

health club management

FEBRUARY 2017

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Fitness as a vital sign

The American Heart Association wants aerobic fitness to be part of medical examinations. Given GPs' lack of fitness expertise, gyms have an opportunity to bridge the gap, helping doctors both measure and improve patients' fitness

Aerobic fitness should be considered a vital sign and assessed as part of medical examinations. This is the very exciting new advice from the American Heart Association (AHA), which says this measure should become as standard as monitoring someone's blood pressure, body temperature or pulse.

The AHA's statement – issued at the end of last year – draws comparisons with smoking, obesity and high blood pressure, observing that aerobic fitness can be an even better indicator of a person's risk of heart disease and early death. Linked to this, the organisation is encouraging doctors to signpost anyone with low aerobic fitness into exercise; it points out that fitness is a malleable measure, with risk of heart disease lowered simply by moving more.

This comes hot on the heels of the decision by the UK's Royal College of General Practitioners to make physical activity and lifestyle a clinical priority for GPs over the next three years (see *HCM* Aug 16, p3); the fitness sector is, it seems, finally coming of age in both the US and the UK, with credible medical bodies pushing to have fitness' preventative health potential recognised by doctors.

At this stage the AHA's stance is still just a recommendation – it doesn't change the formal heart disease risk calculations – but the organisation is hopeful it will have an impact not only on doctors but also on the general public, driving awareness of the importance of aerobic fitness among both groups.

If the AHA and RCGP initiatives have the impact they hope, the fitness sector is set to see far more people referred to its facilities. It must be ready, with staff skilled up to welcome the less fit and help



Improving aerobic fitness can cut risk of early death

This matters for two reasons. Firstly, biological age is very motivating – a simple, one-figure snapshot that sums up your health. Mine used to be much younger than my chronological age, but after a year of little exercise, a Boditrax scan revealed it to be four years older. That's been a powerful kick into action; nobody likes to feel old for their age.

Secondly, echoing the AHA statement, biological age has been clearly linked to longevity: in a 2014 study, people whose VO_2 max was 15 per cent or more below average for their age had an 82 per cent higher risk of dying prematurely than those whose biological age was the same as, or younger than, their actual age. Aerobic fitness really does matter.

But at the moment GPs aren't experts in fitness; they're unlikely to have body scanners to hand, and will most likely be unaware of other tools to help them implement AHA recommendations. So what are their options? The AHA suggests online fitness age calculators, but my experience suggests these estimate your fitness based purely on your current activity levels. What if, as in my case, your fitness routine is new? One calculator gave me a fitness age 13 years younger than I really am; I sadly know that to be untrue!

Nuffield's Health MOT offers a scaleable alternative: an aerobic fitness test which estimates VO_2 max by monitoring heart rate variability. No aerobic stress, no need for treadmills or body scanners, but still a reading that's based on your body as it stands today. It then gives you a % score of how your health compares to others your age. Our sector should be reaching out to GPs with robust solutions such as this.

Kate Cracknell
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[@healthclubkate](https://twitter.com/healthclubkate)

People whose VO_2 max is 15 per cent or more below average for their age have an 82 per cent higher risk of dying prematurely

them get results; in this way the circle will be completed, with GPs' confidence in our sector growing further as they see health risks fall.

But there's another – consumer-facing – benefit of a focus on aerobic fitness. Health data can be bewildering, and aerobic fitness can be used to communicate complex medical messages in a way people understand. Specifically, aerobic fitness (someone's VO_2 max) can be used to calculate their biological age – how old their body is physiologically. If their VO_2 max is lower than average for their age group, their biological age is older than their chronological age, and vice versa.



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health club management

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News: skiier Dave Ryding's historic achievement will put skiing into the media spotlight

Chris Grant: the CEO of Sported, who is using sport to create social change

Ruben Reddy: the architect arguing that temporary structures are more sustainable



The Gym Group to open 17 sites in 2017, meeting its target of 15-20 openings per year

Sports jobs are up by 10 per cent since 2012, according to government statistics

Parkour has been officially recognised as a sport in the UK, making it eligible for funding



Eight-storey Sojo Spa Club opens this month, overlooking the Hudson River in NYC

Stephanie Rest appointed Spa & Wellness director for Argenta at Watergate Hotel in D.C.

Spa opens at Palazzo Versace Dubai, with 7 treatment rooms, private jacuzzi and more



US institutions offered special events and alternatives to the inauguration of Donald Trump

Eiffel Tower will undergo a €300m renovation that will occur over a 15-year period

Legoland in Florida has launched Ninjago World, an immersive land centred around 4D ride

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

We have a duty of care to protect our customers' data

Sean Maguire, Managing director, Legend Club Management Systems

The information an organisation holds is arguably its most important asset. The need to both operate efficiently and provide differential services means that the personal data we hold has not only grown in magnitude, but is also taking on ever greater value.

However, one only has to consider the near daily reports of data breaches in other industries to recognise that as the value of data becomes greater, so does the corporate responsibility and risk. Our customers entrust us with their personal details and we have a duty of care to protect this



information to the highest degree possible.

Health and fitness operators have an obligation to their customers to comply with information security standards such as those set by the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). Equally, those providing services to operators that might involve the storage, handling or transmission of data have a duty to put in place audited processes for data security.

“Customers entrust us with their details and we have a duty of care to protect them”

Unfortunately, many organisations in the health and fitness industry are still either unaware that they are processing customer data in a manner that is in breach of these standards or are simply failing to adhere to data security best practice.

It's time that, collectively, we step up and put in place formal standards and processes to protect data, before one of us becomes the focus of the latest data breach news. We have a duty to our customers as an industry group to offer a formal validation and an industry-wide commitment to information security.

Health clubs are in possession of a wealth of customer data which must be protected



New apprenticeship levy a great opportunity for businesses

Jessica Higgins, Workplace relations consultant (non-practising solicitor), Ilex Gale

Apprenticeships are widely used in the health and fitness industry, providing opportunities for young people to enter the workplace and gain qualifications at the same time. Apprenticeships help businesses to increase productivity and performance as well as create a competent and committed workforce.

However, from 6 April 2017, all UK employers with wage bills of over £3m must pay the government an Apprenticeship Levy. The levy is 0.5 per cent of a business' payroll and will be collected by HMRC via PAYE. All employers have £15,000 to offset against the amount they owe, such that the 0.5 per cent levy only applies to wages paid over the £3m threshold.

The purpose of the new levy is to encourage all employers to invest in apprenticeship programmes and to improve the quality and quantity of their apprenticeships.



“The levy should be seen as an opportunity for businesses to grow and enhance their workforce”

The fund can be accessed by employers to fund apprenticeship training in their business. The levy will be paid monthly and it will be

The new levy will result in more apprenticeships



accessed online via a digital apprenticeship service account.

The government will add 10 per cent to the digital account and the funds will be available to use for 18 months. Any unused money in the fund following this time will be used by the government to fund

apprenticeships for SMEs, so all employers should benefit.

So, if your company pays out more than £3m in wages, be prepared for the compulsory levy coming into force in April – but let's see it as an opportunity for businesses to fund new apprenticeships and grow and enhance their workforce.

There's no evidence of 'weekend warrior' health benefits

Melvyn Hillsdon, Associate professor of physical activity and health, The University of Exeter

Recently the press

reported the findings of a study that focused on physical activity during leisure time in a large cohort of UK adults aged 40 and over. The headline was that so called 'weekend warriors' (people who do all their physical activity at the weekend) have a reduced risk of death similar to people who are more frequently active.

Based on the headlines, readers might be surprised to learn that this study did not separately measure physical activity undertaken on weekdays and weekend days. Instead, the survey asked people how frequently they undertook physical activity in



the four weeks prior to the survey. Their answers were averaged out to estimate weekly frequency.

What the paper actually shows is that some exercise

is better than none and more regular activity is a bit better still. The study did not include occupational or transport activity and therefore it is possible that the infrequent exercisers (the 'weekend warriors') were more active in these two domains with less time for physical activity in their leisure time.

The message is still very positive, any exercise is better than none, but we shouldn't assume there's any kind of weekend effect.

“Any exercise is better than none, but we shouldn't assume there's any kind of weekend effect”

The study actually looked at frequency of activity over four weeks



PEOPLE



While you can teach staff to understand disability, nothing compares to someone who has lived it



HILARY FARMIOE

INSTRUCTABILITY NATIONAL PROJECT MANAGER

How did InstructAbility start, and how has it developed?

The spinal cord injury charity Aspire, which also operates an inclusive community leisure centre, recognised that disabled people were significantly under-represented in the fitness sector workforce. In response, it set up the InstructAbility programme to create accessible training and employment opportunities.

Our programme is open to a wide range of disabled people, including those with physical and sensory impairments and people who have experienced mental health difficulties.

In 2010, a pilot was run with YMCAfit, which delivered a tailored course, and with a range of leisure operators who provided work placements. A further four courses were funded by the Mayor's Legacy Fund. In 2013, Sport England awarded Aspire an £850,000 grant to roll out the programme nationally. To date, over 300 disabled people have qualified as fitness professionals.

How did you get involved with InstructAbility?

I've always been involved in sport, originally training as a PE teacher and progressing to become development manager for the government's School Sport Partnership scheme.

I joined Aspire in 2011 to manage and develop the InstructAbility programme from its pilot. I saw this as an opportunity to use my skills for good, working in the charity sector. I was also keen to lead a project that had the potential to effect long-term positive change in the industry.



Farmioe: 'I saw this as an opportunity to use my skills for good'

What are the main aims of the programme?

- To increase the number of disabled people qualifying as gym instructors and working in the fitness industry, by funding and delivering accessible training and providing work placements.
- To increase the number of disabled people participating in fitness by creating a workforce that represents and understands this client group.
- To help the fitness industry become more inclusive by raising awareness of disability among staff, managers, customers and stakeholders.

Do the instructors mostly train other disabled people?

InstructAbility graduates are qualified to work with people of all abilities, but they do hold Level 3 Exercise and Disability qualifications. On the programme, they learn how to use their experience of living with disability to engage other people with impairments.

How do health clubs benefit from employing an InstructAbility instructor?

While you can teach staff to understand disability, nothing compares to having someone on your team who has lived it.

Disabled instructors have often used high-level problem solving skills in their own life, which they can draw on to adapt exercise for others. They can also attract a broader client base.

In addition, over 80 per cent of employers report a positive impact on their existing staff. This can have a ripple effect across the organisation, with some companies revising policies and practices to enhance accessibility.

What impact do instructors have on other disabled people in the community?

It's all about providing people with real role models. Not everyone aspires to be a Paralympian, but most people would benefit from being a little more active. Being able to go to a club where you feel welcome and supported can make all the difference.

When the instructors share their stories, it can also encourage non-disabled people who lack confidence



InstructAbility graduates can also work with non-disabled clients



So far, 300 disabled people have qualified as instructors

to get started. Not only that, but we're creating role models for other disabled people who want to pursue a career in the fitness industry.

How does the programme affect the lives of the instructors?

The majority of InstructAbility instructors have experienced losing their independence and relying on others for a period of time. Our programme turns the tables, empowering them to provide support to others and drive change within the fitness industry.

Disabled people who have been out of work gain a renewed sense of purpose through volunteering and employment. Many instructors also report increases in their own fitness, which helps with managing their conditions. Put simply, it's

not uncommon for graduates to tell us that the programme has changed their lives.

Are there any plans for new developments within the programme?

We'd like to see more employers investing in disabled people's professional development. We'll be working with ukactive to co-ordinate LeadAbility, a new bursary scheme funded by Matrix Fitness to enable disabled people to access the ukactive Future Leaders Programme.

With funding from Sport England, we'll also be piloting a revised delivery model, working with a range of partners including leisure operators, charities, local authorities and DPULO's (Disabled People User Led Organisations) to co-ordinate the programme at local level. ▶



Schools are under pressure to meet academic targets. There's a lack of time, resources and funding to give wellbeing the attention it deserves



TERRY AUSTIN

HEAD OF WELLBEING, WOOD GREEN SCHOOL

- **In 2015, Nuffield Health launched a pilot whereby it placed a head of wellbeing into Wood Green School in Witney, England. What has been achieved in the first year?**

The first year has been dedicated to raising awareness and establishing my role and position with students and staff. I have to link the role in with the structure of the timetable and curriculum. There isn't an allocated wellbeing lesson, so it's important to integrate with other departments instead of working independently.

What interactions take place with the students?

We use tutorial time and assembly time, as well as isolated wellbeing days for entire year groups. In this time, we focus on nutrition, resilience, mental health and emotional wellbeing among other topics.

How have you, personally, found the experience?

The experience has been great so far. I've been at Nuffield Health for 18 years, working in gyms and medical centres. In those situations, you're dealing with adults who are fully developed physically and mentally, capable of abstract thinking, not as susceptible to peer pressure and more engaged in behaviour change.

Approaching a school of teenagers is a very different experience. You must be flexible with your tactics and strategy.

What's the key difference when addressing this younger audience?

It's more about addressing the 'why' rather than the 'what', focusing on the reasons behind their choices and being aware of peer pressures and so on – a lot of their choices are related to image. It's about



Austin: 'Early interventions in wellbeing can be key'

asking them not what's right and wrong, but what sort of person they want to be.

What have you learnt about school wellbeing?

Schools are under pressure to meet academic targets and Ofsted ratings, and there's a lack of time, resources and funding available to really give wellbeing the attention it deserves and needs.

There are also many variables that can influence behaviour, such as peer pressure, parents and

social media. Younger people today face more challenges to their mental and physical health than ever before. Early interventions are imperative to ensure that negative trends don't continue into their adult lives.

What obstacles have you faced?

Implementing interventions around the school timetable and curriculum can be challenging. The school's infrastructure is complex and schools are busy places. When

considering an intervention, it's crucial to plan ahead, work around the timetable and appreciate the busyness of staff and their other commitments and priorities.

How have you engaged the school workforce?

It's important to respect boundaries and other people's expertise. People sometimes fear change and can be protective of their habits and practices, especially in a school community.

We gave all staff the opportunity to have a personalised lifestyle health assessment to develop their own wellbeing action plan, and this has helped to build relationships.

How could other head teachers start talking about wellbeing?

Every school will have different strengths and weaknesses. It's crucial to conduct an analysis, establishing what they do well and what needs more attention, as well as gathering evidence to allow any change to be measured.

A framework for a 'wellbeing audit' would be helpful for all schools. A committee would also need to be set up, with someone leading the wellbeing focus. For an initiative to succeed, the whole school community must be on-board.



Wellbeing days at Wood Green focus on topics like nutrition and mental health

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JUSTIN MCDONELL

CHAIR, COLLECTIVE WELLNESS GROUP

► Franchises are a staple of the fitness industry, providing a recognisable and reliable brand for customers, as well as support and guidance for owners. Done right, they can dominate a market.

Justin McDonell knows this better than anyone. His holding company, Collective Wellness Group, is the master franchisor of Anytime Fitness, the largest fitness chain in Australia with 446 clubs open and plans to get to 500.

Recently, embracing the current trends of wellness and boutique fitness, McDonell added two new franchise chains, Massage Envy and Orangetheory Fitness.

"I think it's the entrepreneurial spirit of 'I'll give it a go,'" says McDonell of the popularity of franchises. "The advantage of the franchise is that it provides a framework to work within. You can build a business without having to do it alone."

Gym junkie

McDonell started gaining experience in the industry as soon as he finished school, working in his family's gym and eventually quitting university to run it with his mother and sister Jacinta. He moved on

to become a franchisee of several fitness clubs before he and Jacinta signed the deal to be master franchisor of Anytime Fitness in Australia.

After going from strength to strength with Anytime Fitness, McDonell and

business partner Richard Pell started the Collective Wellness Group in order to add new franchise chains to the offering.

The group signed as the master franchisor of Massage Envy in Australia early in 2016, and by the end of the year had also signed the rights to Orangetheory. McDonell plans to roll out 150 franchises of each chain.

"We're always on the lookout for the next great health and wellness brand that's been proven in another market, and that we feel can dominate in the Australian market," McDonell explains. "We're excited about what these two brands can do in Australia."

New directions

In bringing these brands to Australia, McDonell is targeting a different demographic from Anytime Fitness. He says:

"Anytime Fitness predominantly attracts male members and is spread across the country in almost all socio-economic areas. In contrast, Massage Envy and Orangetheory are mainly focused in middle to higher income areas and attract a mainly female clientele."

McDonell adds these new brands therefore provide a good opportunity for existing Anytime franchisees to add an extra, complementary, smaller footprint offering to their portfolio.

Never content to stop growing, McDonell has big plans for the future. "Once we launch and grow the two newest brands, we aim to launch another two brands into the Australian market in the coming two to four years," he says. There are no details at this stage, but McDonell says new additions to the portfolio could be in areas such as physiotherapy, PT or beauty.

"Collective Wellness Group is committed to the franchise sector and in particular health and wellness products," he says. "It's a great growth area." ●



McDonell: A focus on wellness



There are plans for 150 Orangetheory Fitness franchises in Australia



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*Source: Google Trends Jan-11 to Jan-16

Adidas unveils fitness-focused campus

Sportswear giant Adidas has revealed its plans to transform its German headquarters into a huge leisure campus, including four star-shaped public spaces promoting exercise and outdoor activity.

Dutch studio LOLA Landscape Architects have designed the outdoor component of the World of Sports campus in the town of Herzogenaurach, which will provide a canvas for employees to test Adidas products for activities ranging from football and running to skateboarding and cycling.

Athletes, journalists and retailers will be welcomed to use the campus in its first phase, before it gradually morphs into the fabric of the city to become a new public space open to all. An array of buildings, gardens, landscapes and monuments will eventually demonstrate the growth of the company over time.



The first phase of the project will begin in 2017. The extensive landscape – with a lake at its heart – will be developed in parallel with the creation of two new company buildings – HALFTIME by COBE Architects and ARENA by Behnisch Architects.

The four star-shaped public areas will be located in the centre of the new buildings, offering lively and engaging routes through the campus. Each will be carefully designed around a different theme and a set of activities, and will feature

facilities such as sports pitches, bike parking and seating areas.

“They are like buildings without a roof, and each of them, with a distinct look and feel, becomes a beacon and way finder on the campus,” said LOLA in a statement.

“In an incremental way, the new campus will be further developed with both interior and exterior spaces [that merge with the urban area]. The new buildings are merely covered squares, and the landscapes are like open air buildings.”

The project is being developed in collaboration with technical landscape consultant WGF Objekt alongside engineers WPM.

Adidas is not the only sports design company to adapt its headquarters to better reflect its focus on fitness and leisure. Earlier this year, Nike launched a 297,000sq m (3.2 million square feet) expansion of its campus in Oregon to add sports facilities and architecture inspired by human movement.

[Read more online](#)

Equinox aims to shock with marketing campaign

Equinox, the US gym and lifestyle brand, has launched a provocative new advertising campaign, which features images of a woman baring mastectomy scars and the cultivation of cannabis.

The Commit to Something campaign uses shots by world-renowned fashion photographer Steven Klein, and attempts to encourage viewers to “take action and celebrate dedication”.

Seven photographs that comprise the campaign will be prominent on social media and within the 86 clubs owned by Equinox.

“This year’s campaign revolves around the notion that what you commit to is who you are, so we’re daring viewers to take stance and look inward, even if doing so makes you a

little bit uncomfortable,” said executive vice-president and chief marketing officer Carlos Becil.

