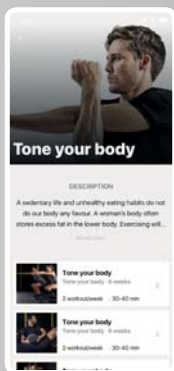


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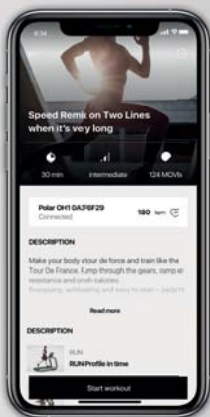
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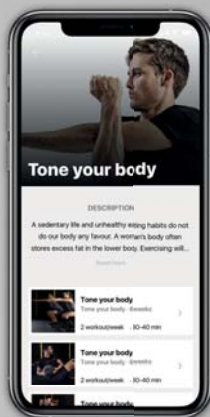
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Blackwell-Frost, Friend, Crawford

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Adapt to survive

Whether sheltered from the storm by government support or facing the full impact of the shutdown, all operators will ultimately have to reopen while COVID-19 is still active in the community. The question is how?

For operators who are currently closed, the dilemma is when to reopen. Regardless of circumstance, everyone is facing the same ultimate question: how to deal with controlling the transmission of COVID-19?

Logic dictates we will need to reopen gyms before a vaccine is created (and the vaccination programme completed) because we can't shut the economy down for the year or more it will take to get to this stage in the control of the pandemic.

So we must prepare to reopen while the virus is still active – regardless of whether gyms are the first or last to do so.

In terms of timing, there'll be an optimum, and operators who get this right will have an advantage. The challenge is to figure out what this looks like for the customer; what it looks like operationally, and how it works in terms of costs and margins to ensure the financials are sustainable.

The pandemic has exposed weaknesses in the health club business model and shown more diversified income streams are vital, so build this into your relaunch plan as much as you can.

Reopening needs to be tackled as though you're launching a new business, with the same inspiration, energy, process and reference to expertise it takes to launch anything successful.

How will we adapt our health clubs to still deliver meaningful and valued experiences, while avoiding issues with transmission?

There won't be one answer. We'll need to adjust operating procedures, re-train staff, invest in tech and start testing staff and customers as soon as we can, to keep the gym as a safe space.

Maybe we'll offer bookable one-hour slots with PT support while carrying out anti-viral fogging between sessions? This would spread usage through the day and would be more doable with people working from home and having control over their time.

Maybe we'll invest in UV robots, anti-viral air filters and social distancing software to ensure density is controlled?

Maybe we'll insist both members and staff wear masks, close certain areas of the gym or move some operations outside?

There will also be new liabilities and our insurance policies, employment, and customer contracts will need to be revised.

It's clear operators who come forward with a model that's safe and can convince consumers of this, while still delivering a good experience, will have a huge commercial advantage.

Once your COVID-19-compliant offering has been nailed down it must be market-tested with customers – you have to



PHOTO: LES MILLS

Take members outside to exercise in the fresh air

“ Operators who come forward with a model that's safe and can convince consumers of this will have a huge commercial advantage ”

know how many will come back for what you're offering before you reopen. Research will be mission-critical at this point and it may take a series of iterations to find the right combination.

Now is also the time to recalibrate your relationship with your customers. They don't have to be passive in the face of this crisis but can be part of the solution if you allow them to be.

Many have stepped up and volunteered during the shutdown and will be open to your approaches, so ask them to help and be more responsible for their actions. This will strengthen your community – something people have missed over the last few months – and could be a deciding factor in terms of success.

Liz Terry, editor
lizterry@leisuremedia.com
@elizterry

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Uniting the world of fitness

APRIL 2020 No 278



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MEET THE TEAM



EDITOR
Liz Terry

+44 (0)1462 431385



PUBLISHER
Jan Williams

+44 (0)1462 471909



MANAGING EDITOR
Steph Eaves

+44 (0)1462 471934



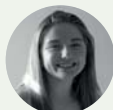
HEAD OF NEWS
Tom Walker

+44 (0)1462 431385



PRODUCT EDITOR
Lauren Heath-Jones

+44 (0)1462 471927



JOURNALIST
Megan Whitby

+44 (0)1462 471906

For email use: fullname@leisuremedia.com

DESIGN

Paul McLaughlin

+44 (0)1462 471933

CIRCULATION

Michael Emmerson

+44 (0)1462 471932

SUBSCRIPTIONS

+44 (0)1462 471910

FINANCE

+44 (0)1462 471930

CUSTOMER SERVICES

+44 (0)1462 471901

CREDIT CONTROL

+44 (0)1462 733477



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Rising to the challenge

Guy Griffiths, GGFit

The fitness industry is in a state of shock due to COVID-19. But we're resourceful and resilient and will fight to stay in business.

You need a plan, and it needs to be flexible, to adapt as the situation changes.

The good news? There's more talk of fitness, health and activity than ever before. Even the government is encouraging everyone to exercise once a day. Online workouts flood social streams.

For operators, member retention is more important than ever before and the number on every operator's mind is member count.

Some cancellation rates are already at 30 per cent, regardless of whether or not membership fees are suspended. Many independent operators collected April dues because members wanted to pay or there was a strong online product available, but this may change going forward, as some members tighten their belts.

ENGAGEMENT IS VITAL

Communication is key to minimising cancellations. Not everyone will have opened or read your last email campaign. Keep in touch with all members using multiple channels – depending on your resources, systems and member demographic. Always follow up your messages.

Measure engagement – email open rates, call outcomes, online class attendance, challenge completions – and monitor cancellation attempts. Adjust your activity according to what works for members.



Call every member who cancels and show them that you care

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/FIXES



Guy Griffiths

Call everyone who cancels and find out how you can help them. Ask what they need. Show you care. It might be the first time you've called them, but it's better than never calling.

One cancelled member who was called by a gym manager recently was so grateful, as they were self isolating and it was the first conversation they'd had for a week.

This level of care could motivate them to re-join in the future, or even reinstate their Direct Debit now, but that is not the objective of the call.

“Member retention is more important than ever before and the number on every operator's mind is member count”

Decide how far you're prepared to go to keep a member on board and be consistent. Adding value to a package to keep a member is better than offering a discount, but a lower membership fee is better than no membership fee. Find your optimum.

DIGITAL EVOLUTION

Digital fitness is a big way forward and the current situation is accelerating this exciting new trend. We must succeed or fail fast, learn and evolve when it comes to digital.

Tell everyone about your digital offering. What it's worth and how they can access it.

More people want fitness solutions; not all want to visit a club and some will stick with digital going forward.

Clubs will still be needed, while digital offerings will support and add value – extending the reach of gym memberships beyond the current c15 per cent.

Retention of the digital member can be even tougher because it's easier to switch off a TV than a live instructor, as Joe Vicks found. His PE class 'attendance' declined from 6.4 million viewers in week one to 1 million in week three.

The drop-off shows the importance of accountability, gamification and nudges for engagement.

Some digital members will develop into full members; but this will not be the journey for all. Retaining the rest, rather than converting them, will be the new challenge. ●



Zhen Yan set out to show the physiological impact of exercise on COVID-19 outcomes

DAN ADDISON | LVA COMMUNICATIONS



Regular exercise may help people survive COVID-19

PROFESSOR ZHEN YAN

DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR SKELETAL MUSCLE RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Approximately 80 per cent of confirmed COVID-19 patients have mild symptoms, make a good recovery and don't need respiratory support, while others become extremely unwell and need life support. Professor Zhen Yan at the University of Virginia set out to find out why outcomes are so mixed.

Yan found regular exercise may reduce the risk of complications in people with COVID-19, as well as offering

the potential for alternative treatment approaches going forward.

He studied an antioxidant called extracellular superoxide dismutase (EcSOD) that's released by the muscles and into the bloodstream during exercise.

His work "strongly supports" the possibility that higher levels of EcSOD in the body can prevent or at least reduce the severity of acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) – one of the worst outcomes of the COVID-19 virus.

EcSOD does this by hunting down free radicals, binding to organs and protecting tissues from attack by the virus.

"Our findings strongly support that enhanced EcSOD expression from skeletal muscle...which can be redistributed to lung tissue, could be a viable preventative and therapeutic measure in reducing the risk and severity of ARDS in COVID-19 patients," he said.

Research suggests that even a single session of exercise increases the

**Strength training grows muscle mass,
increasing the potential for secreting EcSOD**

production of the antioxidant, prompting Yan to urge people to find ways to exercise, even while maintaining social distancing.

Cardiovascular exercise is thought to drive the highest immediate levels of EcSOD production, however, strength training increases muscle mass, meaning it also plays a part in the equation.

Between three and 17 per cent of people with COVID-19 patients will develop ARDS – this percentage goes up once people are hospitalised to between

20 and 42 per cent, as the more extreme cases succumb to the virus.

"We often say that exercise is medicine. This insight into the role of EcSOD in the body is a perfect example of how we can learn from the biological process of exercise to advance medicine," Yan said.

"While we strive to learn more about the mysteries of the superb benefits of regular exercise, we don't have to wait until we know everything before starting to take advantage of this benefit."

Yan said EcSOD may also prevent multi-organ dysfunction syndrome – in which multiple organs begin to fail.

The antioxidant is also being proposed as a potential therapy for diabetic retinopathy, a complication of diabetes that can lead to blindness.

Low levels of EcSOD are seen in heart disease, kidney failure and osteoarthritis.

Find out more:
www.faculty.virginia.edu/yanlab



Dr Jonathan Leary (left) with
Remedy Place's COO Rhyce Lein

Leary aimed to make the club warm, cosy and comfortable

PHOTO: MADRINE TOLLE @ MADRINEAN.ON

Remedy Place teaches people how to take care of themselves and gives them the tools they need to be holistically healthy

DR JONATHAN LEARY

REMEDY PLACE, WEST HOLLYWOOD: FOUNDER AND CEO

Remedy Place is hailed as the world's first social wellness club? How do you define a social wellness club?

It's a place that helps both health and social life, providing healthy substitutions for social occasions like happy hour, Sunday brunch or a girls' night out.

It's a place to socialise which is both temptation- and toxin-free, because I've witnessed in my private practise that the healthier you become the harder it can be to socialise with friends and family.

People's lives are getting more and more stressful and we can't eliminate the stress so we need to find healthy ways to counteract it. Remedy Place teaches people how to take care of themselves and gives them the tools they need to be holistically healthy.

And are people making these healthy substitutions?

Absolutely! We're starting to see people coming here for their birthday. Instead of going out to a restaurant for a steak and bottle of wine, they come here for meditation or an ice bath.

Before we opened there was some talk about whether people could afford it, but if you look at how much average Americans will spend on going out drinking, it's just a re-education to persuade them to invest in their health instead. Rather than spend \$20 on a cocktail which will destroy your health, why not invest \$12 in a juice which will help to build it up?

Also, many people are starting to question traditional healthcare – they don't want drugs, or surgery,

they're looking for natural ways to enhance their health. Alternative healing is trending so much now.

People like coming here because they know the staff care about them and truly want to help them feel better. Lots of people are lost and don't know what works, but here we can give them a plan and a solution. Everything we have on offer I have personally used on patients and seen excellent results.

Where did the inspiration for Remedy Place come from?

This was my original business idea and my big dream when I left school, but at that point I wasn't in the position to get funding and pursue it, so I went into private practice for five years and used this as a way of getting clinical

Meditation is a big part of the Remedy Place offering

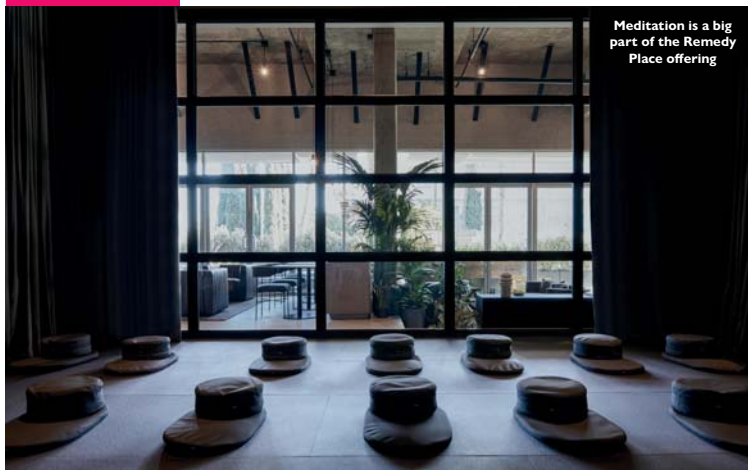


PHOTO MADELINE TOLLE @J.MADELINEJAN ON

- evidence and market research. I saw what actually worked in practice and kept adding things to the business plan.

