

“Good seminars, and good to see so many fitness professionals looking to stay ahead of the game.”
Luke Staton, OutKlass Fitness

WHAT THE EXHIBITORS HAD TO SAY...

“Loved the show, so many great people and a buzz of excitement. For me the

highlight was when someone came out of the Aquaneuro bath and cried after her back pain had vanished. It was an overwhelming experience. Once again well done to the LIW team for a fab event that enabled us to showcase our new product.”

Jonathan White, director, Aquavate

“LIW is a fantastic showcase for the UK fitness industry. We’ve met with hundreds of industry leaders to further outline how we are continuing to both drive new users into the fitness industry and improve retention.”

Jonathan Monks, CFM / MYZONE Business Development, UK & Ireland

... AND A FEW WORDS FROM THE ORGANISERS:

“The atmosphere at Leisure Industry Week 2012 was absolutely fantastic. All of the key fitness suppliers really invested in the event, not only in terms of building and managing some of the most vibrant stands we’ve seen, but also in terms of their unwavering enthusiasm for showcasing their ideas and products to the visitors walking around the exhibition.

“In an economic climate when it can be difficult for professionals to justify time out of the office, it was great to see so much business being done on the show floor.

“We were also delighted to welcome some of the heroes of the London 2012 Games – what better way to inspire the fitness industry?”

David Sanvoisin, event manager, LIW ●



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MEMBERS' CHOICE

The second annual Health Club Awards took place alongside Leisure Industry Week in September. We give an overview of this year's winners

September's Health Clubs Awards ceremony, sponsored by Centrum, saw the conclusion of the second year of competition between clubs of all shapes and sizes across the UK.

Run in partnership with *Health Club Management*, the awards are voted for by members, and this year saw an impressive 450 sites enter – from small independents to leisure centres, hotels, budget clubs and multi-site operators. Voting took place between February and April, and over a million members were involved. After an intensive vote audit process, the regional shortlists were announced in July, and the winners revealed at Birmingham's Hilton Metropole in September.

FOCUS ON STAFF

Host Mark Durden-Smith told the audience: "The Health Club Awards have

been designed to recognise the amazing efforts of front-line staff around the UK. Without your extraordinary enthusiasm and passion for your jobs, which clearly comes through in the member feedback, none of us would be here tonight."

Laura Duckworth, Centrum brand manager, added: "We're delighted to be a part of these awards, where clubs strive to be the very best they can be. The fact that the members of the gyms themselves have decided the winners make these awards so valuable."

The awards started with the presentation of three People Awards, given to individuals who received the most positive feedback from their clubs' members. Gareth Austin from Clayton Green Leisure Centre, Raj Chauhan from Chesford Grange QHotel, and Derek George from Centurion Fitness each received a Highly Commended trophy.

After receiving his award, Chauhan – leisure and spa manager at Chesford Grange – said: "We're so proud to have been rated as highly commended in The Member's Choice Awards, especially as the awards are judged by the most important people – our members. This is testament to the hard work of our staff and the high standards of the leisure and spa facilities at Chesford Grange."

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

As the regional winners around the UK were announced, it was clear that clubs of all types were in the mix to win.

As Simon Brown, MD of the awards, explains: "Our awards are unique because we don't have separate categories for private and public sector sites, and the scoring system allows smaller and larger clubs to compete on a level playing field. We believe all clubs, no matter what their



Everyone Active (above left, with HCM editor Kate Cracknell) picked up three regional gold awards, while the Crown Spa in Scarborough (above right, with Leisure Media MD Liz Terry) won gold in the Yorkshire & Humber region

All clubs, no matter what their size or financial set-up, are competing against each other in their local markets to provide the best experience and value for money for members

size or financial set-up, are competing against each other in their local markets, trying to provide the best experience and value for money they can to members."