“We’re in the business of changing lives at Equinox, so we’ve learned firsthand that going ‘all in’ on anything – whether it be a workout, a cause or yourself – will undoubtedly get you one step closer to finding out who you really are.”



One of the posters features cannabis plants

[Read more online](#)

Ronaldo launches gym chain

World football star

Cristiano Ronaldo is teaming up with US-based health club chain Crunch Fitness to launch CR7 gyms. The Real Madrid winger will open his first club in Madrid, Spain before expanding further afield.

Speaking about the gym, Ronaldo said: “I’m excited about the CR7 Fitness Club venture with Crunch. We are able to offer health and fitness at a reasonable price and members can use the same fitness equipment I use.”

Franchise owners will be able to establish their own Crunch gym in Spain where CR7 members will be able to experience “cutting-edge”

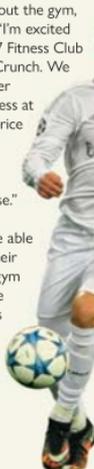
equipment, group fitness programmes, advice from personal trainers and nutrition guidance.

The clubs will target people of all fitness levels, from beginners to enthusiasts.

Ben Midgley, Crunch Franchise CEO, said: “It’s been an absolute honour to work with Cristiano Ronaldo and his team.

We’re very excited to build something truly incredible, particularly knowing that we will be able to impact the lives and fitness journeys of thousands of new people as we continue to grow.”

[Read more online](#)



Orangetheory Fitness opens Manhattan studio

US-based health club chain Orangetheory Fitness has opened its first corporately owned studio in New York City. Located in the Astor Place neighborhood – the vibrant community where East and West Villages meet in Manhattan – the studio is the fifth Orangetheory Fitness studio to open in the city.

The studio features a large, multi-level layout – making it unique in the Orangetheory portfolio as it is the first to rise above one storey – and has been designed to motivate members with upbeat music, modern equipment, contemporary lighting and art.

"We're elated to be opening our first corporately owned Orangetheory Fitness studio in New York City, one of the workout capitals of the world," said Dave Long, co-founder and chief executive officer of Orangetheory Fitness.

"This studio is located in the heart of the city and will allow us to continue to grow while providing us with an ideal spot to continuously deliver the most unique, challenging and results oriented workouts to New Yorkers."

The opening is part of the company's explosive growth in the US, which saw a 69 per cent increase in studio openings in 2016 from the year before. The company also relocated its HQ from its original home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to a 36,000sq ft facility in the city of Boca Raton.

Orangetheory launched in 2010 and has since become one of the world's largest fitness franchises, with 500 studios in seven countries – the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Colombia.

[Read more online](#)



Orangetheory now has 500 studios in seven countries

'Competitive pressures' close David Barton Gyms

US fitness chain David Barton Gym has been forced to shut some of its operations due to what it described as "market pressures". Club Ventures, which runs eight of the chic gyms, issued a statement on 21 December saying it had closed all of its club operations in New York, Boston, Miami, Chicago and Bellevue, Washington.

However, facilities in Los Angeles and Las Vegas and the Island Club and Spa in Honolulu will remain open. These locations are owned by a separate legal entity, Meridian Sports Club.

The statement added: "The company deeply regrets this final action, but due to severe competitive pressures, particularly in New York, it has become impossible for these locations to continue operations. David Barton Gym greatly appreciates the past patronage of all of its clients and support of its staff and training professionals."

[Read more online](#)



PickUp goes to east coast

Basketball-themed fitness chain PickUp USA Fitness has secured a new franchised site in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The new club marks the first US east coast location for the Los Angeles, California-based company, which has been expanding rapidly since opening its first club in 2011.

PickUp USA gyms are full-service fitness clubs with a focus on basketball. Each club offers group and private basketball training, weight and cv rooms, relaxation lounges, locker rooms, retail

zones and the company's main attraction – pickup basketball sessions with referees.

According to Jordan Meister, president of PickUp USA, the business is planning to accelerate its growth for next year, projecting a total of 17 locations by the end of 2017.

"We have franchise territories available in 38 states and are actively expanding across the country," Meister said.

The Charlottesville club is set to open by June 2017.

[Read more online](#)



Call for daily exercise to combat childhood obesity

MPs have discussed the most effective ways to use cash raised from the soft drinks tax, including the rolling out of sports camps and daily mile initiatives. The 90-minute debate, which took place in London last month, was tabled by Justin Tomlinson, MP for North Swindon.

He opened the discussion by saying that a third of children are overweight or obese, which is "an alarming figure, which creates social norms and becomes acceptable".

Tomlinson highlighted the work of Draycott Sports Camp in his constituency, which runs after-school, and school holiday clubs.

He said: "Two-hundred primary school children were

being active every day in the last summer holidays.

"The club is for the vast majority of children who are not sport minded. There should be hundreds and hundreds of these camps."

In March last year, the government announced it would be introducing a tax on sugary drinks, which is expected to come into force in April 2018 and predicted to raise £520m in its first year.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb, who also attended the debate, confirmed that the £520m from the levy will be ring-fenced until 2020. However, Will Quince, MP for Colchester questioned whether £520m would be raised and said the figure



Justin Tomlinson tabled the debate on the sugar tax

would more likely be between £200-300m.

During the debate, Maggie Throup MP warned that one in five children begin primary school overweight or obese and that many are diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.

She said: "We need to tackle obesity at a young age. Changing habits now will change their habits for life."

David Rutley, MP and Caroline Monaghan MP also highlighted the importance of daily mile initiatives.

Monaghan told MPs: "The daily mile was developed in Stirling. It only takes 15 minutes each day. My own children do the daily mile up and down tarmac."

[Read more online](#)

The Gym Group to open 17 clubs in 2017

The Gym Group is on course to meet its target of new openings for 2017, with 17 sites in the pipeline.

In a pre-close trading statement, the low-cost gym announced it was on course to meet towards the top end of its guidance range of 15 to 20 openings each year.

The statement said that 15 new gyms opened in 2016, bringing the total estate to 89.

For the year to 31 December 2016, total revenue growth was 22.6 per cent for the year versus 2015.

Membership at the end of 2016 stood at 448,000, up 19.1 per cent from 376,000 at the end of December 2015. Average members for 2016 was 429,000, up 20.8 per cent from 355,000 in 2015.

John Treharne, Gym Group CEO, said: "This has been another year of rapid progress growing the number of sites in our estate by over 20 per cent and achieving our financial goals. Our 2016 openings are performing well."

[Read more online](#)



Treharne said the pipeline is "stronger than ever"



Franchise owner David O'Donnell has two London clubs

Anytime Fitness opens 100th UK club

Anytime Fitness has opened its 100th UK gym in Ladbroke Grove, north-west London.

The latest club is a continuation of the brand's expansion since opening its 3,000th global club in Stroud, Gloucestershire, 12 months ago, making it one of the fastest growing franchises in the world – out-growing McDonald's and Subway.

The UK is the fifth country to have 100 Anytime Fitness clubs, alongside the US, Canada, Australia and Japan. There are now more than

3,300 clubs globally and the 24/7 health club provider opened its first UK club in Bristol in 2010.

Chuck Runyon, Anytime Fitness CEO, said: "We are so proud to be opening the 100th Anytime Fitness club in the UK. The 3,000th global club was opened in the UK in less than it took McDonald's, Subway and Dunkin' Donuts to open the same amount of stores, which shows the strength of our brand."

[Read more online](#)

Pop-up fitness café takes exercise as payment

David Lloyd Leisure opened a pop-up café in London's Covent Garden last month, which accepted exercise as payment – part of a campaign to encourage people to be more active during the working day. The Run For Your Bun café offered customers a free lunch in exchange for a six-minute micro workout.

Customers were able to place an order for a lunch item before completing the six-minute micro workout under the guidance of the café's personal trainers. They then received their complimentary lunch.

The HIIT (high-intensity interval training) workout included one minute each on a rowing machine, bike and treadmill, as well as 60 seconds of sit-ups, bodyweight squats

and lunges, with 30-second rest periods between exercises.

The lunch options included smashed avocado with cherry tomatoes, goats cheese, chilli and lime on toasted wholemeal bread and a grilled chicken breast burger with tomato, red onion and garlic mayonnaise, among other choices.

David Lloyd Leisure's health and fitness expert, Elaine Denton, said: "We want to remind workers of the importance of being active at work and moving around more. "Workers were able to be more active by visiting Run For Your Bun and getting a free lunch on us in return, but on an everyday basis people can be more active at work just by doing little things.

On behalf of David Lloyd Leisure, OnePoll surveyed 1,000



Run For Your Bun: Six minutes of HIIT for a free lunch

people in 12 British cities and found that the average office worker spends seven hours in every eight-hour working day sat down and sedentary. That

means each year office workers could be spending 1,578 hours (65.8 days) sat at a desk.

[Read more online](#)



Central London is proving to be expensive territory for low-cost operators

Budget gyms pay more rent

Budget gym operators with premises in Central London are paying 19 per cent more rent than mid-market rivals, according to a new Colliers International report.

Dan Taylor, the firm's head of retail lease advisory, attributed the disparity (£2.50 per sq m) to the increase in demand from the budget sector – such as Gym Group and Pure Gym – which are opening sites with more regularity.

Indeed, the number of low-cost gyms opening in London surged by 46 per cent in 2016 alone.

Colliers head of UK leisure agency Ross Kirton explained: "Once the preserve of regional towns and cities, budget gym operators have cast aside concerns of rent affordability in London and are catering to the large number of customers who are keen to swap expensive monthly memberships in favour of no-frills concepts."

[Read more online](#)

Jump In set for growth

Indoor trampoline organisation Jump In is planning to establish several new sites across "affluent" parts of the UK after securing a funding package via Santander's Growth Capital. The company is keen to expand to London, Poole Harrogate, Scotland and the West Midlands, and is expecting to open an arena in Aberdeen in early 2017.

Jump In has an existing estate of four arenas in Slough,

Tonbridge, Warwick and Enfield, which offer jumping, fitness and free-running classes for adults and children.

The expansion project is expected to take place over the next 12-18 months.

Vernon West, executive chair at Jump In, said the funding enabled the operator to "reap the benefits of scale" as well as "increase competitive strength".

[Read more online](#)



UK news

GLL acquires FitSpace to boost budget gym offer

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) has grown its network of Better gyms with the purchase of FitSpace - strengthening its position in the UK low-cost market.

The purchase of the eight-strong nationwide chain brings the number of standalone Better gyms to 17.

Better is the customer brand of GLL, a leisure social charitable enterprise based in London.

The budget gym market is currently dominated by private providers, but GLL plans to prioritise social value over profit, with an emphasis on increasing participation - while maintaining accessibility and affordability.

It will target younger, older and less traditional gym users so more people can benefit from affordable access to physical activity.

Mark Sesnan, GLL managing director, said: "The growing network of Better Gyms brings a fresh name to the high street and proves that a charity can compete very successfully with the private sector in leisure.

"Better still, instead of shareholders, it's our customers that profit from our social enterprise. All our surpluses are reinvested into our facilities to help get people of all backgrounds, ages and communities more active, more often,



Sesnan says GLL will target high streets with Better

thus helping address some of the deep problems in our society today such as inactivity and child obesity."

The new facilities added to the Better Gym portfolio are located in Bournemouth, Bradford, Holloway, Lincoln, Mitcham, Nottingham, Sheffield and Woolwich.

[Read more online](#)



Pure Gym sites will act as training hubs for PTA

Pure Gym and PT Academy sign training deal

Pure Gym sites across the UK will be used as training centres after the operator signed a partnership deal with fitness education company PT Academy (PTA).

The gym operator and education company have launched the Pure Gym Academy, which will see Pure Gym open up its 170 sites to train new personal trainers and fitness instructors.

The deal will see an increase in the number

of PTA courses available nationwide. Courses will initially be run by more than 40 Pure Gym assessors, with the opportunity for more staff to become assessors.

This year, Pure Gym has also announced corporate partnerships with TomTom and Tri SUP, the alternative triathlon series, and UK Running Events to help encourage active lifestyles.

[Read more online](#)

World's first 'biophilic gym' launched

Landscape architect Lily Jencks recently designed "the world's first biophilic gym" for fitness concept Biofit.

Described as "an organic gym concept for big city life," the pop-up health club opened in west London from 9 January to 3 February 2017. With a brief to "bring the outside world indoors", Jencks created an environment where gym-goers were able to work out amid natural vegetation, colours, materials, shapes, scents and sounds.

Biofit - founded by health and fitness entrepreneur Matt Morley in 2015 - has been inspired by tech companies such as Apple and Google, which are bringing air-purifying plants and natural landscaping into their offices to reduce employee stress.

"Our society needs to calibrate our relationship with the natural world, which is leading to a surge in this kind of biophilic, nature-inspired design," said Jencks. "This gym project was about living more intimately with the green living world."

The architect - who has previously created "healing gardens" for Maggie's Centres across the UK, and who has collaborated with the likes of Rem Koolhaas and Frank Gehry - uses sustainably focused, reclaimed and recycled materials in her work, and did so again for the gym. The key idea behind the design: that the use of natural materials and plants in a health club context would leave clients both physically and mentally fitter.

[Read more online](#)

The biophilic gym used reclaimed materials





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2. It allows me to be a source of referral for any of our existing suppliers who are looking to work with other operators.
3. It gives me the opportunity to meet up and socialise with other industry leaders within their field.



**Michelle Dand, Group Health & Fitness Manager,
David Lloyd Leisure Ltd**

For more information about
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Tech news

Fitness devices dominate wearable technology market

The wearable technology sector grew by 3.1 per cent year on year in the third quarter of 2016, with basic wearables – mainly fitness bands – accounting for 85 per cent of the market.

The total shipment of wearables reached 23m in the three-month period, according to data from the International Data Corporation (IDC)'s Worldwide Quarterly Wearable Device Tracker.

Fitness bands experienced double-digit year-on-year growth. Much of the rise during the July-September period was attributed to the launch of newer models and an expanding user base.

Fitbit was once again the market leader in the third quarter, with year-on-year expansion up 11 per cent to 5.3

million units, from 4.8 million. In August, the company released its Flex 2 and Charge 2 bands.

During Q3, Xiaomi saw sales increase by 4 per cent to 3.8 million units, from 3.7 million. However, the IDC report said Xiaomi continues to struggle to gain traction outside its home country of China.

Garmin, which was third in terms of market share, witnessed a 12.2 per cent year-on-year growth to 1.3 million units, from 1.2 million.

Apple saw a year-on-year decline in Q3, with sales plummeting 71 per cent to 1.1 million units from 3.9 million.

The report said the smartwatch category continues to be challenged.

Samsung made the top five during the third quarter, shifting 1 million units, up 89



Fitness bands experienced double-digit growth in 2016

per cent year-on-year, from approximately 500,000.

'Other' wearable devices accounted for 10.4 million shipments in Q3. This category saw a year-on-year rise of 26 per cent from 8.3 million units.

IDC said it expects the momentum for basic wearables to continue for the remainder of the year.

"It's still early days, but we're already seeing a notable shift in the market," said Jitesh Ubrani, senior research analyst for IDC mobile device trackers. "Where smartwatches were once expected to take the lead, it is now basic wearables which reign supreme."

[Read more online](#)

MINDBODY to utilise Google Map technology

A scheme which allows individuals to book fitness and wellness classes directly from Google Maps is being piloted.

Wellness technology company MINDBODY has partnered with Google to allow its subscribers to also book desired classes through Google Search and a new standalone website. Dubbed Reserve with Google, the

technology is being rolled out initially to MINDBODY subscribers in the US – those within 10,000 square miles of New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Those wanting to book classes can search for the type of activity they want to do, click on the preferred class time and complete their booking through Google.

Rick Stollmeyer, MINDBODY chief executive and co-founder, said the project "aims to bring even more customers to our wellness business subscribers".

"This aligns beautifully with our vision of a transaction-enabled marketplace connecting the world of wellness," he added.

More than 58,000 local businesses and 326,000 wellness practitioners in 130 countries use MINDBODY's software system.

[Read more online](#)

Legend and Innovatise to partner on myfitapp

Legend Club Management Systems have partnered with Innovatise UG to create a new smartphone app solution for gyms and health clubs.

Myfitapp will allow leisure operators to use mobile technology to engage with, retain and acquire new members.

Customers will be able to access their gym's social media, push notifications, class schedules, information regarding offers and an integrated booking system, which will allow members to book classes and courts through the app.

Gyms using the app will have access to features including: home screen design, drag and drop image galleries, integrated digital advertising, reports and analytics, and member-get-member schemes.

Gyms will also be able to integrate web content, including video and social media, into the app with no duplicate maintenance.

The app has been optimised for chains, with all clubs in a chain represented with an individual home screen, which allows members to favourite their most used venue.

Jubilee Hall in London will be the first Legend UK client to receive myfitapp, with installation in January 2017.



Legend's managing director Sean Maguire

[Read more online](#)

The service will first be rolled out in the US



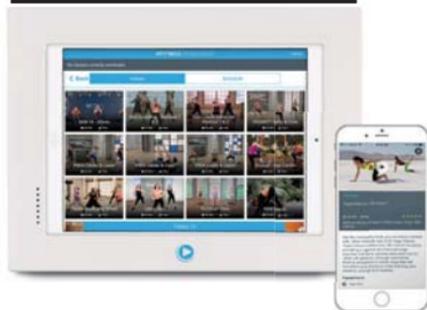


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Supplier and training news

Life Fitness completes Ford Motor Company installation

Ford Motor Company is leading the way in supporting a fit and healthy workplace by becoming the first UK corporate customer of Life Fitness to install Synrgy Bluesky for the 2,450 Ford employees based at the Dunton Technical Centre in Basildon, Essex.

The new Life Fitness functional training system, developed for specifically for outdoor use, was installed at the research and development facility during November.

Employees, including the design and engineering teams, can take part in dynamic group fitness sessions using 12 scalable body weight training stations.

Synrgy Bluesky, which offers a fun, supportive and inviting workout experience for exercisers of all abilities, has proved a popular alternative to



The Synrgy equipment is designed for outdoor spaces

indoor training for employees for all ages and abilities and forms the centrepiece of an engaging exercise space.

Life Fitness has also worked with Ford to install signature pieces of Life Fitness strength and cardio equipment at its indoor training facility. This includes the addition of Integrity Series, Row GX,

Insignia Series selectorized strength equipment, HD Elite and Synrgy360T system.

Jane Hayden, EDAP learning educational adviser at Ford, said: "Providing a healthy working environment is imperative to the success of our company. The introduction of our new Synrgy Bluesky training system is a significant

addition and it is already in demand by our employees.

"As well as creating a real sense of community, the outdoor workouts it offers are fun and exhilarating, they encourage lots of social interaction and help people reach their fitness goals."

[Read more online](#)



The platform offers monthly educational webinars for PTs

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Future Fit launches online course for personal trainers

Future Fit has established a new online training platform, which uses webinars presented by award-winning fitness professionals to educate personal trainers (PTs).

Pro Zone will present monthly webinars delivered by PTs including Lazo Freeman, founder of The Body Transformation Academy, Katie Bulmer-Cooke, James Griffiths and Yvonne Radley.

Users will also benefit from a monthly accredited webinar delivered by Future Fit tutors, which are worth one CPD point with CIMSPA and REPs. Over a period of a year's membership, it is possible for individuals to gain all the accreditation required to maintain professional status.