What did you want to achieve with the design/décor?

I wanted to make a warm, cosy comfortable space – the exact opposite of a health clinic, which is intimidating and stressful. As we're asking people to make healthy substitutions for the things they're already doing, we needed to emulate the bars, lounges and hotel lobbies where they hung out.

Who are your members?

Although anyone can come on a pay-as-you-go basis, our membership is being limited to 200 and we want only people who will bring the right energy and belief in our philosophy. Membership ranges from 19-year-old YouTubers to CEOs in their 60s, along with actors, actresses, athletes and singers.

What do they get for their membership?

Everyone who comes in gets a protocol based on how they present that day, however, with members it's more bespoke.

They get unlimited use of the cryochamber, unlimited classes – breathwork, meditation, stretch, sound bath and educational classes – one multi-nutrient drip a month, one ice bath and infrared sauna combo and

REMEDY PLACE

THE PROGRAMME

This is based on bringing the body back into homeostasis via the seven elements of balance:

- **Mind:** meditation, a sound bath or breathwork to clear the mind
- **Oxygen:** speed up healing in the hyperbaric chamber
- **Movement:** improve mobility and flexibility with a stretch class
- **Nutrients:** nutritious food and drinks are on offer, as well as IV vitamins
- **Cold:** ice baths and the cryo chamber are used to reduce inflammation, boost endorphins and improve circulation
- **Heat:** used in conjunction with cold, the infrared sauna boosts health
- **Compression:** lymphatic drainage massage flushes out the system

THE FOUNDER

Dr Jonathan Leary has a BS in kinesiology and a doctorate in chiropractic medicine. He runs a concierge wellness private practice in Los Angeles, that serves professional and Olympic athletes

WHAT'S THE COST?

- Membership US\$495 a month, or US\$395 for a founding membership
- Classes for non-members start at US\$30

Members can simply relax in the private lounge



The club provides a place to socialise healthily

Time spent in the hyperbaric chambers can speed up the body's healing process



As we become profitable, we plan to start funding research into alternative therapies, because no one is doing this and there's a need for it to happen

either a lymphatic drainage massage or an oxygen treatment, as well as 15 per cent off everything else.

They also receive a quarterly consultation with a health coach to discuss their progress.

What results are you seeing in your members?

Everyone feels better. People have more mental clarity and aches and pains are gradually disappearing. They feel more balanced and relaxed and as though they can optimise their performance.

What are your future plans?

To expand to every major city, starting in the US and then around the world. We're already looking at a couple of locations and will have two more clubs in LA, before moving into major cities like New York, London, Miami, Austin, Portland and Chicago.

As we become profitable, we plan to start funding research into alternative therapies because no one is doing this and there's a need for it to happen.

Big pharma will fund drug research, but they won't fund research into meditation or acupuncture, even though it works.

How will you fund the expansion?

We're in the middle of raising funds for our second location in LA, and from then on we should be able to use profits to begin funding our further expansion.

There will be two more sites this year, but as the years go on we'll be able to handle opening more. We're getting pitched to all the time – developers, retail developments, hotels, real estate companies are all reaching out to us.

Will we see more healthy alternatives to clubs and bars?

Yes, it's the next big thing. Alcohol sales

are going down as people are realising that toxins are not good for you.

How are you coping with the coronavirus?

Although the club is physically closed at the moment, the team has been working hard behind the scenes to continue looking after our customers.

Members have had direct contact with their designated recovery specialist and have been able to use this time to ask any questions or for advice.

We've continued to have most of our classes running on Instagram Live, as well as streaming live Q&A sessions with the head of naturopathic medicine, the head of movement, and CEO, Alyssa Bleakley.

Education is key and that's why we've been doing everything in our power to be a reliable, dependent source through this crazy time, to provide support, facts, motivation and classes. ●



Michael Ramsay
launched
STRONG in 2019

There's something about the combination of fast-twitch and slow-twitch fibres working together that absolutely destroys you and gives you an almost euphoric feeling at the end of every workout

MICHAEL RAMSAY

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, STRONG ROWFORMER

What were you doing before launching STRONG?

In my early years, I worked as a marketing manager in the oil and gas industry, but I was also a personal trainer. I did some marketing consultancy on the side, and I helped run a nightclub on the weekends. I kept myself super busy!

At the age of 26 I discovered F45 through my business partner, Mark, and spent the next four years rolling out six F45 studios and a yoga studio, and founding Journey Retreats.

Our studios won some big awards and were the busiest in the world for a few years. But as much as we loved F45, it was never our own concept, so Mark and I decided to sell all of our studios and re-invest in our own franchise concept, which is now known as STRONG.

Tell us about it!

Pilates inspired, cardio infused, STRONG is a part reformer, part rowing, full body workout that's high-intensity and low impact. I'm confident to say there's no other pilates-inspired concept in Australia that burns anywhere near as many calories as STRONG.

Every STRONG studio consists of 15 Rowformer beds all lined up with the rower/cardio side facing a half-length mirror, and the reformer/strength side facing a full length mirror.

The beds are part reformer and part rower. The rower is a Concept 2 – the market leaders in their field. The whole thing is 4.1m in length and is a pretty amazing piece of machinery!

There's something about the combination of fast-twitch and slow-

twitch fibres working together that absolutely destroys you and gives you an almost euphoric feeling at the end of every single workout.

What's it like inside a studio?

We've spent a lot of time on the customer experience – STRONG studios will all smell the same as we've customised our scent to ensure clients feel energised when they walk in the door. We play a lot of Jay Z so we included Cognac in our scent!

When the class is rowing we blast deep house beats and the lights come right down, creating more of a nightclub feel. When you're on the reformer side of the machine you're more likely to hear RnB anthems, with the tempo of the workout becoming much slower,



STRONG classes take place on a 'rowformer' machine – part reformer bed, part rowing machine

focusing on time under tension for those pilates inspired movements.

Every studio has beautiful bathrooms with phone chargers in the lockers. We steer away from any single-use plastics and encourage all members to bring drink bottles, towels and grip socks.

Where did this idea come from?

An old housemate of mine found the Rowformer on Instagram and she made contact and then introduced me to Ernie Reinhardt, the creator of the Rowformer. Ernie holds the patents for the Rowformer and uses them in his studio, Hardtfit, in California.

We jumped on a plane to LA and visited the studio in Newport Beach. I tried a class and can legitimately say it was one of the toughest workouts I'd



- ever done! At that time I was rehabbing a broken ankle and couldn't do any impact training. I instantly fell in love with the low-impact, high-intensity workout.

How did you take this product and turn it into your own offering?

Myself and business partner Mark negotiated a supply agreement with Ernie. We now hold exclusive rights to the Rowformer machine in Australia, New Zealand and Asia, as well as holding exclusive rights to repurpose the Hardtfit method on the Rowformer machine in these territories.

Although Ernie has done a great job with the machine, we felt we needed full control to build out a franchise model that would suit the Australasian market.

Do you run different classes on the rowformers?

We currently run five different classes: STRONG Burn, STRONG Body, STRONG Resistance, STRONG Core and STRONG Form. After every 13 weeks we bring in new classes, with new moves and sometimes new accessory equipment. Most recently, we've brought in heart rate technology with two display screens and a client portal, so our STRONG humans can track their progress effectively.

Why are rowing and pilates a perfect combination?

In its own right pilates provides clients with increased flexibility and mobility through the joints, as well as a massive improvement in core strength and increased muscular endurance and overall strength.

Meanwhile rowing also has little to no impact on the joints, making it perfect for HIIT training. It gives a full-body workout, as it uses 85 per cent of the muscles in the entire body.

You simply cannot get a combination that provides you with a more intense, calorie burning and muscular strengthening workout with absolutely no impact on the joints.

Who comes to do a STRONG class?

Our key audience is not gender related, in fact we love to promote ourselves as being 100 per cent gender neutral. The reformer market has traditionally been predominantly female and we aim to change that at STRONG.



The classes are high intensity but low impact on joints



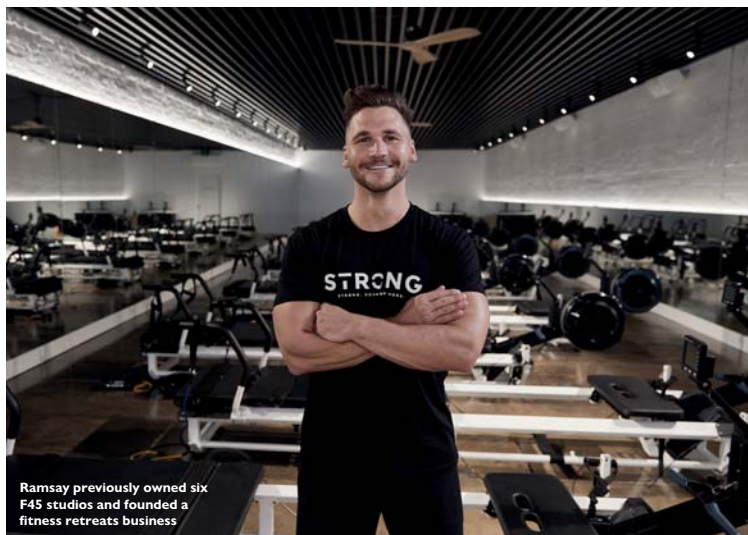
Our key clients are people who want more out of their workout. People who may have done pilates or reformer in the past, and feel like they need more. Qualitative data tells us many consumers feel like they need to go for a run or do an extra workout on top of their standard reformer session. With the rower we can service those needs and give the client an additional calorie burn.

We also aim for clients who want to be challenged, but don't want the risk of high-impact training. We get a lot of

ex-professional athletes who train at the studio, who still really want to be pushed but aren't physically capable of impact training due to injuries and overuse.

What kind of feedback have you had from customers?

The client feedback has been incredible. The community that our STRONG studios are building is something really special. It includes men, women, professional athletes, people new to fitness and people who have cancelled all of their previous



Ramsay previously owned six F45 studios and founded a fitness retreats business

gym memberships and have committed to training solely at STRONG. Our clients are time poor and need a place where they can train smarter.

The feedback has been consistently positive. The trainers are tough, the workout is tough but it's all worth it for how good you feel afterwards.

How are you coping with the COVID-19 situation?

We've tried minimising all expenses and have been fortunate with the assistance from the Australian Government.

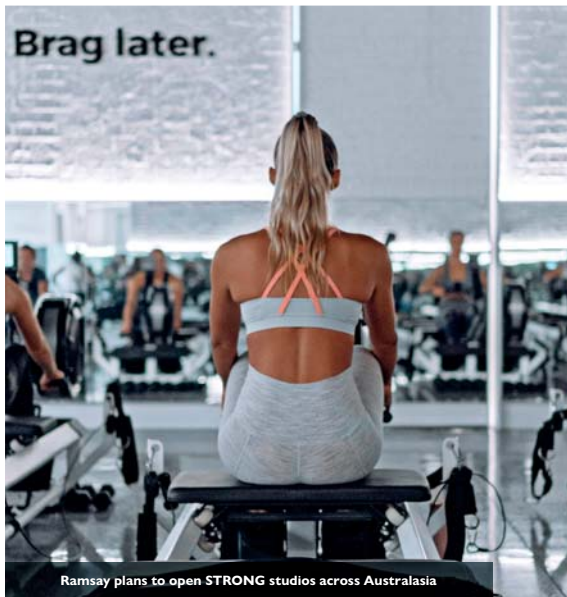
Upon closure, the first thing we did was source as many rowing machines as we could and we dropped them at our members houses with programming guides. This is a complimentary service to our members as we hope to hold on to them once we're able to re-open.

Throughout this time we're working on our systems, innovation and technology and hope to re-open as a more refined service offering.

What are your plans for STRONG?

Once things get back to normal, we're hoping we'll be able to open more STRONG studios in the near future.