Smaller independent clubs performed brilliantly in the competition, winning four of the regions, with nine other top-three finishes. Crown Spa, based in Scarborough, won gold for the second year running for the Yorkshire & Humber region. Stuart Russell, health club and spa manager, said: "We pride ourselves on providing a quality facility and excellent customer service, so winning an award which has been voted for by our members is a real boost to everyone at the club. Achieving the regional gold award for the second year running is so rewarding for all the staff, and being presented with the bronze award for best club in the UK (under 2,000 members) is a major achievement."

Another independent that entered for the first time was The Laboratory Spa and Health Club, with sites in Mill Hill and Muswell Hill in London. The Muswell Hill club collected a bronze in the competitive North London region.

"We were so pleased to accept our award," said Sanchia Dennehy, assistant manager. "We cannot wait to make the most of the great news in our marketing and PR campaigns – it's a really prestigious award and being involved was easy and very worthwhile. I feel sure our members appreciated having an outlet to share feedback on their beloved club."

CROSS-SECTOR APPEAL

The public sector also delivered a solid performance, with Fusion Lifestyle winning gold in the East Midlands and South London regions, and Everyone Active claiming three regional golds – as well pipping David Lloyd Leisure to the prestigious title of Best National Chain.

David Bibby, MD at Everyone Active, said: "We're delighted to have won two national awards this year, including Best National Chain, in addition to nine regional awards for our individual centres. These awards really represent the commitment, dedication and effort that our colleagues at Everyone Active put in on a daily basis, both in our centres and at head office."

"I would like to say a personal thank you to every one of them for their ongoing commitment to the company and its customers, and I would like to thank our customers for recognising this and voting for Everyone Active."

The franchise sector was also well represented, with énergie Group taking four golds across its three brands, including Best Club in the UK with less than 2,000 members – won by énergie Fitness for Women in Eastbourne. David Beattie, group brand and marketing director, said: "The awards are particularly valuable to us as they are voted for by our customers. We're thankful for their support in helping us achieve these fantastic accolades."

But the best performance by a group on the night came from Pure Gym, which

won 11 golds – including Best Budget Chain. This was the operator's second year in the competition and the team took learnings from 2011, really engaging the membership in each of the clubs from the moment voting started back in February.

Founder and deputy chair of Pure Gym, Peter Roberts, said: "We're delighted to have won these awards, which further reinforce our reputation as the UK's leading affordable gym chain. This is a superb result as 450 clubs participated in this event, and again highlights the strength of Pure Gym in offering unique quality and value to its customers."

"We would also like to extend our gratitude to our members who voted for us. Pure Gym is a concept that we, as a team, are deeply passionate about and we will continue to work hard to ensure that exercise becomes accessible for as many people as possible."

FEEDBACK AND ENTRY

As well as receiving marketing materials relating to the awards, all shortlisted clubs each receive a detailed Member Feedback Report. "These have become particularly popular with the smaller clubs, which don't always have the time or money to conduct their own consumer research," says Brown.

If you would like to enter your club, or clubs, to take part in the 2013 Health Club Awards, sign up now at www.healthclubawards.com

Studio equipment



Flowin: Friction fitness

Flowin has developed a frictional training concept targeting stability, mobility, strength, balance, speed and power. The system uses friction between pads and plate to activate muscle groups. The pads allow exercises to be performed using elbows and knees or hands and feet, and the workout can be adjusted according to ability. It is suitable for people recovering from injury or with joint problems.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

flowin



Torq-King aims to give strength through motion

Torq-King by TKF Ltd is a new portable floor-based body workout for all abilities. Its omnivheel system is designed to give a 360° range of motion, rotating on its own axis. It is used on the floor for bodyweight exercises, with a focus on core strength and stability to build lean muscle, core strength, flexibility and endurance. The user can decide what movements to make to suit their fitness level. Torq-King can be used on gym floor and hard outdoor surfaces.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

torq-king

fitness-kit.net

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Escape Fitness gives plyometrics a leg-up