Rob Johnson, managing director at Future Fit Training, said the system was a "big step forward for the industry". He added: "Qualification is the starting point, not the destination, and once in the industry, trainers should keep learning and asking questions."

[Read more online](#)

Wattbike secures deal with Hilton Hotels

Hospitality giant Hilton Worldwide has announced a partnership with indoor cycling specialist Wattbike, which has seen the performance bikes being rolled out to luxury hotels across the Americas.

The deal will see Wattbike equipment being rolled out at fitness centers in all Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts and Conrad Hotels & Resorts across the Americas.

The first bikes were installed at sites in mid-January and will offer guests Wattbike's trademark digital platform – allowing users to access workouts from anywhere and save accurate and in-depth data to analyse later.

The move is part of Hilton's strategy to improve its offer for guests across a number of service areas – including wellness.

[Read more online](#)



Wattbikes will be made available at Hilton properties



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Irick to lead Brunswick's burgeoning fitness arm



Jaime Irick joins Brunswick from General Electric

Brunswick Corporation has appointed Jaime Irick as president of the Fitness Division. Irick will succeed Christopher Clawson, president of Life Fitness, who is leaving the company. Irick has taken up his new role with immediate effect and will report directly to Brunswick CEO Mark Schwabero.

Irick joins Brunswick following 14 years at General Electric (GE), where he most recently was chief commercial officer for Current, Powered by GE. During his stint at GE, he worked across several business units and served in a variety of roles of increasing responsibility, including corporate strategy and sales.

Irick graduated from the United States Military

Academy at West Point, and is a qualified Airborne Ranger. He earned his MBA from Harvard Business School.

"Representing roughly 20 per cent of Brunswick's sales with leading products and brands in the global commercial fitness market, our fitness segment has grown in importance both within the company and the fitness industry," Brunswick CEO Mark Schwabero said.

Brunswick has completed a number of high-profile acquisitions of fitness brands over the past 12 months, including Germany-based Indoor Cycling Group, equipment supplier Cybex International and active ageing specialist Scifi.

[Read more online](#)

Frick named president and CEO of GlobalFit

US-based health and wellness technology company GlobalFit has named Anthony J Frick as its new president and CEO. Frick joins GlobalFit from Diversified Search, an executive search firm, where he held the role of managing director and vice president.

At Diversified Research, Frick played a key role in the expansion of the group's healthcare consulting practice, positioning the firm as a

leading executive search firm in managed care.

A trained lawyer, during his career Frick has also had a stint as a healthcare consultant for Accenture.

In his new role, Frick will replace the current CEO Richard Penn, who announced his retirement last year.

"Tony is the right person to lead GlobalFit in its next stage of growth," Penn said.

"His experience, knowledge of the health and wellness space, and passion for driving healthcare transformation make him an extraordinary fit for the role of president."

Commenting on his new role, Frick said: "GlobalFit is at the centre of healthcare transformation. Through our partnerships with health insurers and employers, our goal is to ensure that every person has effective incentives to lead a healthy lifestyle."



Frick: Lawyer and former healthcare consultant

[Read more online](#)

Pulse Group appoints new executive director

The Pulse Group has appointed Matt Johnson as its new executive director of the company's design and build division.

Under his leadership, the division is responsible for designing, constructing and fitting out leisure centres as well as completing refurbishments of existing facilities.

Johnson has more than 15 years of experience working in the construction industry.

Previously employed as project director at Balfour Beatty, he was responsible for the management of large projects and contracts.

On his appointment, Johnson said: "Pulse has a fantastic reputation, with over 35 years of expertise behind them. I am looking forward to helping take the organisation into a new phase, broadening the range of projects that the business works on, and exploring opportunities for growth within the design and build sector."

Pulse Design recently completed a £2.3m refurbishment of the Phoenix Pool and Gym in partnership with Great Yarmouth Borough Council and the Sentinel Leisure Trust.



Johnson is a veteran of the construction industry

[Read more online](#)



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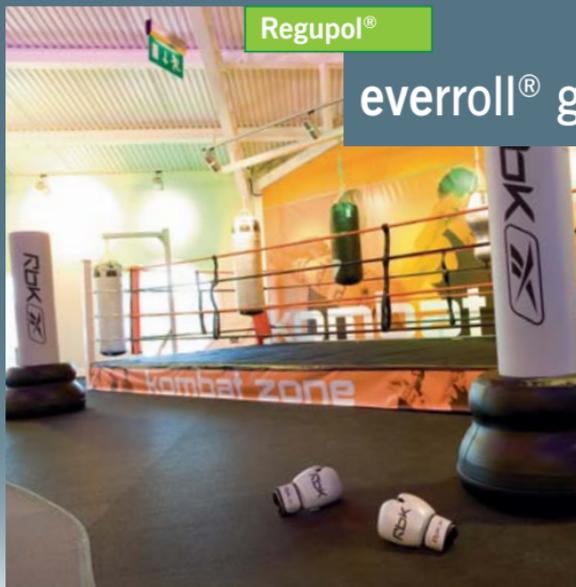


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EVENTS CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

16–18 | ForumClub-Forum Piscine Gallery Fiera di Bologna, Italy

This event will see 16,000sq m dedicated to the exhibition of products and services for those who design, build and restore private, public and commercial fitness clubs, pools, wellness centres and spas. www.forumclub.it

23–27 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute East Coast Bethesda, MD, US

A must-attend event for personal trainers, fitness professionals, owners and managers aiming to ramp up the success of their fitness business. www.ideafit.com/ptrainer

26–27 | Professional Beauty London ExCeL, London, UK

Showcasing skincare, spa, nail, beauty equipment, medical beauty and tanning. Professional Beauty is one of the biggest events of its kind in the UK. www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

27 | SMEMX International Wembley Stadium, London, UK

Provides a platform to network and strike up partnerships with some of the biggest sports clubs, associations and universities in the UK and beyond. www.smemxevent.com

CHARITY EVENT



CHARITY EVENT

13–17 September 2017 London to Paris Cycle Challenge 2017

Cycle from London to Paris for The Big Issue Foundation in this iconic challenge. Make your way through beautiful English villages and into the stunning countryside of rural France, passing historical landmarks and famous battlefields until you reach Paris. People of all ages and from all walks of life take part in this amazing event that supports the Big Issue Foundation in its fight to end poverty, homelessness and social exclusion. Registration is £99 and entrants must obtain a minimum sponsorship of £1,525. www.bigissue.org.uk/event/london-paris-cycle-challenge-2017

MARCH

8–11 | IHRSA 2017 Los Angeles, CA, US

IHRSA 2017 will deliver presentations from business leaders and education on the key topics for health club operators, as well as the latest innovative products. www.ihrsa.org/ihrsa2017

14–15 | Quest NBS and CIMSPA Conferences Chesford Grange, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, UK

A two-day event featuring the Quest and NBS (National Benchmarking Scheme) conference, and the CIMSPA conference. www.questnbs.org

17–19 | The 2017 International Fitness Showcase Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK

An event for fitness instructors and enthusiasts, offering three days of dance, aerobics, step, combat, conditioning, lectures and workshops. www.chrysalispromotions.com

22–25 | ECA World Fitness Conference / OBOW Show Marriott Marquis Hotel, New York City, NY, US

ECA World Fitness represents the fitness and wellness sectors, with annual industry shows in New York and Florida. www.ecaworldfitness.com

6 May 2017 Ratrace Dirty Weekend

Get dirty at the world's largest obstacle course, covering 20 miles and 200 obstacles. Huge permanent builds, the world's longest monkey bars, festival style camping and a monster after-party await the thousands who take on this challenge each year.

To support Children With Cancer UK, you can donate £50 when you register, or raise £500 to join the Children With Cancer UK team and get your entry fee refunded. www.ratrace.com/dirtyweekend/



FITNESS FORESIGHT™ 2017

Fitness Foresight™ from *Health Club Management* looks at the key trends, influences and opportunities shaping the health and fitness sector

ALL IN THE MIND

MENTAL HEALTH

Whether you're clinically depressed or just stressed from work, improved mental health is a prime benefit of exercising and being physically active.

This is key, because by the year 2020, depression will be the second leading cause of premature death and disability. Indeed, the World Health Organization has flagged mental health as one of its top priorities over the next decade.

Health club operators have been very slow to embrace the opportunity presented by mental health, but that's slowly changing. In late 2016, UK-based Nuffield Health acquired a cognitive behavioural therapy company, to allow it to offer a more rounded approach to wellbeing encompassing fitness, nutrition and mental health. Other operators are beginning to introduce mindfulness

programming to their schedules: Equinox, for example, with its Headstrong class.

Whether it's through the development of clinically proven mental wellbeing services, through a focus on mindfulness, or simply in the way gym operators talk about the benefits of being active, we're likely to see a far greater focus on mental health in the coming years.

Headstrong is Equinox's mindfulness-based group exercise offering





Gyms could partner with DNA experts to create 'test and prescribe' programming

GYM FOR YOUR GENES

EPIGENETICS

Scientists are increasingly convinced that the majority of disease – potentially up to 95 per cent – is preventable through making healthy lifestyle choices. This field of science is known as epigenetics.

It was previously thought that genes were fixed for life. However, sequencing of the human genome has taught us that many genes change in response to how we care for ourselves – including how we exercise and sleep, the pollution we're

exposed to, our stress levels and state of mind, and what we eat and drink.

With prevention tipped to become a massive industry in years to come, this is a huge game changer for sectors related to self-care – including health clubs.

A 'gym for your genes' will offer tests that reveal how a range of modalities, from meditation to massage, can impact our DNA – with personalised programmes then prescribed based on that data.

Deepak Chopra is already working on an anti-ageing and prevention centre which embraces epigenetics. It's due to open on Blackadore Caye, a Belize island owned by Leonardo DiCaprio, in 2018.

There's no reason why health clubs can't follow suit, ensuring they're in the vanguard of preventative healthcare, whether by designing their own 'test and prescribe' programmes or by partnering with third party DNA testing experts.

TESTING THE WATER

VIRTUAL DESIGN

Architects will begin to use virtual reality (VR) to design gyms and leisure spaces, asking consumers to wear VR headsets and watching to see how they respond as they walk around virtual environments.

Arup Associates are already experimenting with such technology. They plan not only to gather anecdotal feedback from participants, but also to monitor people's physiological response to

the virtual environments they pass through. Are these environments bringing about the desired response in the audience, whether that's heightened excitement, for example, or an immediate calming of the nerves?

By letting people experience a new facility before it's even been built, this technology will lead to far more engaging buildings, designed with the customer experience at their very heart. ▶

VR will allow people to experience a new facility before it's even been built





Expect a focus on real, wholesome food rather than fad diets

▶ FOOD AS MEDICINE CLEAN EATING

Far from being a diet where you're limited to eating certain food groups or calorie counting, 'clean eating' is a simple concept: avoid processed foods and opt for real, wholesome ingredients instead.

We predict that more health club operators will focus on this approach in their nutritional programmes and their in-house menus, as well as in the nutritional supplements and products they stock; Tribe is a brand that's leading the way here, with its sports nutrition products made exclusively from raw wholefoods.

We can also expect a refined, expanded definition of 'superfoods' as people realise that a wide range of foods have nutritional benefits. Health clubs that roast, bake and fry foods with hot fat, creating acrylamide – which the World Health Organization has warned is carcinogenic – will change this practice.

TECHNOLOGY GETS PERSONAL TAILORED MEMBERSHIPS

The ubiquity of mobile phones means consumers expect to have a dynamic relationship with the brands they do business with – a flexible relationship controlled by them from the palm of their hand.

Gyms have to respond to this, but it needn't be feared. In fact, technology allows operators to personalise the experience in ways that would never before have been possible. Rather than having to build specialist facilities to target new niche audiences, technology allows operators to cost-effectively experiment with marketing to the various shared-interest 'tribes' that exist within one mainstream gym.

It allows a full-service health club offering to be unbundled and then repackaged into curated, personalised, differentiated experiences for each and every member of the facility.

Creating points of difference won't be as straightforward as when building a dedicated facility, because members will still be choosing from the same menu of services and facilities. But if marketed well, tribes will naturally form; additional income from new (and more satisfied) users can be invested in improvements and new services; and the flexibility offered by this tech-based approach could serve to future-proof the business.



Consumers expect to control all aspects of their life via their mobile phone

AI-based Vi coaches you in a two-way dialogue



GET SMART ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) will transform the fitness sector over the coming years, as devices become smarter and more prescriptive, effectively morphing into virtual coaches.

Such devices are already getting ready to come to market: LifeBeam's Vi is one example that's just emerging from crowdfunding and preparing for launch. An AI personal trainer,

Vi takes readings from sensors around your neck and then coaches you based on these readings, in a two-way dialogue via specially designed headphones.

But with the likes of Google now prioritising AI – and other tech giants such as Apple, Microsoft and Facebook all vying for early dominance in the AI space – this will be a market to watch keenly over the coming years.

Modalities such as yoga will be part of the trend towards healthy breathing



ELIMINATION BREATHING

We expect the wellbeing benefits of healthy breathing to become increasingly well recognised – and, indeed, for health club operators to offer interventions such as breathing workshops and coaching sessions to help their members improve this important eliminatory function.

Breathing well is a skill and many people struggle to do it well, but this can be improved with practice.

Breathing controls brainwaves and the stress response and can also trigger sleep, so improving breathing patterns can bring immediate and profound health benefits.

Modalities such as yoga and pilates, which focus on breathing, will be part of this trend.

START THE DAY WELL ACTIVE COMMUTING

A recent UK survey by trade body ukactive and retailer Argos quizzed consumers on their expectations of fitness in the future – with some interesting results.

One clear expectation is that active travel will become more commonplace, with 22 per cent expecting roads to have jogging lanes next to cycling lanes, while 8 per cent think motivational drones will be on-hand to encourage commuters to run or cycle faster.

So what can gyms do to tap into this? Boutique studio operator 1Rebel is already looking at creating London commuter buses with on-board group cycling studios, so commuters can make productive use of their time travelling to work – without the dangers that come with cycling on London's busy roads. The bus will stop at 1Rebel's City studio, with showers and breakfast smoothies available before people head to work. How will your gym harness this trend?

The 1Rebel bus: Active commuting, without the dangers of road cycling



1Rebel's bus would offer onboard cycling classes on your way to work



McFIT opened its World of Cyberobics virtual-only club in Berlin, Germany

▶ A NEW REALITY FITNESS AS ENTERTAINMENT

Virtual reality, augmented reality, 360-degree floor-to-ceiling 'immersive fitness' screens in studios. The latest technology is fusing fitness and entertainment like never before.

The bar was set by Pokémon Go, the augmented reality game which involves people walking real streets to catch virtual Pokémon. An estimated 75

million people downloaded the app in just one month last July – this compared to a grand total of 151 million health club members worldwide.

Meanwhile, in Germany, budget club operator McFIT has launched World of Cyberobics – a futuristic, virtual-only club in Berlin. It has reportedly spent millions on the content production – as

has Les Mills with its 'immersive fitness' content, including The Trip, which plays on wrap-around screens and sucks class participants into the virtually enhanced experience.

The message is clear: find ways to truly entertain your members – or risk losing them to a more hi-tech, eye-catching, gamified alternative.



Gym floors will become modular, allowing operators to switch elements in and out

OUT WITH THE OLD FLUID GYM FLOORS

Gyms will get more creative with the space they have available, keeping gym floors far more fluid and adaptable to new ideas.

The growing popularity of functional and bodyweight training adds momentum to this trend, as health clubs reconsider their reliance on large pieces of equipment and dedicate more space to functional zones and freestyle areas, with smaller, portable pieces.

Manufacturers of larger fitness equipment are recognising this, with a growing number of machines now being designed to be lighter, and with wheels for easier movement around the gym floor.

Expect to see a more modular approach going forward, allowing fitness operators to switch elements of their offering out far more quickly and cost-effectively in order to keep things fresh.



Clubs might consider offering memberships where people train outside the club, and just come in for advice

PAYING FOR EXPERTISE NON-GYM MEMBERSHIPS

People are no longer working out at just one gym. Increasingly we're seeing a portfolio approach to fitness: a weights session at the gym near work, classes at a specialist studio, tracking runs in the park using an app.

Some people don't even want to work out in a gym or fitness facility at all – they're happy using online workouts and classes, cycling to work each day and using trackers to monitor their activity.

But – for now at least, until technology overtakes our own ability to make lifestyle prescriptions – those individuals might still want the guidance and advice that

fitness professionals can offer, to make sure they're doing the right thing and to keep progressing.

We're likely to see gym operators introducing reduced price non-gym memberships, whereby people come to the club for advice once or twice a month but don't even use the gym's facilities.

Holmes Place was already looking at this years ago – a concept called Holmes Place 2 Go, where people were going to be given an activity tracker and have access to the club for advice. That was before its time – but the clock has continued to tick, and the time is now.

ALL TOGETHER NOW GROUP EXERCISE

We've already seen the boutique studios place group exercise squarely at the heart of their business models – and successfully so, creating loyal 'tribes' around their brands.

Now other mainstream fitness operators are likely to follow this lead, focusing on group exercise as a central element of their offering. And with good reason: members who take part in at least some group exercise are 30 per cent less likely to cancel their membership than members who never do group exercise. Meanwhile, members who've made a friend at the gym in the last three months – something that happens far more readily in a group exercise environment than on the gym floor – are a massive 40 per cent less likely to cancel than those who haven't.

The social aspect of belonging to a gym is something technology-based alternatives such as apps and wearables – even with their leaderboards and competitions – struggle to replicate. So expect to see group exercise springing up all over the gym as a way to create a USP: rings of treadmills set up for running classes, gym floor functional classes, virtual class pods, as well as outdoor options such as running groups and bootcamps.

Technology can so easily replace real-life interaction – but people want to work out with other people. Gyms have a greater chance of success if they recognise this. ▶

People want to work out with other people; gyms must recognise this and incorporate more group exercise





Health clubs should look at building rest into the programmes they create for their members

▶ REST GETS TECHNICAL RECOVERY

Modern life means people are 'always on', and many people aren't skilled at building rest – vitally important to keep the mind and body in balance – into their lives in a way that's technically optimised.

Olympic athletes know their rest and recovery schedules are as important in determining performance as their training – but while athletes and coaches know the importance of the right kind of rest, this expertise is rarely available in health clubs.

Once it's stressed through any kind of activity, the body needs time to respond and recuperate. Exercise causes 'damage' to the body that must be repaired, and this requires the body to expend a considerable amount of energy to heal. It's also the time when the training response takes effect and physical capacity is increased to enable a higher level of performance and function.

Fitness and wellness businesses need to raise their level of expertise in terms of

the body's response to rest. They must use existing resources and expertise to educate customers in the benefits, as well as programming technical rest with the correct nutritional, physical and psychological support.

In line with this, while HIIT (high intensity interval training) will remain popular, we'll see a shift towards a balance in exercise modalities, with more mind-body being brought into the mix.



Activity for all, not just sporty kids

A CULTURE OF MOVEMENT ACTIVE EDUCATION

It's time to get creative in addressing childhood obesity. Good work is already being done in this area, but we can expect a far broader range of parties to come to the table with new ideas.

The success of Pokémon GO has shown the dramatic impact technology can have on this target group by quite literally turning activity into a game. Expect far more along these lines.