Longer-term we have Australia, New Zealand and Asia in our sights. Once we've refined our processes and are 100 per cent happy, we'll start looking at some serious expansion investment. ●



Ramsay plans to open STRONG studios across Australasia

IHRSA gets gyms at the front of the queue for reopening

Good news for the US gym sector, as clubs are put at the front of the queue for reopening.

During a recent press conference, Donald Trump and the White House coronavirus task force recognised that health clubs are "vital to Americans" and as a result, they've been included in phase 1 of reopening with Georgia opening in late April.

Lobbying from industry body IHRSA contributed

to the outcome and were spearheaded by president and CEO, Joe Moore, and Newtown Athletic Club Owner, Jim Worthington.

Criteria for triggering phase 1 include the downward trajectory of COVID-19 cases reported within a 14-day period and hospitals being able to treat all cases without crisis care.

Moore says IHRSA has sent a letter of thanks to Donald Trump for recognising the importance of fitness, saying: "At a time when the health of the nation is under attack by the coronavirus, the health of all citizens is integral to the economic and social health of the country. We're grateful to President



The White House has recognised the importance of fitness

Trump and this administration for recognising that the cornerstone of health is a physically active population.

"Health clubs, their staff, and their suppliers are vital to our nation's current and long-term health," he said.

"IHRSA is working with global public health organisations to create guidelines for safe operations and that these will be shared openly to support the global industry."

More: http://lei.sr/C7G2S_H



Health clubs and their staff are vital to our nation's current and future health

Joe Moore, IHRSA

After the pandemic: what will the European fitness sector look like?

Club closures, a squeeze on consumer spending and facilitating social distancing within a gym environment are just some of the issues European fitness operators are likely to face once the COVID-19 restrictions begin to lift.

In an article published on 20 April, industry veteran and EuropeActive board member Herman Rutgers outlined the new landscape that awaits the sector, once businesses are allowed to reopen their doors.

"The future of our sector will not be black or white," Rutgers writes. "Rather, the tones of grey it will depend in which country you are and in what kind of segment of our



Gym environments could look very different post-pandemic

sector you operate in. One thing is for sure; it will not be business as usual."

In his report, Rutgers provides predictions in four

areas: business environment, operations, consumer behaviour and suppliers..

"Many countries will be in a recession, resulting

in a squeeze on consumer spending and companies will be in crisis mode for the foreseeable future," he writes.

More: http://lei.sr/y6y7S_H



The future will not be black or white. One thing is for sure; it will not be business as usual

Herman Rutgers, Europe Active

US operators facing lawsuits over membership fees

A number of US gym operators are facing lawsuits over their handling of membership fee collections during the coronavirus shutdown.

Town Sports International, 24 Hour Fitness and LA Fitness are among those facing class action lawsuits, after members said they had been charged for memberships despite their clubs being closed. Members have also accused some operators of making cancelling memberships "complicated".

New York-based law practice Wigdor said it had filed a class action against



“

We will suspend collecting memberships on 16 April if clubs remain shut

Tony Ueber, 24 Hour Fitness

Town Sports International (TSI) on behalf of member Mary Namorato.

In a statement, the law firm said: "TSI has continued to charge its customers'



24 Hour Fitness is one of those targeted by lawsuits

credit cards for monthly gym membership fees. Incredibly, TSI has made it virtually impossible for members to cancel their memberships."

Meanwhile, budget operator 24 Hour Fitness has also been hit with a similar suit. Brenda Labib, a California resident, has filed a lawsuit in the state's courts, saying

she had been charged for her membership after her 24 Hour Fitness club was closed.

24 Hour Fitness CEO Tony Ueber published an open letter, saying the company would suspend collecting membership fees if clubs remain closed.

More: http://lei.sr/j2r8s_H

Could wearables act as early detection devices for COVID-19?

One factor that has made the coronavirus outbreak so severe is that some of those infected do not show

symptoms, resulting in them infecting even more people.

Now, Central Queensland University (CQU) in Australia is partnering with fitness tech start-up WHOOP to study whether subtle hints offered by wearable fitness technology could help identify asymptomatic cases.

The partners will investigate a potential connection between changes in respiratory rate and COVID-19 symptoms.

"Our data could help identify coronavirus during incubation," said Will Ahmed, WHOOP CEO.

More: http://lei.sr/a2M8Z_H



“

Our data could help identify coronavirus during incubation

Will Ahmed, WHOOP



The study will look at data provided by WHOOP Strap 3.0

Thousands of facilities and 100,000 jobs could disappear

Thousands of UK leisure and fitness facilities could close permanently, as operators struggle to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown.

According to ukactive, there's mounting evidence that organisations are struggling to access loan support and are being crippled by ongoing utility fees, delayed furloughing funds and failed insurance claims.

The evidence, obtained by ukactive in consultation with major operators, shows that – without immediate relief from the increasing financial burdens – an estimated 2,800 facilities could cease trading by the middle of June 2020. This would translate to up to 100,000 job losses in the UK.

"We're just weeks away from the closure of sites," said Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive.

More: http://lei.sr/u3D7v_H



ukactive is lobbying for financial support for the industry



We're just weeks away from the permanent closure of sites

Huw Edwards, ukactive



IHRSA has produced 18 'questions' to guide operators

How to reopen your gym: IHRSA publishes 18-point checklist

As gyms and health clubs

around the world begin to consider their plans for reopening over the next weeks and months, the International Health Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) has provided a checklist for operators to consider.

The industry body has produced 18 "questions" to review across four categories – containment, staffing, operations and cleaning and sanitation. IHRSA says all reopenings after the COVID-19 shutdown should at first include extensive social distancing and enhanced cleaning, with clubs needing to ensure they have adequate staffing and supplies to execute their plans.

It also stresses that operators must adhere to



Operators must adhere to any advice and guidance from relevant authorities

IHRSA

any advice and guidance from authorities in the area they operate in.

"With any plan, it is essential that the decision to reopen complies with the most up-to-date information from national, regional, state, and local authorities with regards to a reopening timetable and any restrictions you must put in place upon reopening," IHRSA says in its guidance. To read the full article and IHRSA's checklist, visit the link below:

More: http://lei.sr/G7J7s_H

Loophole leaves gyms open to legal action by landlords

The legislation intended to protect commercial tenants from eviction during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has a loophole, which could see hundreds of gyms and leisure centres being hit with disproportionate legal action by their landlords. Section 82 of the Government's Coronavirus Act 2020 came into force on 25 March to help protect commercial tenants, banning

the forfeiture of commercial leases until 30 June 2020 for non-payment of rent. The act, however, does not prevent landlords from pursuing a Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery (CRAR) process as an alternative to forfeiture. While some landlords have engaged constructively with tenants over rent payments, others have reacted by instigating legal proceedings against their gym operator tenants immediately.



Gyms are facing weeks - if not months - of reduced income

Ukactive is now urging the government to act swiftly and stop landlords from coercing tenants into paying rent. "While landlords are under pressure themselves, taking

legal action – such as issuing winding-up orders – is entirely disproportionate," said ukactive CEO Huw Edwards.

More: http://lei.sr/w2s9P_H

Victus Soul founder slams banks over handling of support loans

Paul Trendell, co-founder and CEO of boutique operator Victus Soul, has questioned the way banks are handling the government's Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).

The scheme was set up to support small and medium-sized businesses, with an annual turnover of up to £45m. Through it, businesses are

meant to be able to access loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance of up to £5m for up to six years. The scheme is being delivered through commercial lenders, but backed by the government.

Speaking to *HCM*, Trendell said Victus Soul's application

for CBILS had been rejected by Lloyds Banking Group, saying: "We got turned down despite being cashflow positive within 12 months of launch, profitable for the last quarter prior to the COVID-19 outbreak and employing more than 25 people. "We also have

no debt and an asset base of more than £1m.

"The reason we were given was that we 'cannot demonstrate affordability from our last year of financial statements'. What a joke."

More: http://lei.sr/N5j6x_H



Startups, never mind profitable startups, have no chance

Paul Trendell



Victus Soul got turned down for a CBILS, despite being cashflow positive a year from launch

Comedian mystery shops gyms – only one chain passes the test

Comedian Rosie Jones found that just one of the three gyms she tried to train at, for a Channel 4 consumer rights programme, offered adequate facilities for disabled users. Jones, who has cerebral palsy, was asked to investigate disabled access to gyms in the latest episode of Joe Lycett's *Got Your Back*. The programme, which has the tagline of "making complaining funny", takes a somewhat lighthearted approach to highlighting shortcomings of businesses.

In the latest episode, broadcast on 17 April 2020 – but filmed prior to the COVID-19 outbreak – the show's

host sent Jones to test the accessibility of three popular high-street gyms: Fitness First, Gymbox and The Gym Group.

Only one of the three gyms passed the test with flying colours. The other two sites Jones visited fell badly short.

Issues uncovered by the comedian included lack of site access and facilities meant for disabled exercisers being used as storage space.



At one of the clubs, Jones was told the "gym wasn't designed for disabled people"



Jones, who has cerebral palsy, visited three high street gyms

At one of the clubs, Jones was told by the "gym wasn't designed for disabled people".

The final outcome saw The Gym Group come out on top, with good disabled access,

well-briefed staff and a warm welcome. The other two failed on access, lack of facilities and unwelcoming staff.

More: http://lei.sr/Y5t3Y_H

Bannatyne says impact of COVID-19 could be £30m

Duncan Bannatyne, CEO of Bannatyne Group, which runs spas, health clubs and hotels, says the coronavirus shutdown could cost the company £30m.

The entrepreneur said that his bank – Royal Bank of Scotland – is supporting the business and that it will take

on more borrowing under the government scheme to get through the crisis.

The company has furloughed 2,600 staff and has 400 still working. Bannatyne said it made up wages to 100 per cent in March, but that these would drop to 80 per

cent thereafter. The senior team has taken a substantial pay cut. He was not asked about the impact of the shutdown on freelance staff.

The company has not paid its rent and has agreed with landlords to change to monthly, rather than quarterly, rent payments as soon as banking facilities kick in, to ease cashflow.

Bannatyne said the company will reopen all profitable sites once the shutdown is over, but will permanently shutter loss-making locations – he said he expected other operators to do the same, meaning the industry will inevitably see a shrinkage in the number of sites operating.



We have furloughed 2,600 staff and have 400 still working
Duncan Bannatyne

Members who had paid for the month of March but who lost days to the closures were being offered the chance to roll the lost days over – they have been 'very, very good about it', he said.

More: http://lei.sr/S5t8H_H



CIMSPA creates digital hub to support the physical activity sector

A new digital hub has been set up to help individuals and businesses in the physical activity sector deal with the effects of the coronavirus crisis.

The hub, launched by the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA), offers advice for those who have been impacted by the pandemic and is freely

available to anyone working in the sector.

The hub's content has been divided into three separate categories – individual workers, businesses and the sector as a whole – with the aim of providing a single destination for the sector to access a range of information.

For individuals, the resources include advice on financial and legal support, as well as support with



The new hub will offer professionals a range of resources



This is a time for the whole sector to come together

Tara Dillon, CIMSPA

professional development, mental health and wellbeing.

For businesses, the “Stronger Together” hub offers information on government and financial support.

“This is a time for the whole sector to come together and support each other,” said Tara Dillon, CEO of CIMSPA.

More: http://lei.sr/k8j3u_H

Chris Whitty: exercise ‘the best thing you can do’ during lockdown

The government’s chief medical adviser Chris Whitty, has used the government’s daily coronavirus briefing to stress the importance of exercise to public health.

Speaking during the question and answer session

on 15 April, Whitty – who is also England’s Chief Medical Officer – said being physically active was “very important to long-term health” and crucial for keeping people fighting fight during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“There is no situation, there is no age and no condition where exercise is not a good thing,” he said.

“So anything that can be done to encourage – and to allow – people to take exercise is clearly a good thing.

“In this period, in which people are in lockdown, that might mean exercising indoors – and there are a lot of things people can do in their houses.

“Nevertheless, one of the reasons that we had exercise as one of the limited range of reasons people could leave their houses – and still be protecting the NHS – was for exercise. And the reason for that is that exercise is one of the best things you can do.”



There is no situation and no condition where exercise is not a good thing

Chris Whitty, CMO

Whitty added that even those who are classed as vulnerable – including the elderly – should make every effort to stay active.