Escape's colourful plyo soft boxes have been designed to give the world of plyometrics a new challenge. With a set of three sizes, the products cater for plyo sessions at gyms and in functional zones. They are covered in durable vinyl with an anti-slip finish that contains an anti-bacterial agent. Velcro fixing straps enable the boxes to be stacked on top of each other for platforms of various heights without slipping. Health and safety features include a durable cross-linked foam core built to absorb impact.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

escape



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

saq

Aerofloor platform to lighten to the load

The Aerofloor, by SAQ International, was officially launched to the fitness industry at LIW 2012. It's a training platform that was originally designed for rehabilitation thanks to its ability to take pressure off the joints and muscles while still working the cardiovascular system. The product is ideal for novice training, weight loss and old and young users. It incorporates controlled energy return technology (CERT) and has already been installed at a number of football clubs including Manchester United, Manchester City, Everton, West Ham, as well as at the training grounds of Welsh Rugby Union.

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SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

WE TAKE A LOOK AT RECENT PROJECTS FROM MATRIX AND TECHNOGYM

A FITNESS HAVEN

Client: Old Thorns Manor Hotel Golf and Country Estate, UK

Supplier: Matrix Fitness

Over 30 years ago, Ken Wood – the entrepreneur most famous for the eponymous Kenwood Chef food mixer – had a dream of creating a golf course with a small, exclusive membership; somewhere to relax and have a lot of fun. That became reality in the shape of the luxury golf hotel and health spa, Old Thorns Manor, located in 400 acres of beautiful countryside on the borders of Surrey, Hampshire and Sussex, UK.

Already offering a variety of luxurious facilities, including the Atrium champagne bar, stylish sports bars, tranquil spa and impressive conference centre – not to mention the magnificent golf course – the luxury four-star hotel now features a 2,320sq m (25,000sq ft) state of the art fitness facility, Elevation Health and Fitness, after awarding Matrix Fitness a £400k contract to supply top of the range equipment.

"It's a very exciting time to be partnering with Matrix Fitness as our exclusive fitness equipment provider," says Martin Shaw, current owner of Old Thorns Manor Hotel. "With the popularity of cycling and other outdoor activities at an all-time high, our partnership allows us to recreate these experiences indoors, through Virtual Active and MyRide."

Open to guests and members alike, the gym – which enjoys panoramic views over the Peter Alliss-designed championship

golf course – offers a wide range of equipment, including the newly launched C7xe ClimbMill by Matrix, and the E7xe Elliptical. Elevation is also the first gym in the UK to offer the Matrix A7xe Ascent Trainer.

Entertainment is in abundance too, with Vista Clear Television technology and iPod docking stations on each piece of CV equipment, enabling gym users to watch films and TV programmes and listen to their favourite tunes while they work out. Alternatively, they can experience the near total immersion of the cardio machines' inbuilt Matrix Fitness Virtual Active programming, where the destination is displayed on the console in dynamic video content – landscapes from the Grand Canyon to Hawaii – and where exercisers feel gradual terrain changes under their feet and hear ambient sounds through their headphones.

MyRide technology is another innovation on offer at Old Thorns, combining HD video, 140 virtual destinations, and thousands of challenges to create one million possible routes – a powerful way to experience indoor cycling.

For those who prefer strength training, Matrix G7 series resistance equipment has been installed in the gym, and the site also caters for those who favour workouts with free weights.

But Elevation Health and Fitness isn't just about fantastic facilities and state of the art equipment – it's also about a five-star personal support system from the team of exercise coaches, keeping gym users motivated and challenged in their fitness goals.

Additional facilities include a new aerobics and indoor cycling studio, 20m swimming pool and sub-tropical pool, and new outdoor terraced area.