Meanwhile schools will build activity into everyday lessons: we're already seeing outdoor

schools for younger children, and even kinaesthetic classrooms in the US where kids spend all day at specially designed desks with bikes, climbers and swivel stations instead of chairs.

Activity will be constant and achievable by all, rather than happening just in isolated PE lessons where only a handful excel. The focus will be on imbuing a culture of movement in all children, educating them in its value and normalising it by making it unavoidable – and indeed enjoyable – in everyday life.



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▶ THE POWER OF PEACE

MEDITATION SPACES

We're spotting a trend towards the creation of meditation spaces in residential developments, and expect this to filter across to the health, fitness and wellbeing sector.

People's need to find sanctuary is being driven by rising pressures in daily life, as well as a growing awareness of the importance of making time for contemplation and renewal.

Meditation spaces can be indoors, outdoors or a mix of both and can be created in urban settings – with the use of air filters and white noise machines – as well as in natural locations. Designing one with a beautiful view can add to the power of the experience.

Destination spas such as Rancho la Puerta, which has a stunning meditation room with mountain views, have led the way. But with many people already turning to their gym as a place to ease out the stresses of the day, health clubs have a huge opportunity to follow suit.

Could gyms justify dedicating space in their facilities to meditation?



Insects are low in fat and rich in nutrients

NUTRITION ON THE FLY AN INSECT DIET

Long seen as a delicacy in parts of the world such as Asia and Africa, insects are slowly making their way onto the menu in Britain and the US too.

We'll need to get over the 'disgust factor': with the global population set to rise above nine billion by 2050, new food sources will be needed.

More than half of the Earth's organisms are insects, with experts suggesting millions more species are as yet undiscovered; they also breed rapidly and in large numbers. Not only that, but

they're rich in minerals such as iron and zinc, and low in fat and carbs. Plentiful and good for you – it seems almost too good to be true for fitness enthusiasts.

A handful of companies are already using this food source under the radar – some energy bars include ground-up crickets and grasshoppers – while others are going for a more overt approach. For example, both the Black Ant restaurant in New York and the Grub Kitchen in Pembrokeshire, UK, serve a variety of very openly insect-based dishes. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kate Cracknell is editor of *Health Club Management* and has been a leading journalist in the physical activity sector for more than a decade. She is also a regular speaker and presenter at industry events. Kate graduated from Cambridge University with a BA in modern languages.



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THE ARENA GROUP

The team behind the Arena, Arena Heroes and 22 brands believe they can help the Saudi government get the local population moving. **Kate Cracknell** reports

“The Saudi government has big ambitions to increase the number of people being active,” says Mohammed Fayeze, co-founder and chief executive of Saudi-based fitness operation Arena Group. “We believe we can help them.”

He continues: “At the moment, only 13 per cent of the population is active for 20–30 minutes a week. The government wants to grow this to 40 per cent by 2030 and is putting significant investment into wellbeing initiatives [See ‘Transforming a Nation’, p48].”

“A key focus will be mass participation: building facilities and outdoor parks, running fun events and creating social media campaigns to drive awareness of what’s going on. We sponsored the first ever Spartan Races in Saudi, for example, which took place in December and January. There will also be public education initiatives around nutrition, obesity and diabetes.

“For the first time in Saudi Arabia, the door is also being opened for women’s fitness. Previously you had to make the most of loopholes in the system, or you had to go through the Ministry of Health to open up physiotherapy centres, but that will no longer be the case. It’s a huge opportunity to tap into a whole new market.

“The government is also investing in elite sport, going through the sporting federations and the Olympic Committee. The goal is to get 100 medals in the 2022 Asian Games. It’s probably over-ambitious, but you have to reach for the stars to land on the moon.”

TWO BECOME ONE

So how does Fayeze believe his Arena team can assist the Saudi government in achieving its goals?

“We work across all the segments of the population the government is trying to reach: new exercisers, women, elite sportspeople – and children too. We believe kids are an incredibly important audience,” he explains.

These diverse audiences all have their place within the Arena Group portfolio, now the combined force of two separate companies: Arena and 22. Founded independently around five years ago, each opened their first club in July 2014. Initially competitors, the companies then merged in August 2015. “Our shareholders encouraged us to join forces so we could make a bigger difference in the Saudi market,” explains Fayeze.

In spite of the merger, the two operations continue to run independently under the Arena Group umbrella, with 22 operating one site and Arena currently operating two.

INTRODUCING 22

22 is a CrossFit-style boutique in Jeddah, charging US\$160 a month, with 850sq m dedicated exclusively to functional training. “The 22 brand comes from 22 minutes – the idea that the main part of your workout can be done in 22 minutes, with a bit of warming up and cooling down on either side,” says Fayeze, who founded 22 prior to becoming Arena Group CEO.

“Saudi has a limited number of venues where people can socialise, so a lot of younger people have gym memberships just to catch up with their friends. They spend more time ▶

For the first time in Saudi Arabia, the door is being opened for women’s fitness. Previously you had to make the most of loopholes in the system

— Mohammed Fayeze



The Arena Group
management team:
(left to right) Anas
Orfali, Mohammed
Fayez and Hussein Madi



The 22 brand is a CrossFit-style boutique offering

INTRODUCING THE TEAM



Mohammed Fayez, managing partner and CEO of Arena Group, has an education in engineering and spent 10 years in banking and finance before identifying an un-met demand for functional fitness training. He conceived and launched the 22 brand while still working at the bank, and the concept proved so successful that he left to pursue it on a full-time basis. His functional 22 offering then merged with Arena in 2015, and he became CEO of the combined group.

Hussein Madi was central to setting up Arena. He has an education in engineering and management, but prior to launching Arena was incubating companies and managing projects on behalf of a group of shareholders in Saudi. Arena was one such project: "I helped create the concept, but ultimately this particular project grew in terms of responsibility. I ended up jumping in full-time to complete the incubation of Arena and then manage it for over a year, before stepping back into my incubatory role."



The Arena investors who brought Madi into his role included **Nasir Alabady**, who remains Arena chair. "We're all sports fanatics, but what brought us all together was a shared vision of creating a totally new fitness concept for Saudi Arabia," Alabady explains.



Anas Orfali, COO of Arena, has an engineering education. Prior to joining Arena, with his masters in management and entrepreneurship, he worked as a consultant for PriceWaterhouseCoopers with a focus on operations and organisational structure.



- ▶ at the club than is the norm in other markets, but they're taking part in non-fitness activities such as playing billiards and lounging in the pool, sauna and spa pool.

"In creating 22, we wanted to cater for people who were serious about their training – people who wanted to get in, work out and leave. Rather than offering a full-service, 'open buffet' style of gym, we therefore focused on specialised training of functional movement."

He continues: "We also launched 22 Women in June 2016, an 850sq m facility at the opposite end of the original 22 building. It's been incredibly well received – probably even better than the male version. Many women have been educated overseas and they've been waiting for something like 22 Women to open."

ENTER THE ARENA

Meanwhile, Arena's first site in Jeddah – a vast 8,000sq m space – was founded with martial arts at its heart: of the 120 classes offered each week, 40 per cent are in a specific martial arts discipline, with the remainder a combination of general fitness fused with functional-based MMA conditioning. However, as Hussein Madi – general manager of Arena prior to the merger – explains, it isn't set up to appeal only to the already fit: "What we offer is MMA, but it isn't extreme. We focus on fun and community, with a very consultative approach."

Priced at US\$180 a month, and open to men only, Arena focuses on quality as a key USP: world champion instructors have been brought in from around the world to head up the delivery of their respective disciplines, from Brazilian jiu jitsu to Muay Thai, wrestling to boxing. Partnerships have also been set up with world-leading brands such as American Top Team in the US. "We wanted to penetrate the market without competing with market leader Fitness Time, and we wanted to ensure anyone else trying to come into our space would find it very hard to compete with us," explains Madi.



Arena's first site in Jeddah was founded with martial arts training at its heart

This inaugural club also makes the most of its size by doubling as an events venue – an event can be held one night, hosting 1,000 spectators, and by 7.00am the next morning the club is back to its usual gym format, with the MMA cage in the middle.

In December 2014, six months after the club opened, Arena hosted its first event in partnership with MMA events organiser Desert Force. These were the first ever fights held in Saudi, and the most successful event ever for Desert Force, with 20 million viewers on live TV – 60 per cent of which were in Saudi, where MMA is a national passion.

TEACHING VALUES

Going back to Fayez's comment about wanting to focus on children, Arena has also launched a kids' concept: Arena Heroes. This was originally tested at the main Arena club and has proved hugely popular, so the concept will now be rolled out in standalone venues: one is due to open imminently in the space between 22 and 22 Women, so the whole family can work out at the same time – including younger girls as well as boys.

"The kids' market is where the future is," says Arena COO Anas Orfali, "and there's really nothing in the Saudi market like Arena Heroes: not only world-class trainers, but also a focus on social skills. We don't just get the kids fit and teach them an art – we teach them respect for the family, respect for your teacher... We're building values and people are loving it. We have hundreds of people on our waiting lists."

"We sent some of the kids to the jiu jitsu world championships and, after just one-and-a-half years of training, we came back with 23 medals, most of them golds," adds Madi. "That might seem like quite a small

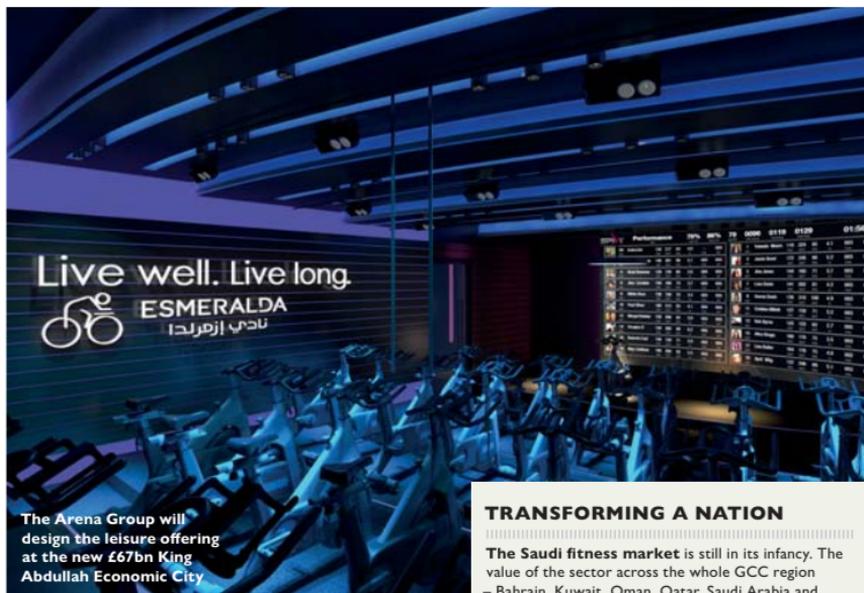
story, but we've approached the Olympic Committee. If the government wants 100 medals in 2022... well, this is what we've been able to do with the kids at Arena Heroes. If we really turn our focus on this, what might we be able to achieve for the country?"

LAUNCHING SATELLITES

Initiatives such as this have helped Arena develop a strong brand equity in Saudi Arabia, to the point that the management team has – at least for now – put the roll-out of both 22 and 22 Women on a back-burner to focus on expanding Arena and Arena Heroes.

Arena has been hosting MMA events since 2014





The Arena Group will design the leisure offering at the new £67bn King Abdullah Economic City

TRANSFORMING A NATION

The Saudi fitness market is still in its infancy. The value of the sector across the whole GCC region – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – is estimated at around **US\$1.4bn**, of which Saudi Arabia accounts for around **45 per cent** of the revenues.

There are currently two main players in the Saudi market: Fitness Time, with just over **100 clubs** across the country, and Bodymasters with around **30 clubs** in the central/eastern region. The remainder of the market consists of smaller operations and independent health and fitness clubs.

But usage of gyms remains low, in spite of the fact that **67 per cent** of the population is **aged under 35** – an Ernst & Young study recently put the fitness market penetration rate at **less than 3 per cent** of the Saudi Arabian population.

And people aren't even being active beyond the gym: a recent government study found only **about 13 per cent** of the population is physically active for **20–30 minutes** a week, with high levels of obesity and diabetes being the result.

The government has therefore created a National Transformation Programme (NTP), putting significant investment behind its ambition to increase the number of active people **from 13 per cent to 20 per cent by 2020, and 40 per cent by 2030.**

► “We do have plans to grow 22, including a new low-cost concept: 22 Box Fit,” says Fayeze. “It will be a pure CrossFit box, and we have a couple of locations in mind.”

“But for now we want to focus on Arena. Rolling out four or five brands simultaneously meant we weren't managing our resources effectively. In addition, the boutique market really isn't developed in Saudi yet, and we don't want to burn the 22 card by rolling it out before its time. We'll wait until the market is ready before we grow that brand.”

Meanwhile Arena's second club, in the capital city of Riyadh, opened on 1 October 2016. Smaller than the original at 2,400sq m, it also has a slightly different focus. MMA is still offered, but there's more functional training alongside freeweights, cardio and a CrossFit area.

“We have another site under construction in Riyadh,” adds Orfali. “It's about 1,700sq m, located in a basement, with a big focus on functional training and weight lifting – in fact, we'll be hosting international weightlifting and powerlifting competitions there. Above it, on the ground floor, we're converting 400sq m of office space into an Arena Heroes.”

“Riyadh is a big city with a lot of demand for fitness. Rather than opening one mega facility to serve the whole city, we thought it better to build several satellite facilities, each bringing in different elements of the overall Arena offering,” says Fayeze. ►

The boutique market really isn't developed in Saudi yet, and we don't want to burn the 22 card by rolling it out before its time – *Mohammed Fayeze*



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CEO Mohammed Fayez believes Arena can help the Saudi government get the local population moving

We'd like to expand into the GCC and beyond. Ultimately we want to reach into the US market and then into Europe – *Mohammed Fayez*

▶ A PIECE OF KAEC

But the team has other interests besides its clubs, including corporate wellness. "We have certified nutritionists, trainers and physical therapists, as well as a lady to work with female employees," says Orfali. "We can go in and embed a healthy lifestyle culture in a company, running the activities and programmes, overseeing the communication. Once we've created that culture, we're also able to offer deals across the Arena Group for men, women and kids."

The group has also been approached by EMAAR – the largest real estate developer in the region, responsible for building the Burj Khalifa in Dubai – to consult on the leisure provision at the £67bn King Abdullah Economic City, due to be completed by 2035 but with as many as 50,000 people set to move in by 2020.

Madi explains: "We beat off some big names, including American companies and big global brands, to be invited to design the leisure destination in that city, which is an area of 50,000sq m. It will have six swimming pools, six tennis courts, a male gym, a female gym, indoor courts, day care, lots of studios... It will be a huge leisure destination."

A GLOBAL AMBITION

So with all the brands in its portfolio, as well as a number of external interests, what are the Arena Group's ambitions moving forward?

"Since the merger, we've focused on developing fewer sites in the short term with a view to building strong foundations for future growth," says Fayez. "By mid-2017 we'll have nine branches in four locations, and by 2020 that will rise to 20 branches."

"We'd then like to expand beyond Saudi, into the GCC and beyond – Dubai and Egypt are on our radar, as well as possibly Turkey. But ultimately we want to reach into the US market and then into Europe."

"Ultimately, we want to raise awareness of what real fitness is about," concludes Orfali. "It isn't about aesthetics. It's about improving your lifestyle so you spend better quality time with your family, so you're more able in all you do, so you're less affected by illness."

"Admittedly the bar is set pretty low in Saudi, which makes it a lot easier for us to achieve results – but we are achieving results, and that's making all the hard work worthwhile." ●

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EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Mental health issues affect 25 per cent of the population, and research shows exercise can be more effective than medication – as well as helping prevent issues occurring in the first place. So how can the health and fitness industry reach out to those who are suffering? **Kath Hudson** reports

Although I've suffered from depression in the past, the only time I've needed to take medication was when I stopped exercising. When I did get back to exercise, while the physical benefits took around a year to become obvious, the mental health benefits were practically immediate.

So why doesn't the health and fitness industry use this as a marketing tool? Why the unwavering focus on weight and physical appearance, which so

frequently ends in disappointment – why not instead celebrate the fact that exercise will boost resilience, sleeping patterns, coping mechanisms, self-esteem and sense of wellbeing?

A shift in focus could lead to clubs connecting with, and helping, many more people – those who don't understand what a profound and positive impact exercise can have on mental health.

Because this is a huge issue nationally: figures from the Centre for Mental

Health show that work-related stress, anxiety and depression contribute to 35 per cent of all work-related ill health cases, making the financial cost to British businesses an estimated £26bn a year. This is a great opportunity for the fitness sector to reach out to the business community with innovative solutions.

So what could, and should, health and fitness operators be doing to proactively help people with mental health issues? We ask our panel of experts.



Paul Farmer
Chief executive, MIND

In my opinion, exercise is the number one preventative measure for mental health and there's a strong evidence base to show its efficacy, so it's very important for operators to really engage with this market.

There are three areas in which health and fitness providers could help. Firstly, encouraging clients to

think about looking after their mental health in the same way they do their physical health. The Five Steps to Wellbeing programme is a great way of doing this: connect with other people, be active, keep learning new skills, give to others and be mindful.

Secondly, make sure your organisation is mental health aware. Signing up to the Sport and Recreation Alliance's mental health charter is a strong platform to help create an action plan, and we're delighted that more than 350 organisations have signed up so far.

Thirdly, connecting with MIND's Get Set to Go programme is an easy way of engaging with this market. This campaign works to signpost people towards exercise opportunities and helps to remove the barriers.

People with mental health issues are often low in self-esteem and confidence, and have preconceptions

that gyms are intimidating places, so it's of paramount importance to be open and welcoming. It might also be appropriate to run a few sessions aimed purely at those with mental health issues. One free taster session might be the turning point they need.

Run a few sessions aimed purely at those with mental health issues. One free taster session might be the turning point they need – Paul Farmer



Fitness staff should be trained to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems



Marcus Hunt
Health and wellbeing manager Europe,
Unilever

The benefits of being active on our mental health and happiness are still relatively unreported, and not widely regarded as a reason to be more active. The fitness industry can help to spread this message by talking to companies and providing innovative ideas on engaging more people in physical activity.

At Unilever, we believe an employee's wellbeing is paramount – this is

fundamental to our global Unilever Sustainability Living Plan. We know that being physically active is as important for our employees' mental wellbeing as their physical wellbeing, and we must continue to share this important message. Having key educational themes and myth-busting discussions around physical activity can enable behaviour change, and the workplace is a perfect opportunity for this.

Within our UK business, we have a number of gyms in our offices, factories and R&D sites, but we've also diversified this offering to include Gentle Gym classes, mindfulness sessions and we recently launched our

Active U programme. The purpose of this programme is to encourage our employees to be active daily, through ideas such as non-sitting meetings, warming up for work and learning more about their functional capacity and how to be fitter for the future.

Active U has four key themes: active workplace, transport, health and happiness. Our 'activity gurus' are always on-hand to discuss how to be more active at home, around the workplace and during a commute. We also place great emphasis on how important being active is for happiness, and we champion this as part of our award-winning mental health

Having key educational themes and myth-busting discussions around physical activity can enable behaviour change – Marcus Hunt



► **Steve Phillips**
Director of PT & community engagement, HPT5

The fitness industry is currently letting personal trainers and fitness instructors down, because we aren't empowering them to talk about mental health. It's an ignored subject that doesn't feature in standard industry training.