More: http://lei.sr/V9u7M_H

Whitty: no condition or age where exercise isn’t a good thing



PHOTO: SASHIN PAKHAR

New distancing guidelines suggested for runners and cyclists

Social distancing measures for runners and cyclists need to be greater than for people walking, because of the effects of slipstream, according to a study by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and Eindhoven University of Technology.

Bert Blocken, professor of civil engineering at KU Leuven and a specialist in urban physics, wind engineering

and sports aerodynamics is recommending new distancing guidelines for outdoor activities and sports.

Researchers simulated the movement of COVID-19 particles by redeploying methods used to improve the performance of athletes using slipstream.

But while slipstreams help athletes run faster, when it comes to COVID-19, the effect is not so desirable.



Researchers used aerodynamics to study safe distancing

"People who sneeze or cough spread droplets with a bigger force, but also people who just breathe will leave particles", said Blocken. "The biggest particles create

the highest chance of contamination – although they fall down faster, they still can land on your clothing."

More: http://lei.sr/C7N6u_H



Simply breathing will leave particles behind

Bert Blocken, KU Leuven

Pandemic could increase childhood obesity levels, say researchers

School closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate the epidemic of childhood obesity in the US, according to scientists at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

Researchers expect school closures will double holiday time this year for many children, exacerbating the risk factors for weight gain that are associated with the summer holidays.

Andrew Rundle, associate professor of epidemiology and his colleagues have published their work in *Obesity*, the journal of the Obesity Society.

Data show children experience unhealthy weight gain during the summer months when they're out of school and that this effect is particularly apparent in children who are already overweight.

"There could be long-term consequences during the pandemic," says Rundle, who specialises in research to prevent childhood obesity.

"Research shows weight gained over the summer months is maintained during the school year and accrues



There could be long-term consequences from the pandemic

Andrew Rundle, Columbia

from summer to summer. When a child experiences obesity, even at a young age, they are at risk for higher, unhealthy weight, all the way into middle age."

More: http://lei.sr/f5F8s_H

Researchers recommend schools offer streamed fitness classes





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CONNECT ENGAGE COACH

with Technogym Mywellness

Reaching members anywhere and anytime to connect, engage and coach is more important than ever and can easily be activated through Technogym Mywellness

In an industry such as fitness and wellness, member engagement and connectivity are fundamental. Today, more than ever, it is important for clubs to continue to be close to members.

STAYING CONNECTED

Technogym Mywellness is the ideal solution to enable you to stay in touch with your members. Launched in 2012, this complete digital platform allows you to connect and engage with users and deliver "wellness on the go."

With a variety of different functions available which can be configured to meet the requirements of the business, it allows fitness clubs to manage their members' training at home.

ENGAGE MEMBERS

Keeping in touch with members and offering them a range of content and engagement to enable them to train at home, means they prove to be more loyal to the club in the medium to long term.

Even if, for a while, they're unable to attend the facility, they're more likely to return if they use Mywellness, because they haven't lost their training habit.

REMOTE COACHING

Today, the key for clubs is to be able to offer training programmes and services to members at home and thanks to the Mywellness platform, clubs can offer training and coaching programs to their customers remotely and make the best use of this technology.

CASE STUDY 1: VILLAGE GYMS

Operator, Village Gyms, has been proactively promoting a Train at Home option to all its members across 31 different sites.

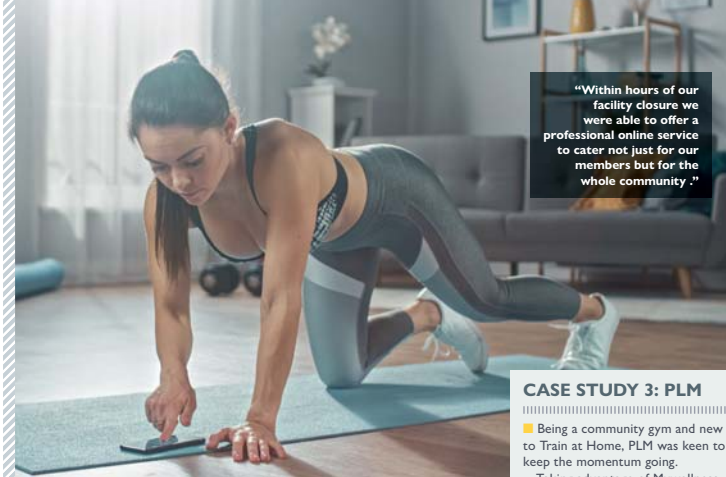
The operator was quick to engage with all members using social media to increase attention by positively promoting the offering, Village Gyms tailored three daily workouts to suit different fitness levels and all three are available on the Mywellness app, labelled easy, medium and pro.

"The Train at Home concept has

been a massive support to both our members and our brand," says Ben Edwards, national fitness manager at Village Gyms. *"Mywellness has enabled us to keep engaged via social media and still offer members a much-demanded fitness service.* The workouts are progressive and easy to follow, aligned with the great professional touch which Technogym always brings. They have been a sure-fire success," he said.



Mywellness gives members access to varied workouts and coaching



"Within hours of our facility closure we were able to offer a professional online service to cater not just for our members but for the whole community."

■ TRAIN YOUR CUSTOMERS AT HOME

Thanks to Mywellness app, fitness clubs can provide training services to customers to keep them active and motivated.

WORKOUT OF THE DAY

The app provides a choice of three new workouts every day for the users, to keep them active and engaged



REMOTE COACHING

The Mywellness app includes 'chat to coach' option to keep in touch with users, anytime anywhere, keeping them motivated and active



TRAINING CONTENTS
Clubs can deliver personalised programmes to individuals, to keep members engaged and on track with their fitness routine

CASE STUDY 2: FREEDOM LEISURE

■ New to Mywellness, Freedom Leisure promoted Train at Home to members across its 104 centres following the shutdown.

Providing three weekly home workouts targeting a range of fitness levels, Freedom has gone a step further and encourages members to compete with six different challenges, including Daily 1,000, which challenges members to get 1,000 Technogym MOVes [a unit of effort] every day for seven days.

Freedom activated Mywellness on 24 March and achieved an impressive 4,225 Mywellness accounts created in a week.

"We knew we had to act fast – the timeline between initial discussion to the launch of the app was 48 hours, which proves what can be achieved when everyone has an aligned goal and focus," said Barry Thomson, regional commercial manager. "This app is an important part of our retention plan and will support members in maintaining a healthy body and mind during these unprecedented times."

CASE STUDY 3: PLM

■ Being a community gym and new to Train at Home, PLM was keen to keep the momentum going.

Taking advantage of Mywellness, PLM is providing three daily workouts made available anytime allowing members to maintain their training routines remotely.

PLM further enhanced the offering by adding additional home workouts designed and provided by the team of PLM trainers.

To maintain the personal touch, personalised programmes and regular trainer contact, using the coach function of the app, keeps members on track with their goals.

"Utilising Mywellness we continue to provide tailored guidance for our clients, a variety of home workout options for all our members and more importantly, the opportunity of growth during challenging times."

"It could not have been any easier to personalise the system to match the business and thanks to Mywellness we are more connected than ever to all of our customers," said MD, Phil Moss.

Ready to launch Mywellness in your facility?

Technogym provides full support and consultancy, so you can maximise the implementation and success.

To find out more about the many ways you can deliver 'Train at Home' experiences for your members, contact Technogym today on 01344 300236

www.technogym.com/connect



So many members got in touch saying they would like to continue paying their memberships to support the staff, that we set up a Just Giving page, which will support local sports clubs and groups

IN THIS Together

As clubs were ordered to close, one logical response was to freeze memberships, despite the financial difficulties it would cause. However, many operators found their community was willing to support them, as Kath Hudson reports

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's announcement on that all health and fitness operators – along with much of normal life – should shut up shop, with immediate effect, caused many operators to implement an immediate membership freeze.

It made sense: if people couldn't go to the clubs they shouldn't have to pay and a membership freeze was better than mass cancellations. Especially as lots of people are facing uncertain times financially and will be assessing their outgoings.

"We took the decision to freeze for all, as it was the fair and the right thing to do," says Holly Ainger, director of marketing and digital at Nuffield

Health. "Giving online classes is what we should be doing, to say thank you for not cancelling."

However, Nuffield Health is in the unusual position of being able to redeploy its staff to its healthcare division, which was renting hospitals to the NHS. Most other operators – who run with tighter margins and without another lucrative business to act as a safety net – needed to call on their community.

Those who did were amazed and humbled by the response of their tribes, who were keen to ensure the club is still there when the crisis is over and that the staff and freelancers will be supported through the crisis.

Many operators, for example SLL, initially froze memberships, but a week later went back to members and asked them to consider an optional delayed membership freeze. This gave members the option of paying during the closure and having the equivalent time for free once the clubs were re-opened, as well as one month extra as a thank you.

Torfaen Leisure Trust, in Wales, was forward thinking enough to have pandemic cover in place, which mitigated a financial crisis and protected the staff. However, according to CEO, Angharad Collins, so many members got in touch saying they would like to continue paying their memberships to support the staff, that the trust set up a Just Giving page, which will support local sports clubs and groups.

We talk to some operators about their experience of mobilising their tribe to keep some income rolling in through the lockdown. If you haven't already done it, it's not too late.



Nuffield launched home workouts for members



Some operators have kept members engaged, while others put them on hold or froze memberships

Differentiate communication with members – start with those who refer the most prospects

Hans Muench

Fitness industry consultant, author, speaker

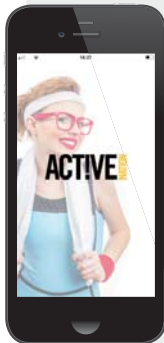
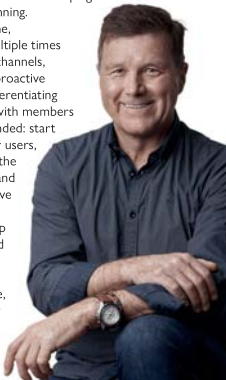
Although many clubs have chosen to freeze memberships in order to show good faith, we should not assume everyone will automatically want to cancel their membership.

If a club has done a good job serving its clients, a high proportion are likely to be sympathetic to the situation in the short-term and, if they're still receiving their own wages, will likely want to support the club and the staff, especially if the club is offering other forms of engagement.

In these difficult times, I've been amazed at how quickly operators have adopted digital technology, which can replace the in-club experiences and provide incentives for members who offer to continue paying. For example, free access to online tools or trainers' online supervision, or group PT. Online portals such as Zoom, VAHA and Mirror are being used to enhance other activities, including meditation, mental training or nutrition counselling. While some operators are offering this content for free, some boutiques are charging for access to their rock star instructors and live PT.

Furthermore, if a club provides additional services to its membership or community, such as shopping for the elderly, or loaning equipment, there are additional justifications to keeping the payments running.

During this time, communicate multiple times and via multiple channels, making sure it's proactive and positive. Differentiating communication with members is also recommended: start with your regular users, those who refer the most prospects and are the most active on social media (analytics can help you with this) and particularly the elderly in your membership base, who may be very grateful for the offer of help.



Active Nation is paying its freelancers to live stream workouts



Our supporters want to see us come out of the other side and continue our great work

Stuart Martin

Managing director

Active Nation

After the government's announcement on 20 March, we adopted a blanket freeze on subscriptions, but also sent out a letter to all of our supporters emphasising how the donations they provide are the lifeline of our charity, allowing us to pay our 800 strong team and providing public benefit to communities nationwide.

We asked those who could afford it to continue paying their subscription and gave another option of donating 50 per cent.

We told our members that we know it's a big ask to donate to the charity while the venues are closed, but explained this vital support would allow us to continue providing digital home workouts with their favourite instructors, run the Active Nation app which provides more than 100 free workouts, as well as supporting our teams to still be there for them when they return.

The response was both surprising and heartening. To date we've received a 30 per cent return rate, with around 30 per cent continuing to make a donation and they continue to come in.

It has been enough to allow me to give my team full pay while waiting for the government schemes to kick in and I think shows that we have real engagement with our supporters. We're still paying our freelancers to stream live classes. They're not getting as much work as they usually would, but at least we can still give them something.

Our supporters want to see us come out of the other side and continue our great work. In turn, we gave back to the community by donating £20,000 of food and beverage stock to the NHS and food banks.