For more information: www.matrixfitness.com



Matrix has installed £400k of equipment

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ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Client: Great Yarmouth NHS, UK
Supplier: Technogym

As part of the Technogym Wellness ethos, the company is involved in a number of community engagement projects designed to increase physical activity and wellbeing. One of the most recent projects was carried out in association with Great Yarmouth NHS, which implemented Technogym's Easyline into community hubs.

These hubs – located in existing community centres, care homes, libraries and so on – have been geared up to offer exercise intervention programmes. They cater for a range of over 20 different medical conditions, including heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, arthritis and obesity.

"We've used the community hubs as a way of engaging people in the community, in an environment they are familiar with and therefore happy to do exercise in," says Charles Allen, physical activity co-ordinator, East Coast Community Healthcare. "Thanks to the diversity of the Easyline equipment, we're able to put more specific, tailored interventions in place for each of the medical conditions being catered for at the community hubs."

Indeed, it's this equipment diversity – as well as the hubs' non-intimidating environment and excellent, engaged staff – which has contributed to significantly higher attendance and completion rates compared to other schemes. "Where in some places attendance has been at 40 per cent completed, we're now getting 80 to 85 per cent of people completing the course – and then carrying on with activity after the intervention," says Lyn Blizzard, health improvement principal at East Coast Community Healthcare.

"The Easyline equipment is fantastic – that's the only word to use to describe it – because it's so simple and



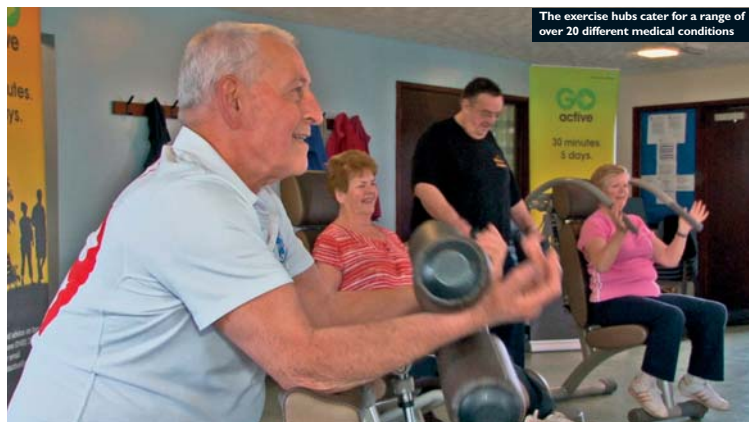
The Easyline equipment is simple to use

easy to use. People can't hurt themselves on it, and the minute they sit on it to have a go, they feel relaxed, happy and confident. They can then progress from here into the mainstream gyms," comments Rachael Lacey, specialist physical activity instructor.

Allen adds: "Ninety-three per cent of people who use our community hubs have already lost weight – an average of 6.5lbs over 12 weeks. Our close monitoring and new systems allow us to support their continued efforts, with constant feedback and tracking of patients' progress."

"Operating these hubs over the last 12 months is now influencing how we are shaping our overall service, as we can demonstrate the importance of physical activity as a valuable tool in improving lifestyle," concludes Blizzard. "It's also a superb way of educating people and equipping them with skills that can be used to help improve wellbeing, outlook and belief in themselves."

For more information: www.technogym.com



The exercise hubs cater for a range of over 20 different medical conditions



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* FullGravity Technology, exclusive patent by Technogym.

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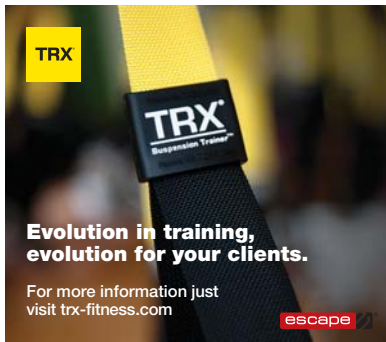
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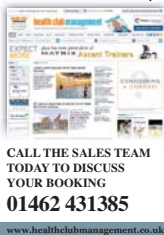
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