Swedish research has proved that exercise is more effective than medication in alleviating the symptoms of mental health, but we don't let people know that we can help them!

We shouldn't be calling people with mental health issues a 'special population' – this is a quarter of the population, and many others are suffering from post-natal depression, anxiety or stress and don't even realise they have a condition.

If someone is feeling low, they don't necessarily want to be pushed hard



Health clubs could offer group support to overwhelmed new mothers

physically (although some do). For many people, the idea of exercise is scary and can create added anxiety, so the key focus is to just get them out of the house. Sometimes they just need to walk and talk.

Going forward, the industry needs to provide a mix of exercise, meditation and cognitive behavioural therapy, and there must be training qualifications linked to all this that are recognised by

REPS and CIMPSA. In the meantime, it's easier than you think to connect with, and help, people with mental health issues. For example, many new mums feel overwhelmed even if they don't consider they're suffering from post-natal depression, so launch a group, invite them to come into the club with their babies and just talk, and then introduce exercise.

We shouldn't be calling people with mental health issues a 'special population'. This is a quarter of the population – Steve Phillips



Chris Harbron
Director of emotional wellbeing, Nuffield Health

Following the acquisition of a cognitive behavioural therapy business, Nuffield Health has recently launched an emotional wellbeing service aimed at supporting those suffering from stress, anxiety and depression. Launching initially to businesses for their employees, the service will then roll out in the next few months through our 111 consumer fitness

and wellbeing gyms and will be available to all, regardless of a gym membership.

Emotional health is just as important as our physical health, and our focus at Nuffield Health is on the overall wellbeing of the individual. All front-line staff will be trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health problems, begin a conversation about it, and signpost the individual to additional support. As such, we're looking to create a culture where open dialogue about emotional wellbeing and physical wellbeing is encouraged, supported and expected.

Thinking and acting towards people as if they're abnormal is one of the key issues that creates stigma around mental health. Understanding and empathy can make all the difference: making it normal to talk about ups and downs can make people feel comfortable to ask for help if they experience a problem. Suicide is a leading cause of death in both men and women, but rates are around three times higher in men. Supporting them to talk about their emotions, as well as spotting signs of more significant distress, is important.

We're looking to create a culture where open dialogue about emotional and physical wellbeing is encouraged, supported and expected – Chris Harbron

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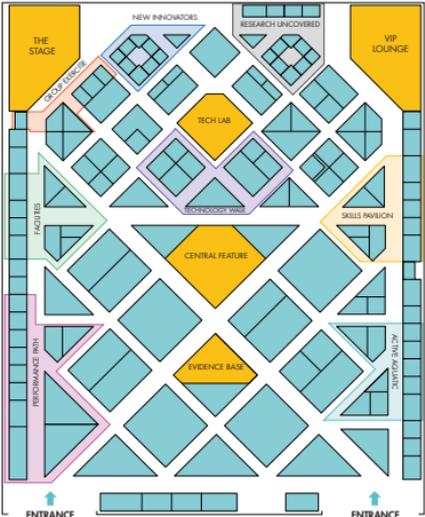
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Mental health issues can lead to lower energy levels, so a gentler exercise approach may be needed



Debbie Lawrence
Qualification lead, VTCT

There's still so much stigma around mental health, and although the Time to Change campaign has done a lot to raise awareness, it's still a very misunderstood area.

The first steps are the normalisation and acceptance of mental health as

something that affects everyone. Being able to speak openly, in an empathetic environment and without being judged, is the key to acceptance. However, this requires strong soft skills and trust, so some extra staff training in mental health awareness may be needed – it's crucial the instructor is empathetic and caring.

Mental health issues often lower energy and mood, so beasting sessions at the gym are generally not appropriate. A more holistic approach is needed, balancing emotional, mental, physical, medical and social wellbeing.

People with more severe and enduring conditions will be harder to reach, and operators may need to be prepared to reach out into the community, with walking groups or sessions in village halls.

There are some great examples of community-based programmes, including

the Welsh national exercise referral scheme and the Bristol Active Living project, which provided a whole range of services, supporting people with mental health issues to participate in a range of activities. ●

Extra staff training in mental health awareness may be needed. It's crucial the instructor is empathetic and caring – Debbie Lawrence

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THERE'S AN **APP** FOR THAT



Jeni Fisher, head of lifestyle partnerships for Google Play, gives the low-down on her personal top five wellbeing apps at the moment

YOGAIA

DETAILS: Freemium (subscriptions from £7.50/month), iOS/Android



Convenience is the name of the game for Yogaia, the world's first live, interactive online yoga studio. Launched in October 2013, the app has seen strong uptake in native Finland, but the UK is where the team are betting on considerable growth in 2017.

Next time a client laments the struggle of maintaining their well-honed routines while at home or travelling – and therefore unable to make it to your club –

consider prescribing them this app. The service is the perfect complement to in-person classes: as well as being available across web/iOS and Android, you can also stream recorded classes via Chromecast to TV screens, making it a convenient option for gym-goers who would otherwise miss out on their regular in-person fix.

Recorded classes are free to view, but paying members (from beginners to more experienced yogis) can book a remote spot at live video sessions, all for "less than the price of a studio class". Paying subscribers also have the option of receiving personalised instructions if they allow Yogaia to access their phone's camera.

There's a choice of yoga classes by level of expertise and length, and the app also offers live talks from yoga practitioners to provide a welcome reprieve from some of the more strenuous sessions.

Recorded yoga classes are free to view on Yogaia





Progression Fitness Pro guides people through weight training sessions

PROGRESSION FITNESS PRO

DETAILS: £3.69, Android only



Progression Fit Pro is the brainchild of weightlifter Zoltan Demant, and was created in response to a clear gap in the fitness app market. Quickly establishing itself as the best-in-class companion for gym or at-home weightlifting workouts, Progression Fitness Pro guides people through various pre-loaded and configurable exercises with instructions, rest timers and workout summaries.

The app does exactly what the name suggests, making it more achievable than ever to chart and encourage progression with every weightlifting session thanks to powerful statistics that offer the user an in-depth analysis of their fitness and strength-building journey.

Gone are the days when gym clients used pen and paper to track their reps; all they now need is this app on their Android phone or Android Wear smartwatch to keep a log of their session.

Members can also sync/back up their data to Google Drive, which makes it easier than ever for gyms and personal trainers to monitor their clients' progress.

With over 1,600 five-star ratings on Google Play at the time of writing, it's clear this app is meeting the needs of today's weightlifters, so why not spread the word to your clients and increase their chances of progressing too?

LIFESUM

DETAILS: Freemium, iOS/Android



As health club operators know, a healthy and balanced diet is crucial for members to achieve their health and fitness goals. With this in mind, Lifesum's expert in-house nutritionists have crafted several bespoke meal plans to assist subscribers in reaching popular health goals, such as building strength or losing a few pounds.

The Swedish start-up's mission is to simplify healthy living, and its recent US\$10m funding round will certainly

help boost its trajectory in priority markets such as the US.

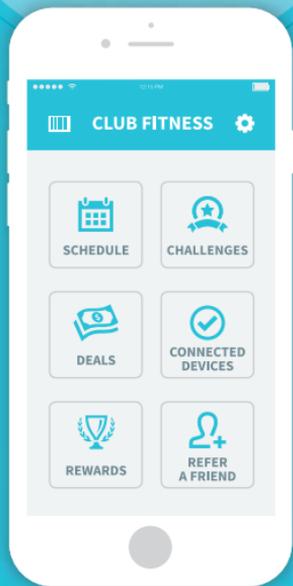
The app is one of the top monetising health and fitness Android apps of 2016, thanks in part to its compelling subscription service. Subscribers receive many benefits, including access to detailed meal information down to the very last detail, helping them track their intake of sodium, saturated fat and more.

While meal tracking is a core in-app functionality, connecting to other apps such as Google Fit, Withings and Runkeeper also allows users to seamlessly track their exercise data in the same place. Tapping into the user's personal activity data also allows Lifesum to further assist them in reaching their goal – for example, sending a push notification suggesting a high-protein meal immediately after an intense weightlifting session.

Even better, Lifesum customers can export their data from Google Fit/Apple Health and share it with their health club, empowering you to even better serve your members' needs. ▶

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WELLBEING APPS



The Fabulous app sends users prompts about keeping up healthy habits

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

► FABULOUS

DETAILS: Freemium, Android only



Fabulous is an app which originated in Duke University's Behavioural Economics lab, taking a scientific and behavioural approach to transforming lives by resetting habits with healthy rituals.

Your health club members are all likely have good intentions, but it's only when these intentions become ingrained habits that memberships are retained and clubs thrive. Maintaining those habits is the goal of Fabulous. The app sends timely push notifications to prompt the adoption of a new mindset – for example, resetting your brain to view exercise as a privilege and not a chore.

The makers of the app recognise that setting small, achievable goals in the short term is the key to ultimately accomplishing longer-term lifestyle changes. With this in mind, the first routine a new

user is tasked with establishing is drinking water in the morning.

The app coaches its users to take a holistic approach to health and fitness, so alongside adding simple habits like drinking more water, you also have the option of setting a habit to 'eat fish', 'floss' or 'stretch' – again, each of these habits on their own are manageable, but together they can truly supercharge your clientele and help them live a happier, healthier life.

► JEFIT

DETAILS: Freemium, iOS/Android



The Jefit app has been designed to help people stay motivated in their fitness routines. It allows users to easily track workouts and share statistics with friends and others in the fitness community – something that's widely recognised as being key to achieving your goals, especially in the era of social media.

The 4 million-strong Jefit community is a forum for users to share their body stat goals and benchmark exercise progress with friends and like-minded people. The app offers access to over 1,300 exercises, with detailed animations, step-by-step instructions and expert tips.

Subscribing to Jefit elite (currently priced at £23.64 a year) offers a range of premium benefits, from deeper training insights to enhanced website features. For example, Jefit elite users can access comparison charts with gym buddies via the web interface, as well

as training progress reports and exclusive workout routines.

A large proportion of gym members can't afford to train with one of your club's personal training team – but Jefit's motivational approach could help boost your chances of retaining these members as they work towards their goals. ●

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JIM GRAHAM

The outgoing COO of the Gym Group has some interesting thoughts on the opportunities that lie ahead for the fitness sector – if it gets things right. He talks to **Kate Cracknell**

What were your first impressions of the fitness sector when you joined the Gym Group in April 2014?

In fact I first became involved in the sector before I joined the Gym Group. This was the middle of 2013, as a partner at Phoenix, who invested to acquire a majority stake in The Gym Group.

I was surprised by how 'small' the sector felt, as well as by the lack of diversity of experience, particularly among middle and senior management across the major players. However, I was drawn to the enthusiasm and willingness to think differently of the younger generation, particularly the guys at the coal-face.

What are your impressions of the sector now, on leaving it?

New investors have brought investment, not only in new infrastructure but also by drawing in new people from outside the sector. These people are bringing skills and thinking from other, more advanced customer product and service industries.

But there's still a long way to go: there still seems to be a lot of 'not invented here' syndrome, 'tried that' and 'it'll never work' and it's getting in the way of progress.

What have been the big changes in the fitness sector in the last few years?

The establishment of a scaled-up low-cost segment, as well as the after-shock of the 2008 recession, has forced people to think differently. Burning platforms and in-flows of new money always brings about change. Adapt or die, I guess.



Graham: 'The annihilation of the mid-market is all but complete'

The major change has been the annihilation of the mid-market. It's all but complete now, and that has to be a good thing since many of the assets were poor, the product tired and lacking relevance to the mass market it once owned.

We're also seeing material new investment in technology to deliver a digital component to the physical experience. In the long-run this is a good thing for the consumer, but the digital ecosystem is ostensibly chaotic and in the short-term there's questionable value to the customer from a lot of the early offerings. There are some interesting new niche products in play, but I'm not sure many will scale effectively.

Finally, the low-cost sector is growing up; it was the upstart and now enjoys incumbent status. That's both an opportunity and a threat for these operators.

There still seems to be a lot of 'not invented here' syndrome, 'tried that' and 'it'll never work' and it's getting in the way of progress



A focus on human behaviour is just as important as a focus on technology

What do you think the sector currently does well, and what does it need to do better?

I think the sector generally does a reasonable job at defining its offering, and at marketing that product simply to the mass market.

But there are two fronts where the sector can and must improve massively, and this is where the winners and losers will begin to be defined. The first is the quality of customer service, in its widest possible sense, which at a sector level is typically poor and far too inconsistent. The second is in truly understanding individual customer needs and wants and then exploiting that insight to tailor the experience differently.

What are the opportunities for the sector if it manages to do these things better?

Assuming that access to fitness facilities becomes ubiquitous (it's not yet, but the roll-out of the larger players will make that broadly true within a few years), then the upsides to the sector will be twofold. Firstly, there should be a material increase in market penetration – a rising tide that should float all boats. Second, the players that succeed in delivering more tailored, relevant and individual experiences will see increases in capacity utilisation, in tenure and in yield.

And what are the biggest challenges standing in the way of achieving this?

Delivering good and consistent customer service in this industry is hard, requiring serious investment in training and strong operational leadership. But any operators that fail to understand and focus on this are at risk of being left behind, as consumers' expectations are only rising.

The major barriers to developing the (digital) product experience are that we still need to get the right technology platforms in place, we need to generate high quality customer data, and we must develop an ability to derive actionable insight from it in near real-time.

You have an investor background – what's your take on the fitness sector in this context?

A lot of new capital has flowed into the sector over the last few years, much of it remaining unspent. Like many industries, this new capital has essentially funded an industry-level transformation: replacement of tired assets and investment in technology enablement.

Clearly this process is incomplete, but the wiser investors who back the winners will have secured – and will continue to secure – excellent returns on their investments.

Unfortunately, not all the capital has been deployed with equal care and wisdom, so for sure there will be losers too. Consolidation is inevitable, but the market will likely remain quite fragmented.

The Gym Group and BasicFit's apparently high price/earnings ratios have driven quite unrealistic price expectations in the minds of many shareholders of much smaller operations who are now looking to monetise. Many will be very disappointed.

What, for you, is the most exciting thing about the fitness sector at the moment?

I'm excited by the prospect of technology facilitating data-driven, personalised digital content to fundamentally improve the customer experience. The smarter players are investing in this, and I think goal-based and outcome-orientated propositions are close at hand. These will leverage the bricks-and-mortar assets through a variety of digital channels.

But to be successful, these investments need to be underpinned by real insight and not led by the technology or technologists. Focusing on human behavioural science and exercise physiology is at least as important as focusing on the technology platforms, and some of the early forays that I've seen in this domain are going to fail because they haven't really grasped this simple truth. ▶

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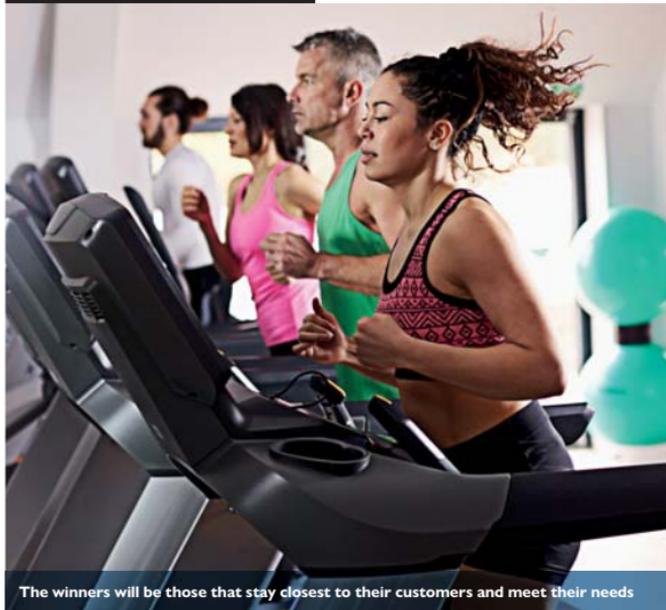
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The winners will be those that stay closest to their customers and meet their needs

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

► **And is there anything that frustrates you about the sector?**

I continue to be surprised by the lack of human interaction and business skills exhibited by quite a lot of personal trainers. Clearly this holds them back, but it ultimately holds back the sector and militates against the development of a true customer-centric philosophy. Enlightened self-interest often seems hard to find.

I'm also frustrated by the willingness of some operators to fuel the development of some of the more pernicious internet intermediary and aggregator business models by paying them as sales channels for short-term gain. While some of these businesses do genuinely add value to the end consumer – and so can, perhaps optimistically, be viewed as symbiotic – I'm afraid a number of them are essentially parasitic.

I guarantee that in years to come the strategy, marketing and commercial directors of operators will wish their predecessors had not breathed life into these businesses as they look at increasing CPAs and value being leached away.

What do you see happening across the fitness and physical activity sector going forward?

In the short to medium term, we'll see maturation of the low-cost sector which will follow a very similar trajectory (although possibly evolving more quickly) as did the low-cost airline and hotel markets. The winners will be those that remain focused on costs and on bringing enough sophistication

to their product and pricing model without creating unnecessary complexity.

Consolidation is inevitable in the UK and probably across Europe. There will be a shake-out of the smaller and less disciplined players and ill-advised property deals will cause some players to disappear rapidly.

In the longer term, I sincerely hope and believe that government will finally understand and believe in the public health benefits of exercise adherence, to the extent that policy formulation will move much more to prevention rather than cure. In that world, the sector stands to benefit not just from the removal of the ludicrous VAT levy, but also from the direction of commissioning funds to state-funded exercise for the vulnerable.

Who will be the winners and who will be the losers?

It's hard not to answer this without stating the blindingly obvious. The winners will be those that stay closest to their customers; that build scale; that stick to their knitting; and that invest in technology that boosts the probability of a customer firstly setting a realistic goal, and then establishing a repeatable pattern of exercise adherence.

The losers will be those that are one or more of the following: ill-disciplined in deploying their expansionary capital; prone to confusing their customers by addressing multiple segments simultaneously or putting unnecessary complexity in their way; and irrational in the pricing of their product. ●

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BOUNCE BESPOKE

The continued rise of the trampoline park means software providers are starting to provide bespoke solutions that cater to the nuances of this sector. **Josephine Timmins** reports

The UK's first dedicated trampoline park might only have opened two years ago – when Gravity Force opened a 27,000sq ft park in Camberley, Surrey – but trampoline parks are by no means a new phenomenon at a global level. In the US, there has been significant momentum behind this sector for over 10 years, and this has been mirrored around the world.

The International Association of Trampoline Parks (IATP) estimates indicate that by the end of 2015 there were over 550 indoor trampoline parks around the world.



The UK market is now experiencing rapid growth, with the number of parks having increased from six in England and Wales at the end of 2014, to nearly 100 in 2016. That means the sector is large enough to demand solutions that match the nuances of its operational requirements – not least in the area of software.

We talk to a selection of software providers and trampoline park operators to understand some of the new software features and functionality being brought out to support operational efficiency, customer experience and revenue generation in the booming trampoline sector.

DAVID STALKER CEO, Oxygen Freejumping



There are two major considerations that together define quite different software requirements for the trampoline park model: 'pay and play' and safety/authentication.

The 'pay and play' concept really underpins how the majority of our customers engage with us, and we aim to have most of those booking online. It's hugely important to make this process

easy and efficient, so having a seamless connection between our website and our CRM system is of real significance.