Everyone Active is passing a percentage of membership fees to Prince William's emergency charity

The creation of virtual communities has become very important to customers

Gemma Bonnett-Kolakowska

Managing director

Bonska Consultancy

From a marketing point of view, digital strategy is absolutely key. Organisations and companies should look at how they communicate with members who are not able to come into the club.

Empowering them through utilising wearable tech to monitor their progress will ensure that a proportion do not simply cancel their membership.

The product that's offered should be more than just the gym and the creation of a virtual community will become very important to customers.

There are many ways you can develop virtual content using trainers and this should be investigated. This will, in turn, help to raise the profile of the brand outside your catchment area; important for recruitment and retention of good employees, as well as meaning you will be seen as a thought leader.

You need to develop the digital community and set a clear strategy of action if you haven't already done so.

Long term this will also support revenue flow and help to differentiate those facilities that truly believe in community and accessibility. It will also open the door to those who may not be able to get to a facility on a regular basis.



PHOTO LES MILLS

The groundswell of support on social media has been encouraging and heartening

Duncan Jefford

Director

Everyone Active

When the closure was announced we got to work putting together a suite of online workout solutions, so we could keep engaging with our community and support their physical and mental wellbeing during this crisis.

We were very proud of the online solution we put together with Les Mills on Demand and Gympass, which is worth £45 a month.

We then went back to our membership with three options: to have their membership credited for the amount of time that we are closed; to sign up to the online membership for £9.99 a month; or to continue paying their full membership, and Everyone Active will donate half to Prince William's charity, National Emergencies Trust, which will help those impacted by the coronavirus.

We had a good response, with more than 7,000 members coming back to us within the first few days and we anticipate this will grow in May as the lockdown continues. The groundswell of support on social media has been encouraging and heartening, showing how much our members value our service.



PROFILE

The family-owned Healthworks Group, armed with a loyal following and a committed team of employees, has put a strong strategy in place to keep revenue flowing through the COVID-19 crisis.

Kate Cracknell speaks to its CEO and president

The Harringtons

Mark Harrington Snr is CEO
of Healthworks Group

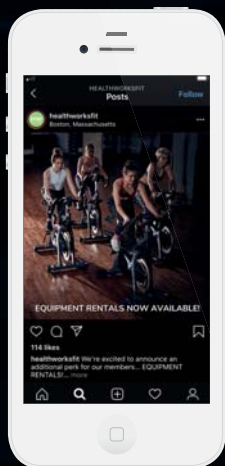
Mark Harrington Jr
became president of
Healthworks Group in 2010



As a father-son duo, Mark Harrington Snr and Mark Harrington Jr are respectively CEO and president of Boston-based Healthworks Group; younger brother Matt is also in the management team, overseeing the Group's Gymt brand and heading up construction and facilities, while mother Patty was involved through the early years of the company, spearheading its mission to empower women.

This in itself is a tale worth telling, but right now – in the depths of the COVID-19 crisis – there's a more immediate story we'd like to share. Here, we talk to Marks Snr and Jr about the measures Healthworks has put into place to keep revenue coming into the business, even while members cannot use the physical facilities of their clubs.

All information is accurate as at the date of our interview – Monday 6 April 2020 – and relates specifically to the four Healthworks clubs.



Healthworks has been renting out its fitness equipment to members



Now we have an offering with no geographical limits, we're looking to sell digital memberships beyond our member base

What measures have you put in place to steer the business through COVID-19?

We've been working on our response to COVID-19 since late January. Our goal was to be ahead of the situation, aggressively attacking it and doing what we could to power through.

Phase one was public safety, most clearly manifested through extensive cleaning: absolutely everyone on the team was cleaning all the time.

But as we kept track of the news reports from around the world, and realised we would likely have to either close our clubs or be faced with a situation where nobody wanted to attend in-person, we started looking at ways to create a high-value product that people could use remotely. That, of course, meant a virtual product.

It was something we'd been talking about doing for years, but there had always been something more pressing on the agenda. All of a sudden we had to pivot, putting something in place in the space of approximately 10 days.

We sent an email to our team announcing: "As of 8.00pm yesterday, we are no longer a retail company. We're an online/virtual company." And they were remarkable, adapting incredibly quickly. With their help, we've been able to put in place two significant products: virtual group exercise, and remote personal training.

This means we're able to offer our members a broader range of options than simply cancelling or freezing their membership.

Tell us more about your at-home services...

Our virtual group exercise offering is a combination of on-demand and live streamed classes. We started filming even before our clubs closed, which meant we already had an on-demand library of professionally produced classes – led by our own instructors – by the time we hit lockdown. Complementing this, our



The Group is offering remote PT sessions, which are proving popular

trainers are now live streaming and/or recording classes from their own homes. About 75 per cent of the sessions are live streamed, with everything then available on demand afterwards. We'll have 40 classes this week, 60 by next week, 80 the week after.

Then there's remote personal training, which we're marketing as "the same PT you know and love, just delivered via video conference rather than in-person". We find the consumer products work best as the platform: Skype, FaceTime or whatever suits the client and the trainer.

How have you communicated all of this with members?

We care deeply about our members and felt it was only right to give them proper options, which we did proactively and immediately.

Our message was this: "If you are willing and able to support us, we ask that you continue to do so" – that is, continuing to pay full membership. For members who were able to do this, in addition to providing full access to our virtual class offering, we're also crediting them with US\$50 a month of 'club cash' to spend with us once our doors re-open.

We're putting together a range of member-only perks too, such as gym equipment rental. We introduced this on Friday, so three days ago, and it has already proved incredibly popular: we have about 150 studio bikes across our estate, and within hours of launching the scheme we had 240 people wanting to rent them!

But there are other options besides continuing to pay membership, and we made these very clear to our members. Any member, at any point, is entitled to a no-cost membership freeze, to cancel with no questions asked, or to downgrade to a US\$30 a month (or US\$14 a fortnight) digital membership.

The Attorney General appears happy that – as long as we present options and provide value, coupled with real-time refunds and no-cost freezes – we are operating in an acceptable way.

We continue to communicate with our members regularly, through emails, phone calls and social media. We're seeing around a 70 per cent read rate for every email that goes out, which is something you'd normally only dream of!

What results are you seeing from your various initiatives?

Around 50 per cent of our members are currently continuing to pay full membership, with another 10 per cent taking up virtual-only digital membership. The remaining 40 per cent have mostly frozen their membership; we've had very few cancellations.

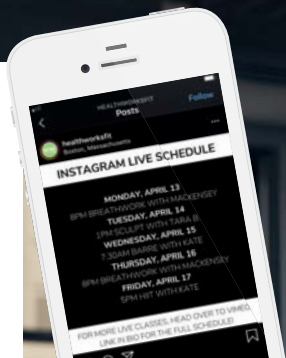
The remote personal training service has also been a great success: we'll maintain around 40 per cent of our PT business for April.

We actually have some PTs who are making more money than they did previously: they've been able to tap in to former clients who might have moved out of the area, as well as members referring other family members living across the US.

It is a mixed bag though – some of our PTs are struggling to get to grips with this environment – so we've increased the commission we pay all our trainers by 25 per cent. This means most of the money we make through this channel is going back to them. That's important to us: we want them to be OK throughout this process, employed and earning money.



Around 50% of our members are currently continuing to pay full membership, with another 10% taking up virtual-only digital membership



As at today, we've been able to hold on to 70 per cent of our full-time staff, with personal trainers delivering remote sessions, instructors being paid full class rates for as many classes a week as we can give them, and the sales team working hard to market and sell digital memberships. The sales and management teams have agreed to a pay cut across the board so we can keep as many people employed as possible.

To what do you attribute your success?

Healthworks has always been the engine of our company: a strong brand with passionate staff, a clear USP and the sort of raving fans everyone wants. It has a different feeling from many other clubs: its members don't see it as a necessary evil but as a community they feel part of, that they believe in, that they care about, and that they therefore want to support through a crisis. There was a stickiness there to begin with.

The close connections between members and staff have been key. The first question we've been asked has so often been: "Are you going to continue paying your staff?" Our members want to support the trainers, instructors and other staff members they care about through this crisis. Our move to give virtually all the online PT fees to the trainers has therefore been very well received, and has driven a higher uptake of virtual PT than we expected.

The sense of community in our clubs has also been key to the high uptake of digital membership. When members realised the emails or phone calls they were receiving were coming from the sales person who joined them, or a team member they chat with every time they come in, they tended to opt for a digital membership rather than cancelling.

It is worth recognising, though, that Healthworks has an upscale membership base, most of whom are still working and being paid. "As long as my pay check comes in as normal, I'll keep paying as



Healthworks pivoted
to a brand new digital
offering in just 10 days

normal" has been something we've heard a lot. Linked to that, we also have a fairly high percentage of members – over 20 per cent – who were already used to paying ancillary revenue, whether for small group training or personal training.

What are your immediate plans?

Everything is moving so fast at the moment – a few days feels like a month – and we know it will get harder before it gets easier.

Our team will, however, continue to do their best to look after members and keep revenue coming in.

Firstly, we want to make sure all members who have access to our virtual offering are benefiting from it. We're reaching out for feedback and actively encouraging everyone to take part in the virtual classes.

Secondly, we'll see if any of our frozen members might now like to upgrade to a digital membership.

Third, given we now have an offering with no geographical limits, we're looking to expand our reach, selling digital memberships beyond our member base. At the moment, digital membership is mostly being taken up by existing members or those who are at least familiar with our brand: former members, or friends and family introduced via member referral. We hope to build on this.

■ How Healthworks rewrote the law

"When we started Healthworks Fitness Centers for Women, there were very few women-only clubs, and what there were were small footprint, social clubs," explains Mark Harrington Snr. "There was a clear demand for what we offered: some women simply don't feel comfortable exercising around men. The problem was, it violated a Massachusetts law which said no discrimination was allowed on the basis of gender."

"In 1996, we were sued by a man named James Foster, who said he wanted to become a member of our Healthworks club in Back Bay. We faced a lawsuit which we lost: in December 1997, a Suffolk Superior Court judge ruled that we were not allowed to bar men from our clubs."

"We set about changing the law, and our case was helped in large part by our members. I don't think we'd ever really appreciated the significance of what we were doing until we saw how many women came out in support of us, even picketing in front of the State House. I personally received over 1,000 emails and letters of support. It was a real rallying cry from our members and it helped us get the law changed."

"In January 1998, governor Paul Cellucci signed a new law allowing single-sex clubs to operate – women-only, but equally men-only. Now, around 30 to 40 US States have followed suit with a similar bill."

What might the future look like for the Healthworks Group?

There's so much uncertainty at the moment and we're very concerned for the overall business. It looks OK right now, but every month we're closed will be exponentially more challenging than the month before. Depending on how long this continues, at some point it may not be realistic to expect high levels of revenue.

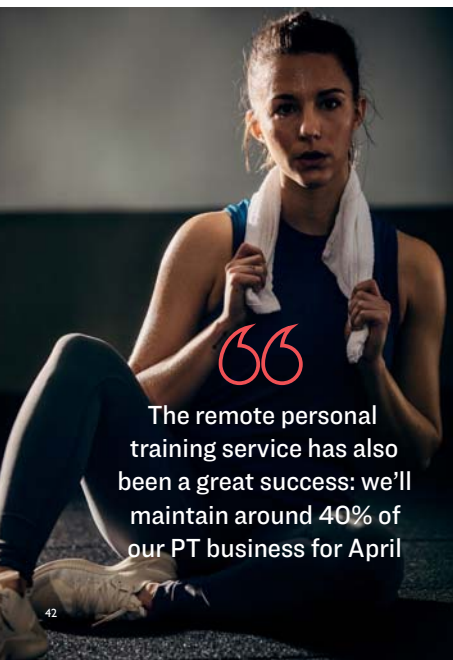
We also have no idea what things will look like once we re-open our doors. Healthworks in particular is a model that thrives in business districts. If remote working becomes the post-COVID norm, it could force us to dramatically change our model.

However, one thing is for sure: virtual is here to stay. In its simplest sense, it lets members access our services on the days they can't make it to the club. It also gives PTs a tool to do more training. And it provides a great alternative to cancellation. Most people leave our clubs because they're moving out of the area; now, if they want to carry on training with us, they can sign up for a digital membership.