However, one of the risks associated with this lies in customer identification and indemnities. The system needs to be able to identify the individual, so that when they come into the park we're able to make sure they are indeed the right person; that they've signed the relevant disclaimers; and that they've been through the safety briefing. In addition, in the case of children, the system needs to enable a guardian or parent to authenticate and agree to the safety briefing.

The trampoline park model also means the software has to cope with a much greater volume of bookings, and help

operators to manage this workflow and customer density much more effectively.

Currently, there isn't really a system available that I feel is consistently and sufficiently reliable in terms of digitising and automating this process – from online booking to customer identification and authentication – so we often have to run a paper-based disclaimer system in parallel, which is crazy in today's world.

We need far greater sophistication in the system – within the CRM in particular – to ensure the highest levels of health and safety, while at the same time making the customer booking and check-in process efficient, and making it possible to target your marketing as efficiently as possible.

There isn't really a reliable system for digitising and automating the process, so we often have to run a paper-based disclaimer system in parallel – David Stalker



There are now almost 100 trampoline parks in England and Wales, up from just six in 2014

PHIL MOSS

General manager, BrightLime



It's incumbent on the software provider to understand how the trampoline park model differs, and to provide solutions that promote and

encourage customer self-administration. That means streamlined online pre-booking, with automated waiver

processes for multiple jumpers which are easily accessible, editable and meet legal parameters.

In addition, the software must support enhanced front-of-house processes with quick check-in, easily acquirable merchandise (i.e. trampolining socks) and rapid payment processing.

From a reporting perspective, the software needs to reflect the fact that the booker may not be the jumper. Can the software differentiate between the two and make this clear to anyone reading the reports? Operators also need to understand which sessions are

working and which aren't, when the difference between 10 per cent and 100 per cent attendance for one session can be as much as £1,000.

Finally, British Gymnastics, ROSPA and 11 other organisations urged trampoline parks to sign up to and abide by a set of safety rules in November 2016. Software providers therefore need to look at how they can support the essential role of facility maintenance through responsive solutions that can flag operational failure, highlight recurring issues and automate responses for calls to action.

SHEZ NAMOOYA

Business development manager, EZ-Runner



Trampoline parks have a very different relationship with the customer compared to more traditional health clubs. Whereas traditional clubs

typically have a one-to-one relationship, trampoline parks will – in the majority of cases – have a one-to-many relationship where people are trying to book families, friends and groups of people on to a single session.

The software needs to be able to cater for this essential booking requirement, while also coping with the fact that a typical trampoline park might get the same number of bookings in a day as a traditional health club might get in a month.

Moreover, the system has to manage significant peaks or spikes in this booking volume – evenings, weekends and holidays, for example.

The other main consideration is that we need to prevent queues at the front desk. We're currently looking at enabling barcode mobile sign-in to help address this challenge.

We're also adding core functionality around social media and gamification to encourage repeat bookings, drive customer loyalty and support our clients' moves towards more of a membership system. ●

One key consideration is to prevent queues at the front desk. We're looking at enabling barcode mobile sign-in to help address this

– Shez Namooya



STILL GOT IT!

Not all retirees are ready to wave goodbye to their trainers and say hello to daytime TV. In fact, in the latest Active People survey, the most significant rise in women participating in sport was among the 55–64 age group.

Kath Hudson looks at some inspiring programmes catering for seniors

JANEY ANDERSON

HEALTH DEVELOPMENT
OFFICER, CITADEL LEISURE
CENTRE, UK



Invigor8 is an Ayrshire-wide initiative, run in conjunction with the NHS as part of a falls prevention project.

Fourteen classes are run in South Ayrshire's leisure centres, churches and community halls – mobility and transport to and from the sessions can be a challenge, particularly in rural areas, so Invigor8 tries to take the programme to those who need it.

The sessions work to increase strength, endurance and balance, with the main

aim being to keep people independent and living at home for longer.

There's always a 30-minute break for a cuppa and a chat, which is really important when engaging with our participants: many of them are socially isolated and this time to get to know other people is as important as the physical activity, as they start to feel a sense of camaraderie in the group.

It's really important to have a well-trained, empathetic team who are approachable and good at listening. We also undertake assessments to show people how their balance and strength are improving, which encourages them to keep coming to the sessions.

Some of the more physically able participants go on to take part in other classes like Aquatrim.



The Invigor8 sessions work on balance and strength

Functional fitness MoTs will be rolled out into the community



STEPHANIE WADLOW

GP REFERRAL CO-ORDINATOR,
HAILSHAM LEISURE CENTRE, UK



Freedom Leisure has been proactive in reaching out to this demographic, and we now offer a number of services for older people.

Our programme includes aerobics, line dancing, curling, bowling, a strength and balance class that works on postural stability, pool-based classes and yoga. The most recent addition to the programme is a chair-based session for people who have had a stroke or have Parkinson's.

This year we'll be taking our functional fitness MoT out into the community, which tests aspects such as how steady people are on their feet, their reach and their grip strength.

Sport and leisure centres can be quite an alien environment for many older people, so fitness instructors need to have a lot of patience and good communication skills.

Signage needs to be clear and not too high, older users need to be given clear instructions at reception, and you need to have staff around to keep an eye on them – for example, helping them through the turnstile or carrying their drink for them in the café. Class times also need to be scheduled appropriately: not too early and not in the dark.



Social interaction is as beneficial for seniors as the exercise itself

CLIFF COLLINS

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES,
EUROPEACTIVE



EuropeActive ran a project, PAHA (promoting physical activity and health in ageing), which sought to establish if a six-week intervention of structured exercise, exercise counselling and behavioural change

support could be effective in increasing the physical activity levels of inactive 55- to 65-year-olds.

Run by instructors trained in active ageing and behavioural change, the programme comprised three exercise sessions a week – covering aerobic exercise, resistance training and stretching/mobility – and the intensity was increased over the period of the intervention. In addition, the PTs had individual counselling sessions with the participants.

From the 669 people who took part – all of whom were previously inactive – 89

per cent completed the full six weeks and 70 per cent were continuing to exercise three months after the trial. All reported an improvement in their health and fitness. The study demonstrates the importance of mentoring, guiding and motivating people to exercise in a planned way, with a sense of health improvement being key to continued exercise.

Based on the PAHA experience, EuropeActive published a Good Practice Guide in December, which is available as a download in English, French and German from the EuropeActive website.

BEN WILKINS

HEAD OF COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT, OOMPH, UK



Aimed at people in their 60s and above, Oomph started out five years ago as a care home intervention, but over the past 18 months it has reached beyond this setting into leisure centres, gyms, churches and libraries, as a paid-for class.

It's all about making exercise fun – like a party, with exercise being the side-effect. Sessions last between 20-60 minutes, with a mix of balance and

strengthening exercises, maybe some balloon volleyball and a quiz.

In care homes, the exercises are mostly seated. In the community, if people are more able, it's a mixture of seated and standing. We're moving towards more competition-based exercise, as research shows that the more interactive it is, the more engaged people are and the more inclined to change their behaviour.

We believe peer-led exercise is the secret to success and we train people in their 60s, 70s and even early 80s to run the classes – often as volunteers. Oomph offers a three-day course to become a trainer, including one day of pre-learning, or a two-day course for those already working in a care home setting or who have a qualification to work with older adults.

Research conducted by University College London, which assessed perceived wellbeing and ability to cope, showed that participants believed their quality of life had risen by 13 per cent since they started the programme.



Oomph believes peer-led exercise is the secret to success

▶ KRISTOFFER SJOBERG

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ACTIVAGE, SWEDEN



Many gyms run senior classes but are only reaching the active seniors. If you haven't been to the gym before, or if you have an injury, this can be intimidating. We wanted to create a gym that would be seen as a meeting place, where people could come for a coffee first before plucking up the courage to try a workout. The social aspect is very important for this demographic.

Every member gets an individual programme and their own PT, who they see six times over the first eight weeks. Our instructors are highly trained, with a great deal of expertise in working with older bodies – and not just at an entry level, as some of our members have ambitions to go cross-country skiing and run marathons, so they need advice on training appropriately.



Members work with functional equipment and their body weight

There's a maximum of 12 people in each class. We make sure every participant works at their own level, as it's important to always leave them with a positive feeling so they want to come back soon and make exercise a habit.

We don't really use many machines, as we want our participants to be able

to use their bodies just as they need to do in regular life.

Another important point to bear in mind when marketing to this demographic is that it's necessary to use methods like newspaper advertising and leaflet drops, as 40–50 per cent aren't actually on social media.

AMY FASTIER

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER,
STEADY STEPS, UK



Edinburgh Leisure's falls prevention programme, Steady Steps, offers structured classes with robust evidence-based exercises led by specialised instructors. All classes are tailored to the individual, so everyone works to their own ability. The sessions

focus on improving muscle strength, which in turn improves balance and subsequently confidence. The social element also plays a vital part, with time for tea and chat at the end of every class. We also deliver educational sessions about how to prevent falls, based on NHS guidelines.

It's important to create a welcoming, friendly environment, from the initial contact at reception through to a follow-up phone call to find out how the class went. We also carry out physical function tests before and after the 16-week course, so people can see

how they're improving.

There are 15 classes across Edinburgh each week, and participants are also encouraged to do two home-based sessions. In the last year, 526 participants were referred to the programme and 85 per cent reported increased confidence relating to balance as a result of the programme. Ninety-five per cent improved in at least one of the three physical function tests and 77 per cent have not experienced a fall since completing the programme.

ALFONSO MORENO

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ABE EUROPE, SPAIN



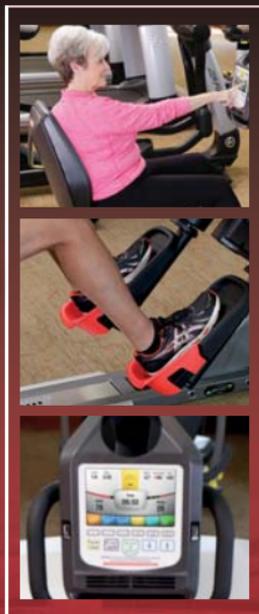
Suitable for all ages and health conditions, the ABE platform is an unstable round surface filled with air that reduces the impact on joints by dispersing air when you jump, allowing people to do an aerobics-style class without as much effort.

Participants do simple movements to the rhythm of the music, using equipment such as weights, elastic bands and maracas. Music is key to keeping the 45-minute classes fun, and fun is the main motivator to keep people coming. We run classes in a number of senior centres in Madrid, targeting the over-65s. About 200 people attend two classes a week.

We take measurements at the start and end of the year – weight, body measurements and composition, medication, illnesses – and we also make diet suggestions. Weight loss is between 3–10kgs, and we see an increase in muscle mass, fat reduction, higher force and agility rates, cholesterol reduction and great psychological improvements. ●



Incidence of falls has dropped dramatically among participants



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TRENDING NOW

Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson of ClubIntel summarise the key trends identified in the 2016 International Fitness Industry Trend Report

Predicting trends takes more than asking people's opinion. It requires digging down and understanding the behaviours of an industry over time by measuring the actual practices that take place, how those practices are adopted, and how those adoption rates change over time.

It's also important to understand the difference between a fad and a trend – indeed, this is critical to sustainable business profitability.

Fads are short-term phenomena that rise quickly, take the world by storm and just as quickly fade into obscurity. In business, they have been known to create mercurial success and protean failure.

Trends, on the other hand, are events that evolve into wider movements. The power of a trend can manifest itself in the attitudes, values and behaviours of its audience. Consequently it is trends, not fads, that industry leaders must focus on in order to map out strategies for their businesses.

The lifecycle of a trend begins with a period of emergence – a period when a trend first makes a noticeable presence. Emergence is followed by a growth stage: a period of rapid evolution and market adoption. Following the growth stage, maturity arrives, when a trend achieves a highly developed stage of life – growth takes a back seat to the trend's status as an important bellwether in its respective industry. Finally there's decline, when a trend typically loses ground or possibly even becomes extinct.



Selling memberships online offers a huge opportunity for growth

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Layered onto this, by looking not only at growth but also at adoption levels, we can also determine if it's a niche trend or a mainstream trend (see Figure 1).

TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS

So, what are some of the insights garnered from the 2016 *International Fitness Industry Trend Report* in terms of the trends currently being adopted by operators from across the fitness sector?

Technology within the health and fitness industry remains in its infancy, but over the past three years has demonstrated the greatest absolute growth of any trend category.

Only one area of technological innovation – social media – has this far been adopted by over 50 per cent of the industry. However, other tech-based practices – such as club-based

mobile apps, cloud-based registration and scheduling platforms, virtual group exercise classes and fitness wearables – all fall among industry practices that have shown the greatest relative growth over the past three years. These are all categorised as 'emerging' trends.

Our prediction is that these technology trends will continue to evolve over the next few years to the point where leveraging them will be a competitive necessity, not a point of differentiation.

Meanwhile, online pricing and online membership sales present a huge opportunity. In 2016, 40 per cent of respondents said their facilities showed their pricing / fees online, but only 28 per cent actually sold memberships online; growth in these trends remains slower than average, putting them into the 'niche' category at this stage.

While the growth in these practices over the past few years has been considerable (more than 100 per cent relative growth), they still fall well behind the percentage of consumers who make purchases online more generally. If the industry is going to remain relevant to

Cyclical shifts in adoption show how fleeting some trends may be. It's important to know when to go with them and when to let go



Bodyweight training is an example of a trend that reached maturity in 2016

tomorrow's consumers, it will need to adopt these practices more readily.

REACHING A PEAK

In 2016, we saw a migration of trends into either the 'mature' category or the 'niche' category. This means these trends experienced changes in adoption and growth percentages that indicated they had reached their peak, whether that meant being a trend the masses had adopted, or a trend that spoke to a niche audience.

Bootcamp-style classes, personal training and bodyweight resistance training are examples of programming trends that reached maturity in 2016 – their growth is slowing as they are adopted by the majority of operators.

Thus far, however – and in spite of excellent market visibility – programmes such as health/wellness coaching and online self-directed fitness training (i.e. services you can use online via a computer or mobile device, both at home and at a gym, using a virtual trainer rather

than a PT) appear to be heading towards a niche in terms of adoption levels by the industry, and therefore by consumers.

HERE TO STAY?

Another key point is that, when it comes to programming, services and training – the classes and other forms of training offered in health clubs around the globe – fads are more prevalent than true trends. Indeed, approximately 50 per cent of the themes emerging in this category are classified as niche trends (i.e. low adoption levels), while another 34 per cent are classified as either 'emerging' or 'growth' trends.

There has also been a decline in adoption levels for several forms of programming over the past three years – and in some instances over the past year. For example, over the past three years, dance-related classes, exotic dance-orientated classes and suspension training classes have all seen adoption levels decline versus three years earlier.

These cyclical shifts in adoption show how fleeting some trends may actually be. From an operator perspective, it's important to know when to go with them and when to let go.

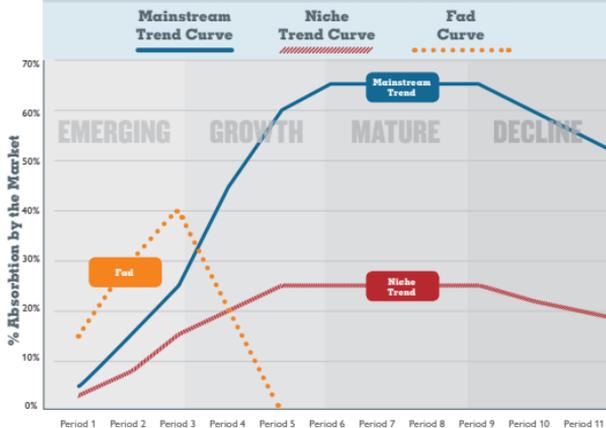
SPECIALIST OR GENERALIST?

The type of business you operate (boutique fitness studio, commercial fitness club, non-profit, etc) reflects considerably on the types of trends witnessed within the facility.

For example – and perhaps unsurprisingly – non-profits demonstrate higher adoption levels for socially-driven programmes, sports-related programmes and programmes that are targeting young people and seniors.

Interestingly though, commercial fitness clubs seem to be adopting a model that's trying to be everything to everybody: there appears to be no outstanding trend, but rather an across-the-board adoption of most trends. ●

FIGURE 1: LIFESTAGES OF TRENDS AND FADS



ABOUT THE REPORT

Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson are the co-founders of brand insights firm ClubIntel.



In the third quarter of 2016, ClubIntel and its partners facilitated the fitness industry's second behavioural trend study – the 2016 International Fitness Industry Trend Report. The study measured adoption and growth rates for over 90 fitness practices across multiple categories (programmes, services and training protocols, equipment, facilities and technology) and industry segments (region, size of business, business model, etc).



The full report can be obtained for free from: www.club-intel.com

TOP CLUB OPTS FOR GERFLOR

The prestigious Royal Automobile Club on London's Pall Mall chose a high performance Gerflor flooring solution to meet the needs of its popular gym spaces

The Royal Automobile Club was founded in 1897 with the primary purpose of promoting the motor car and its place in society.

Today, the Club is one of the foremost private members' clubs in the world with a diverse membership of 17,000 people, an extensive programme of events, two beautiful clubhouses, as well as first-class accommodation, dining, and sports and recreation facilities.

HIGH END LOOK

With a similar approach to quality and standards, the family-owned and run business Buxtons – which was founded in 1919, from a small shop in Brighton – provides high-quality flooring to a varied cross-section of commercial clients around the country.

This near centenary of excellence in high standards of service and quality has served the family firm well when providing the Royal Automobile Club with new sports flooring for their fitness centre.

Steve Knight, director of commercial flooring for Buxtons, commented: "We're an approved contractor for Gerflor and often become involved in many high-profile projects for the company.

"At the Royal Automobile Club in London they have a Technogym system



The Royal Automobile Club on Pall Mall has 17,000 members

in their fitness centre and the Gerflor relationship in terms of their Taraflex® products is a very good fit for this".

In consultation with Dan Wise, the gym manager at the Royal Automobile Club, around 70 sq m of Taraflex® Multi-Use 6.2 in wood and black colours from international flooring and interior specialists Gerflor was specified for a host of gym areas, including their 'stretch',

'rower' and 'functional' zones.

Taraflex® vinyl sports flooring has been used in many international and local sporting events and is available in 17 colours and three wood-effect designs.

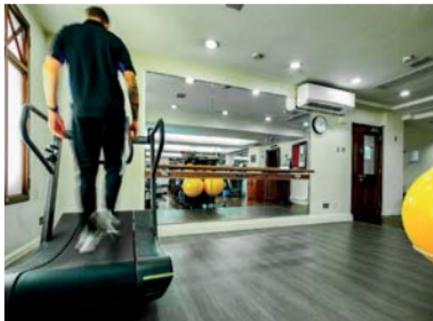
The Multi-Use 6.2 product offers a P1 category shock absorbency of 25-35 per cent and meets the EN 14904 Standard for indoor sports surfaces.

At the Royal Automobile Club in London they have a Technogym system in their fitness centre and the Gerflor relationship in terms of their Taraflex® products is a very good fit for this - Steve Knight, Director, Commercial Flooring, Buxtons





A Taraflex® solution in wood and black colours complements the private club's high end look



If the flooring is a mess and unpractical, then it affects all aspects of the member experience. The flooring needs to be the foundation to start the workout on

Dan Wise, Gym Manager, Royal Automobile Club



Taraflex® is recognised for providing durability, safety and comfort without impairing performance. The range offers backing than 45 per cent force reduction, making it unrivalled in the marketplace in terms of offering comfort for users. Taraflex® meets the EN Standard of 22196 for anti-bacterial activity (E. coli - S. aureus - MRSA) (3) returning >99 per cent levels of growth inhibition. The product is treated with ProtecSol®, which renders polish redundant and is triple action, meaning no polish is ever required, it contributes to easy maintenance and is anti-friction burn.

Taraflex® has a double density foam backing and as another bonus, it's environmentally-friendly. Gerflor offers several installation solutions for Taraflex®

including the Eco-Fit System which is a fast, free-floating installation which is versatile enough to be used in various multi-specialist applications.

SEAMLESS PROJECT

Wise says: "We needed something hard-wearing and durable but that also fitted in with the club's high design standards.

"If the flooring is a mess and unpractical, then it affects all aspects of the member experience. The flooring needs to be the foundation to start the workout on."

He added: "Buxttons Flooring were a great company to work with. They listened to our high demands in terms of timescale and workload. The whole thing from start to finish felt seamless. The finished product looks far better than I

could have ever imagined".

Knight concludes: "We've specified Gerflor flooring many times before. It's a lovely product to work with. Very easy to lay and extremely trouble-free. In fact, we specify it whenever we can".

To learn more about Gerflor solutions, or ask for a free sample, call or email to talk to a specialist, or pay a visit to see the latest in flooring innovations.



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GETTING THINGS DONE

In the first of a two-part series looking at the evolution of ukactive, Steven Ward, the organisation's executive director, looks at what's changed over recent years

You joined ukactive in 2006 as an intern and are now leading the organisation into 2017. How has the organisation changed in that time?

Beyond recognition. It's been gradual, and part of a long-term strategy, but we're now in a totally different world. We now have over 4,000 members and partners and are able to celebrate an attrition rate of less than 6 per cent, which shows we're doing something right in our mission to raise the value and importance of physical activity and the sector we serve.

All this means that we have a sustainable platform from which we can serve the sector, be an independent voice championing the activity cause and take our work to another level.

What does this look like on a practical level?

The best example is the evolution of the ukactive National Summit, which brings together the leading figures from physical activity, health and politics to look at the role our sector has to play in improving the health of our nation.

The 2016 Summit was without doubt the strongest event we've ever put together in terms of calibre of attendees, keynotes and strength of the breakout sessions, and this was reflected in a record attendance of over 600 people. To have the head of NHS England Simon Stevens – who presides over a £120bn budget and commands the largest workforce in Europe – stand before us all and say: "We won't have an NHS in the future without a fully-firing physical activity industry" shows how far we've come as a sector, and how we'll play an increasingly important role in health delivery.

You say ukactive is defined by collaboration and an emphasis on getting things done. Can you tell us more about that?

We will always collaborate with partners that share our mission and drive to make

Ward says the November Summit was ukactive's strongest event yet



positive things happen. However, our biggest drive is to accelerate progress in our sector and get things done. This is the ethos inherited from Dave Stalker and Fred Turok; without their efforts, none of the work we're doing today would be possible.

We've sought to continue with these principles: sometimes ruthlessly focusing on getting things done ruffles a few feathers, but it's essential in bringing about progress. Take CIMSPA and our decision to back it exclusively over SkillsActive. It was obvious to me, and to Tanni Grey-Thompson when she took over as ukactive chair, that we would get nowhere by sitting on the fence while two lame horses led the industry in circles on the topic of workforce development.

We had to put our backing where the major employers wanted it, and that was behind the sector's Chartered Institute, which held the potential to be one single body responsible for workforce development, from the gym floor and poolside to the boardroom.

It was a bold and risky decision, but without it CIMSPA wouldn't have

secured the backing of government and Sport England to invest in the resources needed to deliver the plan – and we're now starting to see positive results.

You mentioned working with Tanni Grey-Thompson. What does that partnership look like?

I hope members realise how lucky we are to have Tanni leading the charge for our sector. She's incredible. One of the most successful athletes we've ever seen in the UK – that tells you all you need to know about how determined she is when she sets her mind on something.

But the thing that most impresses me, and helps me the most in my role, is her judgement. Tanni is able to take the most complex challenges, weigh them up and then give the most valuable advice and guidance.

We're focused on continuously strengthening the identity and integrity of ukactive. Tanni personifies that. She helps build bridges with stakeholders that might have fallen into disrepair, and she gets the ukactive message heard by building trust and understanding.



Tracey Crouch MP takes part in a special parliamentary ParkLives

PHOTO: ANDY TYLER/PHOTOGRAPHY

We would have been laughed at five years ago had we come out and said we wanted £1bn to invest in transforming every leisure centre in the country – but with Tanni as the messenger, we're heard. We have at least a chance to have our case considered.

With the support of the team that she has around her on our main board, we have a chance to make a real impact in the years to come.

In terms of partnerships, ukactive has received criticism from some quarters for working with Coca-Cola GB. What do you say to those people?

We've always been very open about our desire to elevate the importance of physical activity, and we're willing to work with a range of partners across the public, private and third sectors to get more people, more active, more often.

With regards to Coca-Cola GB, our partnership focused on evaluating and rolling out the ParkLives programme across 10 core cities and 35 other local authorities through the ParkLives StreetGames, offering free activity sessions in parks to disadvantaged communities. This has



Tanni Grey-Thompson:
A powerful and positive force within the ukactive organisation

helped 180,000 people to lead more active, healthier lifestyles.

There's a significant role for the private sector and the world's largest brands to play in getting Britons moving again. The government has recognised the importance of this with its whole-hearted support of Argos sponsoring National Fitness Day, and Sport England's

new strategy also has a much greater focus on the role private companies can play in tackling physical inactivity.

Put simply, in an age of austerity, if we don't work with the private sector, then many vital activity initiatives will cease to exist. We simply won't get the injection of innovation we need to move the physical activity sector forward. ●

In an age of austerity, if we don't work with the private sector, then many vital activity initiatives will cease to exist





THE EVOLUTION OF SPANISH FITNESS

A new report provides robust data on the Spanish health and fitness market.

Kristen Walsh, associate publisher for IHRSA, reports

Published in September 2016 by Management Around Sports, in conjunction with the University of Alcalá de Madrid, *The Market Report on Spanish Health Clubs* is the most comprehensive survey and overview of the Spanish health club market available.

The new report – based on a survey of Spanish clubs completed in early to mid-2016, looking back on data for 2015 – contains information and analysis on the total number of health clubs in Spain, membership structures, pricing information, facility size, amenities offered, health club consumer demographics and much more.

KEY FINDINGS

According to the comprehensive report, Spain is home to 4,350 health clubs, with an average size of 3,859sq m including outdoor activity space. On average, each club has 3,037 members with an average age of 36.5 years.

Spanish health club members are slightly more likely to be female (50.6 per cent) than male (49.4 per cent), with an average monthly cancellation rate of health club membership coming in at 6.7 per cent.



Specialist boutique offerings are emerging strongly in Spain

The average monthly membership fee of health clubs in 2015 was €35.10 (plus VAT), while the average monthly income was valued at €42.15 per member including secondary spend (plus VAT) – a 10.4 per cent and 11.6 per cent increase respectively.

The results show that in 2015, health and fitness clubs in Spain increased their revenue from monthly membership fees

to €1,186,813, up by 3.8 per cent compared to the revenues in 2014. Total income per health club has grown by 3 per cent from 2014 to €1,405,112 in 2015.

In 2015 the average EBIT per club was €181,346 – a 6.18 per cent increase from 2014. The amortisation ratio, plus financing (leasing and rentals) over the total income, was 16.1 per



One growth sector is the personal training studio: facilities that offer one-to-one activities or small group training, with a strong focus on member results – *Maria Ángeles de Santiago*



In Spain, 50.6 per cent of all members are female



Smaller local gym chains such as Anytime Fitness are seeing growth

cent in 2015. This is similar to 2014, when the figure was 15.5 per cent.

In 2015, Spanish health clubs spent, on average, 37.7 per cent of income on personnel salaries, 9.9 per cent on supplies, 3.5 per cent on marketing and promotions, and 1.3 per cent on education and training.

EVOLVING MARKET

"The fitness and health club industry in Spain is undergoing a very interesting evolution," says Maria Ángeles de Santiago, CEO of Management Around Sports. "There are business models that are strongly consolidating in the market and others that are emerging as totally innovative."

So which business models are emerging strongly in Spain? "A number

of sectors are currently experiencing growth," she says. "Each of these has a specific competitive advantage.

"These include specialist clubs or boutiques: small facilities where members pay per visit. The greatest advantage is the unique experience they provide the user/member. They address specific objectives and the activity is in a group setting.

"Another growth sector is the personal training studio: facilities that offer one-to-one activities or small group training, with a strong focus on the members' results.

"Finally, neighbourhood gyms that are open longer hours – even 24/7 – with a slightly smaller footprint than the typical low-cost gym, and a small number of staff." ●

OBTAIN THE REPORT

The full 91-page report is available as a PDF download at www.ihrsa.org/research-reports – priced at US\$69.95 for IHRSA members,

or US\$139.95 for non-members. It will also be available on-site at IHRSA 2017 (ihrsa.org/convention), which takes place on 8–11 March in Los Angeles, California, US.

For any questions regarding the report, please contact store@ihrsa.org

The report's English language version was funded by IHRSA.



ABOUT IHRSA

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

Locate an IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

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



MEMORABLE JOURNEYS

Halo Leisure has been working with Legend software to transform its customer journeys, identify at-risk members and build stronger relationships with all customer segments

Halo Leisure manages 20 sports and leisure centres throughout Herefordshire, Shropshire and Bridgend County Borough. An existing user of Legend Club Management Systems' front of house, online bookings and reporting solutions, at the beginning of 2016 Halo decided that it wanted to be able to make greater use of the vast wealth of customer data at its fingertips. At its most strategic, the company's objective was to communicate in an intelligent, relevant and entertaining way with its customers in order to strengthen brand loyalty, increase retention and minimise attrition.

Cathy Fletcher, group sales and marketing manager, Halo Leisure, explains: "It's a competitive environment out there. Customers have greater choice than ever; there are more operators with attractive offerings, lower price points, and a wide variety of exercise options. It's therefore business critical that every interaction we have with customers adds value to their experience with us. We knew that we had an absolute goldmine of information about our customers within the business, but we weren't making effective use of it."

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

In February 2016, Halo Leisure launched the first of its new automated customer communications with the assistance of Legend Leisure Services. Together, the two organisations identified a range of customer journeys and developed the frequency, tone and content of the communications that would form those journeys.



Halo's online bookings are up by 15 per cent

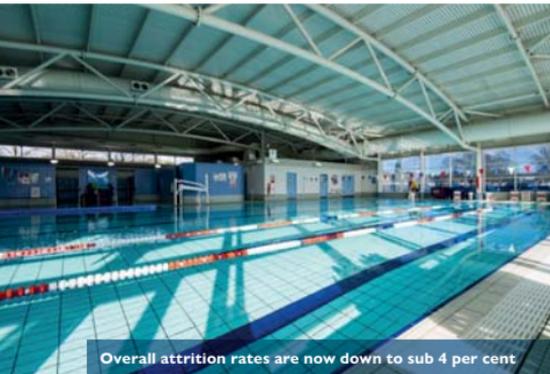
The objectives included:

- Improved customer retention
- Reduce the number of customers at risk of leaving
- Strengthen brand loyalty & reputation
- Upsell additional services
- Gather quality feedback from customers

The first to go live was Halo Leisure's 'New Customer Journey'. Designed to create instant engagement and reinforce the positive feeling that goes with joining, the New Customer Journey helps new members feel welcome; introduces them to the depth and breadth of services available; and familiarises them with their membership package and Halo's online member community. This helps to establish strong commitment between Halo and its customers and ultimately lengthens their stay and loyalty. The early stats are promising; New Customer Journey emails see open rates of up to 38 per cent.

Halo and Legend then introduced a 'Retention Journey', which incorporates timely and informative emails and text messages such as the success of a customer's first online class booking. Special offers, birthday messages, and newsletters with lifestyle information and seasonal recipes help maintain a high level of engagement.

Through these automated communications, customers are also driven online to Halo's content-rich website, with a full class timetable, online bookings and access to other self-service functions. Since the launch of the automated member journeys, visitors to the website have increased significantly, whilst online bookings have increased by an impressive 15 per cent.



Overall attrition rates are now down to sub 4 per cent



Halo and Legend also wanted to address two further customer segments: 'High Risk Customers' and 'Families'.

The 'High Risk Journey' is facilitated by the rich stream of data that comes from having Legend Leisure Services' customer journeys fully integrated with the Legend front-of-house and reporting systems.

"Using a clever set of algorithms built into the reporting, Legend is able to provide us with an alert when a customer's behaviour changes and they might be at risk," Cathy explains. "It may be that they have debt on their account, or they're not coming to the activity they usually attend. This will trigger a relevant interaction with motivational, encouraging and supportive content with the aim of getting the customer back in and engaging with us. It's been a hugely positive journey, with the data showing that of all customers opening the email, 10 per cent of high risk users end up reducing their score to low risk."

Finally, Halo Leisure actively works with families who attend its centres to promote long-term loyalty and upsell opportunities. By offering every family who has a child enrolled in one of its courses - from swimming to gymnastics and trampolining - a party voucher in the run up to the child's birthday, not only is Halo able to increase its ancillary services, but it also reinforces the value it places on customer focus and care to its users.

VALUE & FUTURE PLANNING

Although early in its marketing automation and customer journey adoption, Halo Leisure has recognised the value of this type of informed and insightful interaction. The customer experience is underpinned by Halo's



measurement of customer satisfaction through Listen360, a Net Promoter Score (NPS) solution built into Legend's service offering. Loyalty to the brand is measured by evaluating the propensity of customers to recommend the leisure centre to a friend or colleague. Not only does NPS provide real time feedback enabling immediate operational resolutions, it also provides a KPI comparison across sites.

Looking ahead, 2017 is set to bring further segmentation and analysis of the data for yet more personalised customer journeys as well as a 'Prospect and Lead Generation Journey'.

"Legend has become the glue that is underpinning the majority of our communications," Cathy concludes. "They really understand the customer process and the member journey, and their proposition gives more value for money and offers more functionality. Their advice and guidance, not just in the settling in stage, but ongoing, is outstanding. Our automated email and SMS messaging triggered at key points in the customer journey is the best it's ever been, which is central to our CRM and retention strategy."

"Indeed, as a result of this work, overall attrition rates are now down to sub 4 per cent across the business and we're starting to derive real value from the swathe of data that has sat within the business untapped for some time. The close collaboration between Halo and Legend ensures the streamlining and tailoring of information, critical to the ongoing success, and continued growth of our business."

“Using a clever set of algorithms built into the reporting, Legend is able to provide us with an alert when a customer’s behaviour changes and they might be at risk”



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PRODUCT INNOVATIONS

Industry suppliers tell *Health Club Management* about their latest health and fitness products and services

Natural materials are best for flexibility, says The White Studio's **Simon Lines**



The White Studio's Simon Lines

Yoga experts at The White Studio have developed a line of bespoke wooden yoga flexibility wheels.

The White Studio created the wheel to help increase flexibility of the user's middle and lower back, open the upper back and develop strength, balance and control, as well as perform deeper stretches and backbends. Because of its shape and sturdiness, the Flexibility Wheel can be used for both passive and active stretching, and as an aid for strength-focused exercises.

Managing director of The White Studio, Simon Lines, says: "The White Studio Flexibility Wheel was born from an unwillingness to accept second best. Historically, the only yoga wheels available in the UK and Europe were cheap plastic from China or very expensive wood from the US. We decided it was time to create something in natural materials, individually made

with love and care by a small team of real people, not just popped out by the hundreds from a machine.

"Our flexibility wheels will never replace the cheap plastic wheel, just as the bicycle will never replace the car. However, not unlike the bicycle, our wheels allow those who truly care to move that tiny bit closer to a more harmonious lifestyle."

The White Studio's flexibility wheel is a 33cm-diameter wheel with an ergonomically-friendly 14.5cm width to accommodate the individual's backbend and provide stability. The wheels are designed to be strong and light, and come with a written and dated warranty.

The White Studio also provides health clubs and individuals with tutorials, support and advice on how to use the wheel.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

THE WHITE STUDIO

The yoga wheels are made from all-natural materials, designed to be both strong and light





A 'split step' feature ensures three steps are always available during the workout



Steve Barton, MD of Technogym UK

Steve Barton on Technogym's new stair climber

The new EXCITE CLIMB stair climber from Technogym has been designed for space efficiency. The stair climber is 1.89 m tall and uses just one sq m of floor space, making it the most compact in its category.

Users can choose between different training programmes, including high intensity routines that are designed to shape the lower body, burn calories, increase muscle performance, strengthen the cardiovascular system and improve co-ordination and balance.

Newly developed 'split step' technology guarantees at least three steps are always available during exercise, which, along with the addition of lateral footrests, gives exercisers a much wider variety of workout options.

Like all products in the EXCITE line, EXCITE CLIMB is integrated with the mywellness cloud. All training data is automatically saved to the user's profile on the cloud and can be viewed from the UNITY 3.0 console or from any personal devices. UNITY 3.0 also provides virtual

landscapes where users can engage in a solo workout or link with a friend.

"EXCITE CLIMB is an innovation in the stair climbing world thanks to its split step technology and immersive virtual entertainment options," says Steve Barton, managing director of Technogym UK. "It complements the EXCITE range, giving operators a more extensive choice of cardiovascular equipment."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
TECHNOGYM

Creator Raj Sareen explains how Styku is changing body image



Sareen created the Styku scanner

Physicist turned tech entrepreneur Raj Sareen has created the Styku 3D Body Scanner, which aims to help clients achieve their weight loss goals by providing them with a powerful visual.

Unlike traditional methods of measuring body composition, Styku is quick, easy and non-invasive. Within 30 seconds, the 3D scanner takes a range of measurements,

and then creates a 3D image of the person. According to Sareen: "There's nothing more motivating than seeing the changes in your body reflected back as a real image. Styku is able to lay one scan on top of another to give a very accurate before and after image."

Styku is partnered with tech giant Microsoft, the makers of the Kinect – the world's most precise 3D camera. This ensures that measurements are accurate to within 2-3mm.

The system allows clients to set workout activity and calorie targets to reach their ideal body fat percentage. Shape analysis can be tracked over time; a person's statistics can be compared to other people of their age and gender; and health risks can be identified.

Sareen says Styku can help clubs with member acquisition, retention and sales revenues. "Clubs can use Styku to engage and motivate," he says. "Members are happy to invest in their transformation and see measured results."



The 3D body scanner is accurate to within 2-3mm

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
STYKU

Physical Company's **John Halls** reveals new use for NFC



John Halls, Physical Company MD

Physical Company has released its new PBX power bag, which comes embedded with an NFC tag. With multiple handles and a sturdy barrel, the bag – offered in a weight range of 5-35 kg – is designed for use in circuits and bootcamp-style sessions.