What would be your advice for other operators in these difficult times?

Ideally, you need to work out a way of offering your customers a product they want – but above all, you need to continue to treat them with respect, even when things get tough.

This is our high-level focus at Healthworks. We're doing everything we can to ensure the company survives with as much integrity and respect for its team and its members as possible.



“

The remote personal training service has also been a great success: we'll maintain around 40% of our PT business for April



The Healthworks management team values integrity and respect for its team and members

IN NUMBERS 2020

HEALTHWORKS: A 40-YEAR TIMELINE

30 October 1977

First club opens in Salem, Massachusetts, under the brand name Light 'n' Lovely.

January 1984

Salem location renamed Healthworks.

July 1984

Opening of the second Healthworks club.

1996

James Foster sues Healthworks, now operating four locations, to become a member of the all-women's club at Back Bay (see separate briefing – *How Healthworks rewrote the law*).

October 1997

Healthworks' 20th anniversary.

1998

Healthworks Foundation formed as a not-for-profit enterprise.

2002

Healthworks Foundation opens its first location at St. Mary's.

November 2003

Healthworks Chestnut Hill opens.

2011

GymIt brand formed; first location opens in Brookline. "We had considered taking Healthworks to other cities, but in the end we decided to stick to Boston and roll out more brands there. We knew the city, the real estate, we had customer loyalty."

2012

Healthworks Group refocuses on premium clubs (Healthworks) and high-volume/low-cost clubs (GymIt). As a result, the Salem location – "a solid mid-market club" – closes.

31 December 2014

Republic Fitness brand formed; first club opens.

2016

First Fitness Management formed, specialising in the design and management of fitness centres for corporations, property managers and institutions.

2017

Healthworks celebrates its 40th birthday.

4 Healthworks Fitness Centers for Women

Upper mid-market, full-service clubs charging around US\$100 a month, typically catering for 2,500–3,500 members, and known for their GX and fitness programming as well as their best-in-city PTs.

2 GymIt clubs

Low-cost/high-value, co-ed clubs charging "in the mid-20 dollars a month" – a higher price tag than some budget clubs due to their urban locations.

1 Republic Fitness

A high-end group exercise and "best of the best" personal training facility.

1 Healthworks Community Fitness

A not-for-profit, inner city centre; a second site was handed over to the management team that ran it.

20 First Fitness Management locations

Management contracts for residential developments, corporates etc.

How did Chinese clubs tackle the shutdown?

While Europe and the US are in the thick of coronavirus shutdowns, health clubs in China are starting to reopen. Jak Phillips examines how three Chinese operators tackled the challenge of the pandemic and came out ahead

Mathematician John Allen Paulos famously wrote, "Uncertainty is the only certainty there is..." China's health club operators would almost certainly agree, having spent the past three months battling unprecedented challenges at the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic.

But despite having to close their doors for two months as the country went into lockdown, many clubs were able to survive, and indeed thrive in spite of the uncertainty, building their digital presence in a matter of weeks to dramatically transform their businesses.

Now, in April, as much of the rest of the world starts to adjust to life in lockdown, gyms all over China are reopening their doors, welcoming back



existing members and also new customers they've attracted with their online offerings.

So how did they pull through the biggest crisis clubs have ever faced? And what can the rest of the fitness world learn from their approach? Here are 12 key insights into how Chinese clubs overcame the challenges of the coronavirus disruption.

Rip up the rule book

Across every industry, coronavirus has forced businesses to re-think their go-to-market strategy. For the Chinese clubs featured in this article, this has meant ripping up the rule-book and using coronavirus as the catalyst for a completely new approach to meeting people's fitness needs.

Necessity has been the mother of invention. Operators who previously relied entirely on visits to their gyms to bring in revenue have been forced to reconsider their strategies. In these cases, they've emerged from the lockdown with complementary digital channels, more efficient systems, plus fresh opportunities to grow their revenue and customer base.

By looking at new ways to support their employees and customers during a crisis, these agile club businesses have unearthed solutions that will set them up for greater success as fitness evolves towards a new normal.

Strengthen personal connections

In a country where the average family home has just three occupants, going into lockdown instantly sparked increased demand for online communities and shared experiences, so gyms were quick to step up and forge connections with their members.

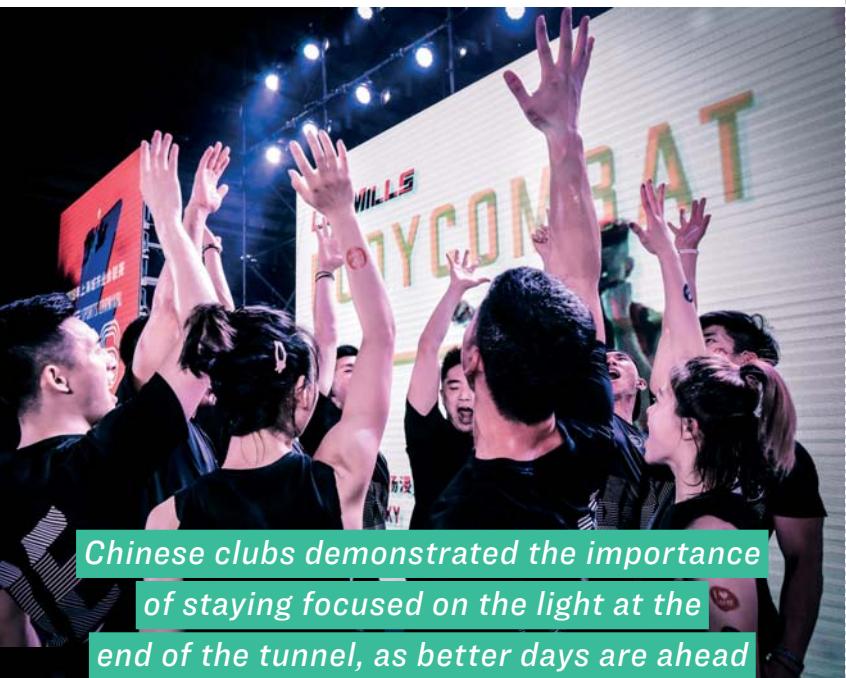
For Asia-based premium operator Pure International Group, which has seven clubs in Shanghai and two in Beijing, this meant mobilising



Clubs quickly built a digital presence to stay connected to members

PHOTO: LEFT

PHOTO: LEFT



Chinese clubs demonstrated the importance of staying focused on the light at the end of the tunnel, as better days are ahead



all staff to communicate with members and send daily workouts to members through the Pure 360 Lifestyle app.

"In our closed clubs in Shanghai and Beijing, the yoga teachers, the sales team, the PTs and group ex instructors constantly kept in touch with the members," Pure CEO Colin Grant explained in an IHRSA briefing - see www.hcmmag.com/ihrsa/webinar

"You've got to get them engaging with members through social media, to make sure the members know we care about them, even though we're closed. Send them daily content through social media for things like home workouts and information on how to eat well."

Keep members engaged

The shutdown has created a new open competitive situation for members' attention when it comes to digital and a top priority for clubs during lockdown has to be providing workout solutions to keep members engaged and moving before their heads are turned by other online fitness offerings.

Whether this is done by setting up instructor-led online classes, or by harnessing a member-centric solution where clubs can earn revenue from each sign-up, the key points are ease of execution (particularly if lockdown will present logistical challenges around filming) and the quality of the content. Poor quality detracts from the member experience and risks giving new audiences a negative perception of your brand.

Chinese boutique Shape, which operates 10 sites in Beijing, started streaming live workouts from the first day of the lockdown. Shape chose a platform



Perception is reality.
It was important
members could see
cleaners walking
around the clubs
actively cleaning on
a regular basis

Colin Grant, CEO,
Pure Group

where viewers can donate money in the form of 'gifts', with the amount raised covering the cost of the instructor, enabling them to keep their skills sharp, while still being paid.

Focus on cashflow

Maintaining cashflow is key to surviving a crisis. Clubs in China took several steps to limit their outgoings, while still honoring commitments to instructors, members and suppliers.

Pure's Colin Grant advocates accessing support from your local government, where available, as well as exploring the possibility of rent reductions.

"We spoke to our landlords in Shanghai and Beijing about rent relief and we had some success in that area," he said. "It varied by site, but we had a lot of good responses from landlords who understood that we were closed and still had to pay our staff – they're our most important asset."

For group fitness-focused gym chain Left, which has rapidly grown to 500 sites across China in just five years, the team's resolute focus on short-term survival was designed to ensure long-term prosperity.

"You've got to allow for worst-case scenarios and forge a plan to maximise your survival through strong fiscal discipline," says LeftFit director of operations Ren Xingrong – who joined the business from e-commerce giant Alibaba in 2016.

"With coronavirus, everyone is in the same boat and facing huge operational challenges, so those who can survive the longest will be best-positioned to benefit when the industry recovers."

Online group classes have been a popular way to stay fit during the pandemic





By filming and streaming classes, operators have been able to keep instructors in work

PHOTO LEFT



Lefit has used the lockdown as a chance to grow their digital audience

PHOTO: LEFT

PHOTO: LEFT

Go after new revenue streams

While cutting overheads is essential during hard times, finding additional revenue streams can be just as effective in keeping you afloat, as well as adding long-term value to your business.

Boutique operator Shape started streaming live workouts on the day of the lockdown and after building an audience (which reached 100,000 viewers) by using social media platforms WeChat and TikTok to grow their brand, were quick to monetise this new audience.

The operator launched a 12-day online fat-loss training camp, where instructors host video training and coaching sessions with participants. Priced at 369 RMB (US\$52), more than 1,000 people signed up, with many going on to purchase additional bespoke packages.

The instant revenue helped the business stay buoyant and created another outlet for its instructors. Shape now plans to expand these personal coaching concepts across its physical network.

"Personal coaching really complements the group workouts our boutique has become known for, allowing us to grow our audience and reach older consumers who prefer one-to-one services," explains Shape CEO and founder Zeng Xiang.

"As well as online, it's a great addition to our physical presence and we plan to launch this offering in 90 per cent of our sites by the end of 2020."

With coronavirus, everyone is in the same boat and facing huge operational challenges, so those who can survive the longest will be best positioned to benefit when the industry recovers

**Ren Xingrong,
director of operations,
Lefit China**

Make a bold play

The online to offline (O2O) business model – where businesses build an audience through a slick digital presence and then channel them towards physical sites – is highly popular in China thanks to the ubiquity of WeChat, which facilitates the majority of consumer transactions.

As one of the leading proponents of O2O (alongside Super Monkey), Lefit already had some pedigree in online innovation, but coronavirus prompted the operator to embark on a bold new project.

The gym deployed a team to start broadcasting fitness content and within weeks the classes were attracting an average of 20,000 viewers, thanks to smart promotion via WeChat and TikTok. Lefit says its online workouts have clocked up a total of two billion views since launch.

Buoyed by this initial success, the team started an online gym platform – dubbed 'Lefit Live Broadcasting Room' – offering live workouts, training programmes, and coaching upsells.

With membership starting at only 99 RMB (US\$14) per year, the number of paying users is "increasing exponentially every day", according to Lefit. The chain hopes to significantly reduce its reliance on offline income, which currently accounts for 85 per cent of total revenue.

"We don't yet know the scale of the opportunity for online fitness and whether everyone will



Integrating online and offline businesses will be key to surviving these uncertain times

revert to the physical gym once coronavirus fully subsides," says Ren Xingrong, "but coronavirus has given us an unprecedented opportunity to integrate our online and offline businesses. From a state of total panic at the start of this pandemic, we're now much more positive about the future."

Attract new fans

While both complex and impressive, the underlying principle behind both Shape and Leftit's strategies has been to grow their audience beyond their existing member base and use the lockdown as an opportunity to win new fans.

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, Shape's instructors had never broadcast live workouts and the chain's TikTok account was dormant. Fast forward a couple of weeks and the operator was attracting 100,000 participants to its online workouts.

"We had a standing start, but by bringing in experts to train our coaches in how to broadcast, as well as teaming up with live broadcast platforms, we were able to harness multiple online channels to attract audiences towards our brand," explains Zeng Xiang.

Grow through partnerships

At a time when lots of brands are eager for online content that helps people stay fit and build a stronger immune system, strategic partnerships are an effective way to ramp up your reach.