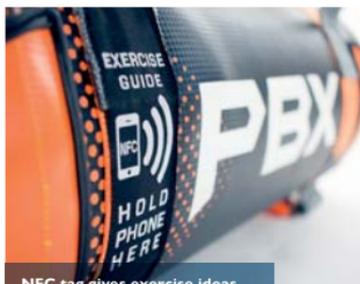
The power bag is a single piece of equipment that gym-goers and athletes can use to target a range of different muscle groups. But the true innovation lies in the Near Field Communication (NFC) tag embedded in the bag.

Near Field Communication is a method of wireless data transfer that detects and then enables tech devices in close proximity to communicate with each other. The PBX bag tags are loaded with exercises designed for the power bags. When the user holds their smartphone over the tag, the information uploads so they can see the recommended exercises.

"We strive to be at the forefront of cutting-edge and innovative fitness equipment," says John Halls, managing director of Physical Company.

"Usually this innovation is focused on the physical design, shape and materials of a given piece of kit.

"The PBX bag is a great design, but the addition of the NFC tag takes it to a whole



NFC tag gives exercise ideas

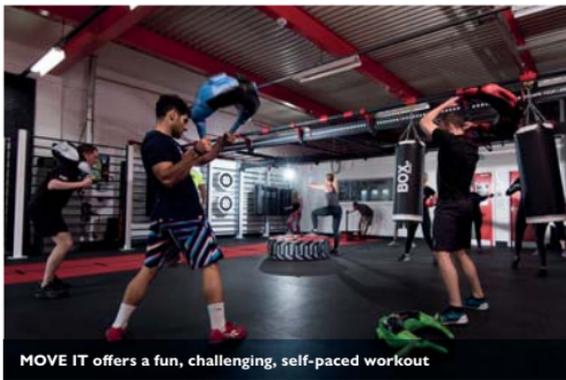
new level. Not only does it give the user plenty of new ideas, it also encourages interaction with the kit and a different experience on the gym floor!"

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
PHYSICAL COMPANY

Matthew Januszek on Escape's new functional training workout

Escape Fitness has launched MOVE IT, a functional, high-intensity interval training experience for fitness clubs and studios. The class allows clients of all abilities and fitness levels to train together on a full range of functional equipment – including hurdles, kettlebells, medicine balls and sandbags – progressing through a series of zones, increasing the intensity as they go along.

MOVE IT has been designed as a fun, challenging, self-paced workout that delivers results and, ultimately, improves member retention. There are two MOVE IT programmes in one: 30-minute and 45-minute workouts are included for



MOVE IT offers a fun, challenging, self-paced workout

programming flexibility and wider appeal. It's provided to clubs as an all-in-one package, including instructor training, programming, and operations and marketing support.

Matthew Januszek, co-founder of Escape Fitness says: "Our aim with MOVE IT was to enable clubs to equip their trainers with more functional training knowledge and skills, as well as workouts that many members will want to get involved in.

"The sessions are proving really popular – it's getting more people into functional training and they love the experience. That's great for clubs, as when people are both engaged and achieving results, they're more likely to keep coming back for more."

MOVE IT provides a multi-purpose functional training area that can also be used for one-to-one PT sessions.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
ESCAPE



Januszek is Escape's co-founder

DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

Precor launches the Experience™ Series EFX® 800 with Converging CrossRamp®

PRODUCT INNOVATORS

Throughout history, leading fitness equipment manufacturer and supplier Precor has been at the vanguard of fitness innovation. Having created the original elliptical category in 1995, Precor once again spearheads advancements in the sector, with the launch of the Experience™ Series EFX® 800 with Converging CrossRamp®.

The patented Converging CrossRamp® is designed to mimic a person's normal converging path of motion as they walk and run, making exercise feel more natural. Its unveiling follows three independent research studies, along with rigorous testing to optimise the design. Studies were also commissioned on diversity of motion paths and the impact on the body, such as how muscle activation patterns can change depending on the training angle. The ramp inclines from 10 to 35 degrees enabling even more workout variety.

Along with the Converging CrossRamp®, other premium attributes include a modernised design with a sleeker frame and the choice of either fixed or moveable handlebars. Plus a more personalised workout with the new P82 touch screen console, which features Android-based technology, faster processing speeds and embedded Wi-Fi.

BOOSTING EFFICIENCY FOR FITNESS FACILITIES

Enhanced serviceability is a key component of the new design, which is easier to clean and maintain. A covered ramp and rear-drive housing help protect the machine from dirt, dust and sweat; an attribute gym owners at the Anytime Fitness 2016 conference enthused about. The addition of the Active Status Light™ alerts staff when the machine needs attention. Pivot joints and tool-less detachable panels enable easier access that only requires a Phillips screwdriver or bare hands, drastically reducing the amount of time spent attending to maintenance.

Jim Birrell, Precor's chief innovation officer said: "When we created the category in 1995 with the original EFX®, there was nothing like it on the market. Operators loved the EFX® because it attracted new members and exercisers were drawn to it because it offered an unmatched fitness experience.

"The newest EFX® takes all the science and business insights that we've collected over the past two decades and incorporates them into this unrivalled, updated Precor version."

Greg Stephenson, fitness director at the University of Minnesota comments: "We love our current EFX® ellipticals and it's hard to believe Precor has improved on



Precor's patented technology makes exercise feel more natural

something that was already a well-designed machine, but they did."

For further information contact: www.precor.com

TRAINING CAPABILITIES

The Converging CrossRamp® can be used to train in a number of ways, from a forward direction with the ramp angle between 13-20 for maximum glute impact or by training in the reverse direction at high and low CrossRamp® levels to target quadriceps. Training backwards with the CrossRamp® at any resistance or angle will help increase heart rate as this is an unfamiliar movement.

Calves can be trained in a forward movement with the CrossRamp® level at 12 to 15, and at level 20, knee flexion is similar to running on a treadmill.

When training forwards the ramp is actively pushed down and when training backwards the ramp is actively pushed up. Train at a steady cadence and, as the CrossRamp® levels increase, so does heart rate and calorie consumption. Lower CrossRamp® levels can be used for recovery periods.

The low impact, fluid movement of the Experience™ Series EFX® 800 with Converging CrossRamp® contributes to exercisers' perceiving a lower rate of exertion, making the workout more enjoyable despite the training challenge.

Training backwards with the CrossRamp boosts heart rate



Lock it in

Kate Corney takes a look at the latest innovations in health club lockers. For more information, log onto www.fitness-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'



Crown colour matches lockers and benches

THE ICE LOCKER GROUP CRAFTS LOCKERS FOR ALL USES

Craftsman Lockers and Garran Lockers have joined to become the Ice Locker Group. The group offers a wide range from standard steel lockers to changing room solutions for 5-star venues and spas, including changing cubicles, vanity units and bench seating.

'Stow and Go' lockers of holdall size outside the changing rooms, alongside reception or adjacent to the activity areas are also available, as well as smaller valuables lockers designed to store mobile phones, tablets, wallets and keys with the option for charging units inside.

Ice Locker Group also offers customised solutions.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

CRAFTSMAN

CROWN SPORTS LOCKERS PROVIDES A LITTLE LUXURY

Crown Sports Lockers has helped create a luxury changing space for Malaysian operator Genting Casinos hotel spa at the NEC, Birmingham, UK. The changing rooms serve the dry and wet leisure provision for the hotel's Santal spa treatment rooms and gym.

Crown Sports Lockers worked with spa designers Spa Creators to create a relaxed yet clinical space. Crown supplied lockers and treatment room furniture, finished throughout in a colour-matched stain on solid ash timber and ash veneer.

Locker doors were solid shaker framed, with upholstered centre panel insert and wrist strap-operated Ojmar OTS locks.

Wet vanity units with Corian tops and spray-painted base frame units were supplied to the client's RAL colour specification, fitted alongside ample capacity towel units.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

CROWN

CODELOCKS GETS SMART

CodeLocks has designed a new range of smart locks that provides a variety of entry methods. The new CL5500 range uses wireless technology, letting users connect remotely and choose between push-button code, smart card or smartphone access.

The keyless entry reduces the need for onsite staff to manage access and the hassle of managing or replacing lost keys.

Self-service entry offers accessibility outside normal working hours, with all access recorded.

Building managers can control and operate CL5500 locks remotely via a smartphone, including updating basic settings and generating multiple, date- and time-sensitive codes.

The lock can also be set in code-free mode at fixed times of the day when access is required for cleaning, maintenance or deliveries.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

CODELOCKS



Smart card entry is just one of the options

KEMMLIT'S SAFE AND STYLISH LOCKERS AND CUBICLES

Kemmlit's Cronus Glass Cubicles and Type R lockers were used as part of a recent refurbishment of The Spa at Beckenham in Kent, UK, which is operated by Mytime Active.

Project architects Arkon Associates selected Kemmlit's Cronus cubicles in a white glass finish for the male and female shower rooms and Type R lockers in grey, blue and white for the changing rooms.

The Cronus cubicle system is designed to be used for either dry or wet areas. The panels are made from toughened safety glass with a satin anodised aluminium supporting structure.

The Type R Locker System uses corrosion-resistant aluminium finished in a special overlay to protect against damage.

Cronus and Type R Lockers are available in a variety of colours and finishes.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

KEMMLIT



Lockers in The Spa at Beckenham



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Electromagnetic appeal for Change

CHANGE gym in Hove, Sussex, uses eGym equipment to beat the competition

Facing stiff competition from a nearby low-cost competitor, CHANGE – formerly known as Active4Less – knew that radical action was required if it was to hold its place in the market. Instead of entering a price war, CHANGE invested in eGym equipment, enabling the facility to offer a unique workout which would appeal to a larger segment of the local population.

Based in Hove, Sussex, CHANGE identified several untapped local markets, including women and people who are deconditioned or who had never been inside a gym. During operation as Active4Less, the core membership was students and young people, but these were prime targets for the other low cost operator. The two neighbouring facilities were constantly battling to attract the same market segment.

AUTOMATIC ADJUSTMENTS

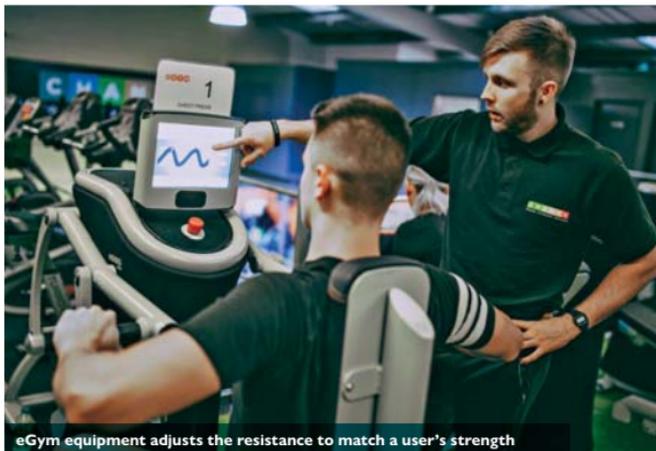
Gym owner Brandon Harris had been introduced to the eGym cloud-based solution and felt it would offer him the differentiation he was looking for. He invited the eGym team to work with him to increase the appeal of his offering and attract a larger number of new members.

Instead of using intimidating weight stacks to create resistance, the eGym system utilises an electromagnetic resistance system that is automatically calculated and adjusted through regular strength tests to match the fitness levels of the individual user.

The user does not need to manually adjust the equipment each time they visit, instead the system automatically adjusts based on the information pre-set by the trainer. This takes the uncertainty out of the process and enables the user to focus one hundred percent on the performance of optimal movement patterns.

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Harris says: "eGym supports us to coach every member. Instead of the user having to worry about how much weight to lift, what technique to use, how fast to



eGym equipment adjusts the resistance to match a user's strength

Our members are now tracking their development and are experiencing incredible results, quickly – Brandon Harris, CHANGE gym



perform each movement, eGym works all this out for them and guides them through their entire workout programme.

"Because of this controlled yet progressive method of training, our members are now tracking their development and are experiencing incredible results, quickly. This is extremely motivating for our members."

Since the installation of the eGym equipment in September 2016, CHANGE has delivered more than 1000 inductions. An average of over 570 users per month are undertaking 2,100 eGym

circuit sessions. With a mixed member demographic, simplicity and motivation are the core reasons members are signing up to begin eGym strength training sessions. The club has since seen a 30 per cent membership increase.

Harris adds: "The biggest benefit we are seeing is the increased number of users who have never lifted weights, especially women, taking to the equipment. We are also seeing improved member retention figures, which we expect will improve even further over the coming month." www.egym.co.uk

Taking the floor

Physical Company partners with Village Hotel Club to maximise Apex opportunity

Village Hotel Club is launching Physical Company's suite of eight Apex sessions across its 29 clubs. The 30-minute Apex sessions on the gym floor are designed to revitalise functional training zones, instill confidence in using gym equipment, build relationships between personal trainers and clients and continually boost members' fitness and motivation.

"We were looking for a way to bring fresh interest and engagement to our gym floor – the area least used by our members," explains Tracy Sollitt, national health and fitness manager at Village Hotel Club. "Our company excels at group fitness but we have a comparative shortfall in our gym floor workouts. We wanted to galvanise action on the gym floor and needed a structured plan and a high quality product to engage and interest our discerning customers."

Village was familiar with Physical Company, which had refurbished and kitted out many of its sites. When Tracy broached the topic of how best to maximise the gym floor space and functional kit use, Physical Company suggested Apex as a solution.

A COMPREHENSIVE OFFERING

Physical Company combines comprehensive training with support material including an online portal, development tools and programme suggestions, ongoing training and clear product information.

"The base training for 140 of our PTs was absolutely excellent and we are currently cascading it down to all our PT colleagues. I love the fact that the Apex sessions are updated on a quarterly basis to keep the challenge fresh."

Sollitt was initially concerned, as functional kit was traditionally not well used by members. A little research revealed the low usage was due to people not knowing what to do with the kit, rather than not wanting to use it. "Apex introduces equipment in a really accessible way and gives it personality by

Physical Company has kitted out many of Village Hotel Club's sites



Apex introduces members to kit they might not usually try



associating it with a great workout," says Sollitt. "Apex is a great bridge between gym and studio – the group session appeals to members who favour the studio classes and introduces them to the gym and its kit."

"On the flip side, our gym members enjoy the challenge of group exercise and are stepping up and joining our classes."

"Our slightly older demographic loves mind/body work so the new Fusion (pilates/yoga), Active and Release are perfect for them. Meanwhile, the HIIT sessions like Agility and Ignite work our younger members harder than ever before."

NEW KNOWLEDGE

Sollitt also rates Apex highly for upskilling the instructors. "Our PTs feel empowered by their new skills and Apex gives them

a captive audience of members who are encouraged to work more closely with them on a one-to-one basis," says Sollitt. "Extending their knowledge of key concepts such as myofascial release, pilates, yoga and alternative core work has given them greater confidence on the gym floor too. Physical Company has been really forthcoming and flexible in delivering bespoke elements for us and this attention to detail and willingness to adapt sets them apart," says Sollitt.

The admiration is reciprocated by Physical Company. "Village has embraced all the tactical elements offered by Apex and we are learning from them as much as they are from us," says John Halls, Physical Company managing director. www.physicalcompany.co.uk

Apex introduces equipment in a really accessible way and gives it personality by associating it with a great workout

– Tracy Sollitt, Village Hotel Club



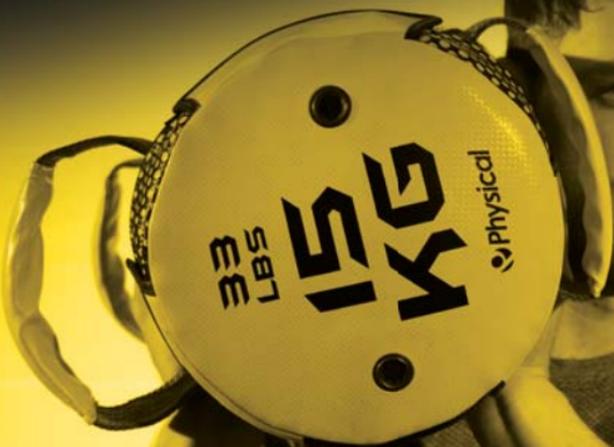
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Prebiotic foods like bananas could help exercisers who have asthma



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Gut reaction

Prebiotics and healthy eating 'can reduce severity of exercise-induced asthma'

More than five million people in the UK have asthma – 235 million worldwide – and exercise-induced asthma can affect up to 90 per cent of sufferers.

During or after a workout, people with asthma can experience a narrowing of the airways, bringing on unpleasant and sometimes fatal systems such as shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing and a tightening of the chest.

Until recently, the only treatment has been drug therapies that are effective but not curative. But now sports scientists at Nottingham Trent University (NTU), UK, have found that asthma exercisers may have a significant reduction in the inflammation of the airways if they take a prebiotic supplement.

PREBIOTIC SUPPLEMENT

The small study was based on 10 physically active adults who have asthma and eight other sufferers in a control group.

The 10 participants took a prebiotic supplement, Bimuno-galactooligosaccharide (B-GOS) for three weeks, while those in the control group took a placebo identical in taste

and texture. B-GOS, among with other prebiotics, feeds good bacteria in the gut so that it multiplies and takes over bad bacteria.

After the three weeks, everyone in the study took a hyperventilation test which causes a fall in lung function – an effect which is used to define exercise-induced asthma. Their blood was also taken to study circulating markers of inflammation in the airways.

The results of the study, which were published in the online edition of the *British Journal of Nutrition** in August, show that the severity of exercise-induced asthma was significantly reduced in those who took the B-GOS supplement. There was also a significant reduction in the blood markers of airway inflammation. In some cases the supplement "completely abolished" the increase in some markers usually associated with airway constriction following exercise.

WHAT THE RESULTS MEAN

Given the small study size, the limitations of the research are obvious and greater sample sizes would be a key requirement in the future. That said, the findings provide further evidence of the

important role that microbes living in the gut can play in health and disease.

Dr Neil Williams, a lecturer in exercise physiology and nutrition at NTU, and the lead researcher on the study, says: "Our study shows that this particular prebiotic could be used as a potential additional therapy for exercise-induced asthma.

"We're only just starting to understand the role the gut microbiome plays in health and disease, and it's becoming increasingly recognised that microbes in the gut can have a substantial influence on immune function and allergies, which is likely to be important in airway disease.

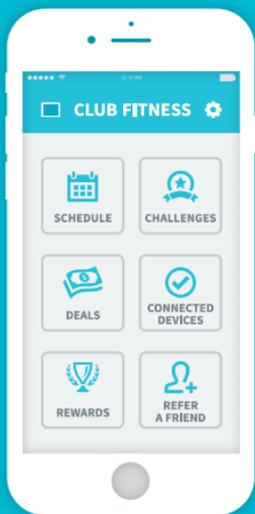
"B-GOS acts to increase the growth and activity of good bacteria in the gut. This in turn may reduce the inflammatory response of the airways in asthma patients to exercise. The level of improvement in lung function that appears after the prebiotic is perceivable by the patient and therefore potentially clinically relevant."

In response to the report, Asthma UK said that prebiotics can be found naturally in a range of foods such as bananas, yoghurts and even baked beans, which led to reports in the national media of how the latter could potentially prevent an asthma attack. ●

* Williams, N et al. A prebiotic galactooligosaccharide mixture reduces severity of hyperpnoea-induced bronchoconstriction and markers of airway inflammation. *British Journal of Nutrition*. August 2016

We're only just starting to understand the role the gut microbiome plays in health and disease

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