Spotting an opportunity, Shape launched a series of corporate wellness classes in mid-

February using a freemium model and has since delivered these to more than 30 companies, bringing in extra revenue, while introducing thousands of white-collar workers to the brand.

Alibaba forged a content partnership with Les Mills China across five channels and apps to help the Chinese public stay active during the lockdown, resulting in half a million workouts in the first week of the partnership.

"Crisis in Chinese means both danger and opportunity," says Les Mills China CEO, Jane Jiang. "Resilience and confidence have been key to the fitness industry overcoming this crisis by unearthing new opportunities."

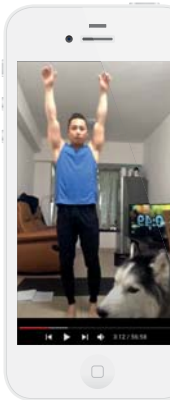
Manage your reputation

Whether your club is still open, closed due to lockdown, or preparing to reopen, it's vital to manage perceptions and take clear actions to inspire confidence and make members feel safe.


"At the end of the day, it's our job to ensure we provide a safe and healthy environment for our teams as much as all our members," says Pure's Colin Grant, who's made hygiene measures a key focus.

"Perception is reality. So it was important members could see cleaners walking around the clubs actively cleaning on a regular basis. At the same time, we started communicating these measures to members, via social media and notices in the club.

"Now, we're putting videos together documenting all the elevated hygiene measures we're adding to ensure we've got a safe and clean environment.



Pure sends daily workouts to members via its app



Shape announced a recruitment drive for 200 new rock star instructors, with the expectation their class participants would follow them across

LeFit started an online gym platform with live workouts, training programmes and coaching upsells



Upskill your team

The lockdown gave operators a golden opportunity to upskill staff and clubs were quick to capitalise. They made the most of their teams' free time, as well as the efficiencies of educating online.

Pure Fitness put on large numbers of internal training sessions for its teams, while Lefit kept its instructors active and gainfully employed by having them host live workouts and coaching sessions on its new online platform.

Les Mills China provided a raft of online training courses for instructors, attracting around 3,000 to quarterly workshops. As well as saving time and travel costs, instructors were grateful for the opportunity to fully digest content by rewatching it multiple times.

But it was Shape that really raised eyebrows, making use of the premium boutique chain's healthy cashflow to announce a recruitment drive for 200 new instructors during the lockdown. With many clubs struggling to pay wages, Shape was able to acquire a squad of rockstar instructors, with the expectation that many of their class participants would follow them across.

Strategise around your relaunch

As challenging as things are for everyone right now, Chinese clubs demonstrated the importance of staying focused on the light at the end of the tunnel, as better days are ahead.

For your staff and members, this means keeping them updated on every club development and starting to think about how you'll build a buzz through relaunch events once you get the green light to reopen.

"We're working on our rebound plan," said Pure's Colin Grant. "The two keys to a successful rebound plan are timing and tone – it can't be too soon and you can't be too aggressive."

"In the coming weeks, we're aiming to get our suspended members re-activated, then

We're much more comfortable about the future now and it's entirely possible that our online business will account for one third of our revenue within the next two to three years

Zeng Xiang, CEO and founder, Shape

we'll speak to lapsed members to try to bring them back. We also need to get new guests in, so we're looking at ways to do that too."

Adapt to the new normal

For clubs that pull through the coronavirus pandemic and make it out the other side, there'll be significant opportunities for growth. With health now a priority for pretty much everyone, we can expect an increased demand for fitness offerings once the lockdown lifts.

In China, a post-lockdown Nielsen survey found 75 per cent of the public planning to spend more on sport and fitness in the future, while 80 per cent are trying to eat more healthily. This has been reflected in spring festival spending, with sales of home fitness equipment up 300 per cent.

It's too early to say what the impact will be on gym membership numbers, but logic would dictate that once coronavirus anxiety subsides, these new legions of fitness fans will be eager to escape the confines of their homes and embrace the thrill of live fitness experiences.

Either way, clubs that have grasped this opportunity to integrate their online and offline offerings will find themselves in a win-win situation, concludes Shape's CEO Zeng Xiang.

"Despite the enormous disruption, coronavirus is a short-term pandemic and eventually things will return to normality. Most people will go back to their gyms and return to normal life.

"From our perspective, we're glad we seized this opportunity to unlock new online revenue streams at relatively little cost. We aim to grow these, while also leveraging online as a means of attracting new customers to our clubs on a larger scale.

"We're much more comfortable about the future now and it's entirely possible that our online business will account for one-third of our revenue within the next two to three years." ●

For more insights on building an online audience, check out this article on the seven social media trends that could prove key for cutting through the noise and building an army of fitness fans:

<http://lei.sr/U84f>

Fitness posture Someone can help you



Lefit's digital offerings have proven popular

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

Matrix Connected Solutions helps Roko deliver a digital member experience beyond the four walls of the clubs

Matrix Fitness are proud to have completed an upgrade of the fitness facilities for Roko Health Clubs at Chiswick Bridge and York, which now offer a premium, fully connected and wraparound member experience 24/7.

The team at Roko were looking for a supplier that could provide modern CV and strength equipment that not only looked fantastic, but also performed to a high standard and was easy to use.

The equipment also had to have a great reporting offering, engage members for longer and help them reach their goals.

Neil Stanton, operations director at Roko Health Club comments: "We wanted to take our member experience beyond the four walls of the club and integrate more with their everyday active life. A digital offering is now essential as people live an entirely connected life and data is an integral part of helping them become the best they can be."

"We decided to install the Matrix 7xi cardio and ultra-strength range," he said, "as the Matrix connected solutions available with this equipment seamlessly integrates a digital experience for our members – one that we can view via the Roko App – and connects with third-party fitness tracking apps to allow us to programme, manage and support our members' entire fitness journey."

EQUIPMENT CHOICES

Matrix carefully selected 28 pieces of equipment from its 7xi cardio range for

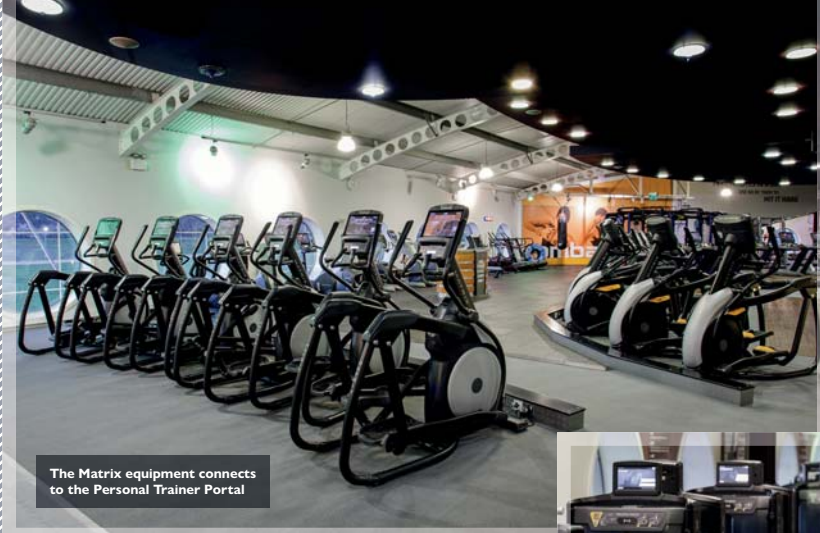
both the Chiswick and York sites. These come complete with touch screen, wifi connectivity, Netflix and social media access. Furthermore, the cardio machines enable users to access the Matrix Fitness Sprint 8, a 20-minute high-intensity interval training programme that is scientifically proven to boost energy, reduce body fat and promote lean muscle.

The equipment offers users the Matrix Personal Trainer Portal, which allows access to a complete library of workouts and links to personal trainer expertise to help maximise their workout.



Matrix selected 28 pieces of CV equipment for Roko





The Matrix equipment connects to the Personal Trainer Portal



“Matrix Connected Solutions is more than a collection of hardware, software and connectivity options. It’s a fully integrated digital ecosystem that enhances the way machines are managed, members are motivated and the club brand is promoted”

It was the Matrix Personal Trainer Portal that really grabbed the attention of the Roko team, as the system allows them to track how members are performing in relation to goals that have been set by their personal trainer.

The system also allows Roko to group members according to their goals, and communicate workouts, challenges and information that’s most relevant to them.

FIRST IN THE UK

The Roko clubs were among the first in the UK to have Matrix’s new connected strength line, with 18 items each being installed. The range allows the team at Roko to offer their members a guided, fully-connected strength training experience.

The range is perfect for both newcomers and more experienced members, as the equipment tracks repetitions, activity time and rest time. Members are able to define their physical transformation target, receive step-by-step instruction and identify their benchmark weight to begin a

personalised progression programme that helps them reach their goals.

Finally, the connected strength line provides 8-12 weeks of personalised progressive workouts that can be specific to ‘endurance’, ‘strength’ or ‘build’ goals, all fully endorsed by the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

“As a premium health club, we pride ourselves on providing a five-star fitness experience for our members,” says Stanton. “Matrix Fitness’ scientifically-advanced range of strength and cardio equipment will not only provide our members with the best tools for their training, but are also full of features which are new, exciting and provide extra functionality for their workouts.”

“The team at Matrix proved to us throughout the purchasing process that their product range had everything we needed and their ability to respond to our specific development needs was unmatched. We are very impressed.”

“We’re pleased to have entered this new partnership with Roko Health Club

and to be able to offer them a complete solution that will allow the team to truly attract, engage and retain their members at Chiswick Bridge,” says Paul Jones, key account manager for Matrix Fitness.

Matrix Connected Solutions is a fully integrated digital ecosystem that enhances the way machines are managed, members are motivated and the club brand is promoted.

Connected Solutions is a broad name for a large portfolio of products. All Matrix products support and facilitate Connected Solutions.

Data captured through these touch-points provides the operator with high-level insight and intelligence into their membership base; supporting business objectives through trackable statistics.

MATRIX

TEL: 01782 644900

EMAIL: info@matrixfitness.co.uk

WEB: www.matrixfitness.co.uk

ENGAGE & RETAIN

“

*The best time to plant a
tree was 20 years ago; the
second best time is now*



Myzone's Tamara Bailey says finding a way through the coronavirus crisis will mean taking an honest look at how successful your member engagement really is

Most of my career in the industry has been spent focused on the challenge of retention and strategies to improve it, either

as an operator or as a consultant and supplier of retention tools. Throughout that time, I've seen operators fall into four categories:

Denial

While some operators have a handle on member engagement, anyone who says "we don't have a retention problem" has always been a red flag to me. It's usually quantified by "we get great customer satisfaction scores" (not a measure of retention), "our attrition is low" (not a measure of retention) and "we make great sales" (not.....you see where I'm going!)

Silver bullet hunters

Those who accept they need to improve retention but think a single step/tool/change will bring about immediate results. That isn't how retention works.

Best intentions

Most operators fall into this category. They know retention is critical, that they need to improve and that it will take time and the creation of a strategy they are willing to work on. Unfortunately the urgent overtakes the important and it slips down the priority list to end up on the back-burner.

Doing it

There are some clubs and operators who are fantastic examples of commitment to member engagement, who have teams driven by their central purpose and who live and breathe it daily because it's who they are.

I don't know where you believe yourself and your organisation were sitting up to 20 March 2020 but I highly recommend you ask yourself the question and be honest with the answer, because you will have noticed that shit just got real!

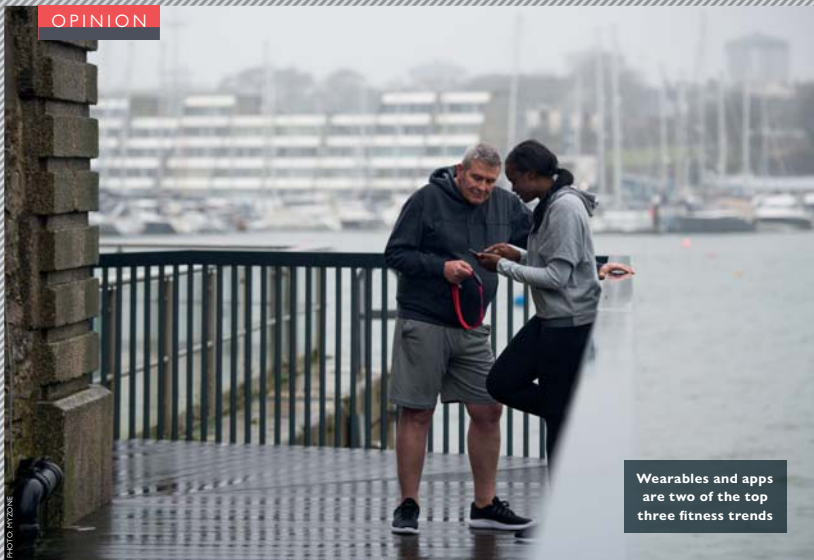
In a matter of weeks we went from the New Year influx of new members and implementing our 2020 plans to having to consider exactly how we could keep our business and our teams afloat.

The reality is, the coming weeks and months are going to be extremely challenging for us all and, if you didn't have a real and effective strategy to stay connected to your members before the 20 March forced closure, there's a real risk to the future.

However, as a good friend and ex-colleague once quoted to me, "the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago; the second best time is now".

The real opportunity here is the chance to use the closure time to focus on the business rather than just working in it. It's unlikely we'll ever be given this chance again, so we need to act and act fast and be aware of the facts:

Some operators are fantastic examples of commitment to member engagement



Wearables and apps are two of the top three fitness trends

PHOTO: MYZONE

PHOTOS: MYZONE

There is demand

The European Fitness Market has grown by 3.7 per cent in the last four years and was worth €28 billion in revenue in 2019, according to the Deloitte European Market Report.

€4.9bn of this was attributed to the UK, making it the second largest region for growth of revenue and member penetration.

Tech is the future

According to market experts, two of the top three trends for growth were apps and wearables (the other being indoor cycling). These are the future of fitness.

People want to exercise on their own terms

Fitness aggregators are growing, allowing people to have more choice about where and how they exercise and potentially removing the connection between member and club.

The only certainty is change

Whatever happens, when we finally open the doors, nothing will be the same.

So what now? We have an opportunity to shape our fitness offering and turn the challenge into something positive.

Be honest about your situation

Consider how connected you are to your members – you need to acknowledge your starting point and recognise both the gaps you need to fill and any good strategies that are in place already.

Acknowledge the 'new normal'. When we reopen our facilities we can't expect to operate as we did before, and maybe that's not a bad thing.

For a long time, we've been trying to force people to exercise a certain way. If nothing else, the last few weeks have shown us the potential of meeting people where they are and enabling them to exercise on their own terms.

Embrace Digital

Over the last few years the growth of digital has been well documented, but not well adopted. All this has changed in just a few weeks.

Build a virtual strategy, use apps and devices that build membership value.

Remote PT, programming and advice, at-home workouts and live streaming won't just be for lockdown – smart operators will make them part of their offering going forward.

Member retention has always been about building connection, habit and value, that won't change, but how

we do it must. It can open the door to people who can't – or choose not to – come into our clubs.

Map strategies to your purpose

Simon Sinek's Golden Circle remains relevant and is a fundamental key to success. If you know the 'why' of your club or organisation, the 'how?' and 'what?' become clear and align all departments and messages.

This doesn't mean facilities will be obsolete. People will always crave face to face experience – maybe now more than ever – and will continue to want to attend classes with their favourite rock star instructors.

There will still be value in the one-to-one support from trainers and a desire to take part in gym floor workouts, but by creating a more holistic experience, allowing people to exercise when, where and how they want, we not only improve the chances of them building and maintaining habits, we also potentially start to draw in a wider population of exercisers and increase member penetration and revenue streams.

The challenge ahead is real, but so is the opportunity. ●

Tamara Bailey is group account manager, UK, at Myzone. @tamara44

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Go:Do

Stay fit & Stay in touch

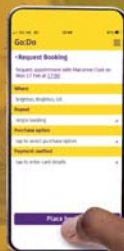
In these challenging times Go:Do Fitness are opening up their Personal Trainer listing and booking platform to all health and fitness clubs.... **For FREE!**

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Sign up for free



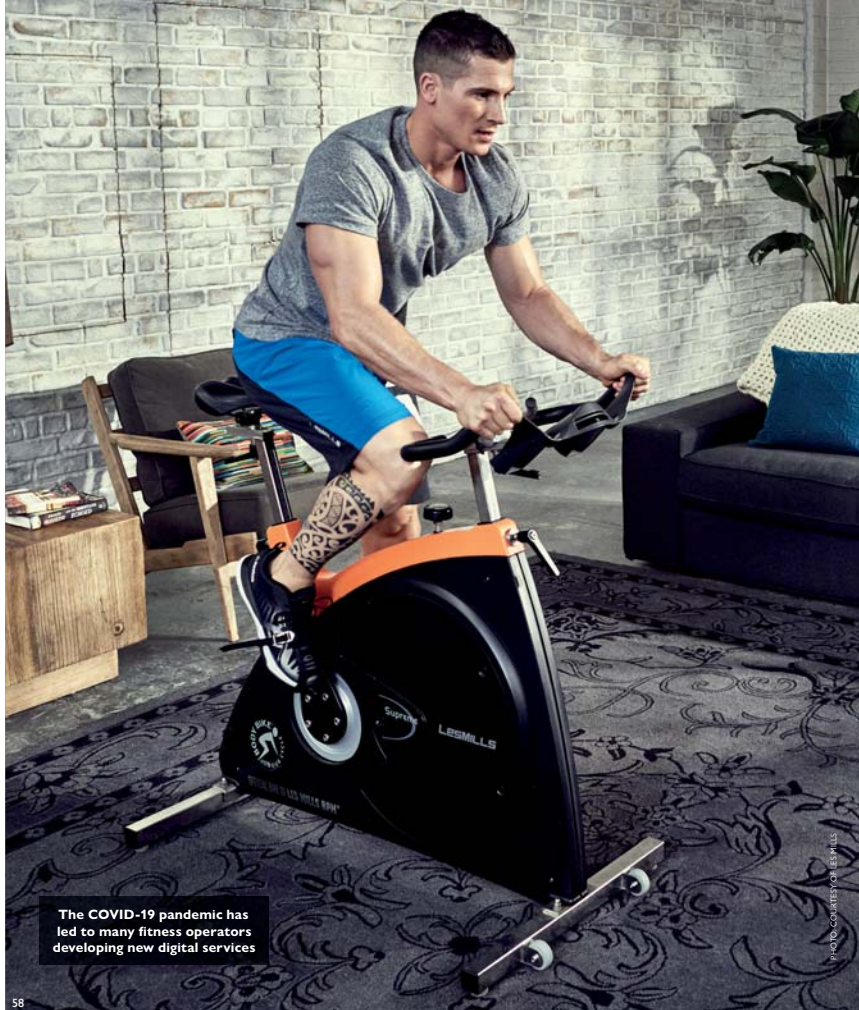
Choose your trainer



Place booking



Go:Do



The COVID-19 pandemic has led to many fitness operators developing new digital services



PIVOT *to* DIGITAL

The coronavirus pandemic has inspired a huge pivot to digital right across the industry, from sole traders to large chains and trusts. Kath Hudson looks at some of the offerings pulled together in lightning fast time to keep members active and sane

A

lthough the subject of embracing the age of technology to expand beyond the four walls of the club has been a talking point for years, not all operators were making it a priority above their day-to-day operations.

However, the sudden onset of COVID-19 meant everyone had no choice but to respond immediately, and they did an absolutely sterling job, utilising a variety of digital technologies.

Some operators have turned to established content providers, such as Les Mills or Virtuagym, which have been offering support and some free usage. Others have recorded

workouts for YouTube, or streamed classes via Facebook, Instagram or Zoom.

Within days of the enforced shutdown, the amount of content available online meant the world's confinement needn't be sedentary or miserable. From bodyweight training to HIIT, yoga and nutritional advice, a wealth of inspiring, nourishing content is being pumped out daily.

Now the argument for expanding beyond the four walls is over. Most operators have pivoted to digital and, as the new normal gets underway, can look at nuancing, and monetising, the offer and working out how it will complement their clubs when curfews are lifted. ►

BLOK

"We've been talking about an online offering for a while, but our digital strategy was longer-term, so we've had to think on our feet and rapidly change our plans," says Ed Stanbury, co-founder of boutique brand BLOK. "What we've launched is not the finished project, but is still part of our long-term strategy, rather than a quick response."

First to launch were 15 classes on Instagram, in partnership with Beats by Dr Dre, which will include headphone giveaways. This was followed up with a schedule of around 20 livestream classes a day and video on demand – before the lockdown was announced the team managed to film 30 workouts.

In order to continue to support the team – which includes around 200 freelance instructors – this will be a paid-for service. At the time of going to press the team were working out the options, including pay-as-you-go options.

"We'll continue to work on the full platform, which will be hyper-personalised with an app, a smart tv app, PT, live events, as well as editorial and audio content," says Stanbury. "Going forward this will be an additional service and retention tool for existing customers, as well as providing a marketing tool to raise brand awareness in a city prior to launching a club."



"What we've launched is not the finished project, but is still part of our long-term strategy, rather than a quick response"

Ed Stanbury

BLOK's Ed Stanbury says their team managed to film 30 workouts before lockdown was announced



The offering includes kids' classes

"Although we've had to close our clubs until further notice, operators still have a huge role to play" Duncan Jefford



EVERYONE ACTIVE

UK-based leisure trust Everyone Active has a very broad membership from five-year-olds to 75-year-olds and, as soon as the shut-down was announced, the team set to work finding a suite of solutions to keep all the members active. This is now being offered at £9.99 a month.

"Although we've had to close our clubs until further notice, operators still have a huge role to play in keeping people healthy and active, and supporting mental health during this crisis," says director Duncan Jefford.

"We've partnered up with Les Mills on Demand to offer a broad range of their workouts, as well as NEOU to offer thousands of dance, HIIT, sculpt and

stretch classes, including pre-recorded workouts and live streamed sessions," he said. "Live sessions help people to still feel part of a community, as they can arrange to go to the same class with their usual workout buddies. NEOU also includes NEO Kids which is ideal for kids PE lessons."

Everyone Active is also offering 8FIT, an app which includes pilates, meditation, meal plans, yoga and general wellbeing. Further programmes are also available on the EA platform and discussions are ongoing to further add to the offering

"I'm hugely excited by what we've created," says Jefford. "We've managed to cover online workouts, as well as live streamed classes which help our members retain a sense of community."



Frame Online is free for frontline workers and current members

FRAME

Just as **Frame** was gearing up to launch its eighth studio it had to do a quick pivot to launch Frame Online instead. Free for current Framers and frontline workers, it costs £10.99 a month for newbies.

Three genres of workout are on offer: Sweat, Sculpt and Party, made up of 18 classes with a series of high quality workout videos, including 80s Aerobics, Ass and Abs, and Mat Pilates.

Personalised training with expert instructors will also be offered via one-to-one video sessions, while digital corporate wellness packages give

employees access to the on-demand classes, as well as the option of bespoke corporate workshops encompassing meditation, sleep and happiness workshops.

Weekly workshops and events are also going online, including group hypnotherapy sessions, kicking off with Calming Anxiety in an Uncertain World.

Co-founder, Pip Black, says: "This is a difficult time for everyone. With the launch of Frame Online, we can continue to dish out those sweet endorphins and look after the nation's physical and mental health from the comfort of their homes."

URBAN SPORTS CLUB

Within three days of the club closures, Berlin-based Urban Sports Clubs had set up its first live classes and in 10 days launched a new product offering livestream courses directly from the studios. Every day around 50 new livestream workouts are being made available, and by the end of March there had already been more than 10,000 check-ins.

Members are being charged for the content, which is being used to support all of the partner venues under the company's umbrella, including those that are not able to offer their services at the moment, such as bouldering and swimming centres.

"Many of our members are showing their solidarity with our partners," says co-founder Benjamin Roth. "Even those who paused their memberships when their countries went into lockdown are now reactivating their memberships. They really care about their local studios and their trainers."

"The digital product is something we had in mind for a long time, but we had other priorities. When the lockdown came it was time to do it and we had the first live classes online after two days and a whole new online product in one and a half weeks!"

We needed to do something for our partners and members. Although there's still a lot to improve on and a lot to do, our partners are already working well with it and our members can stay active and healthy at home."

Roth says members want to support their local clubs

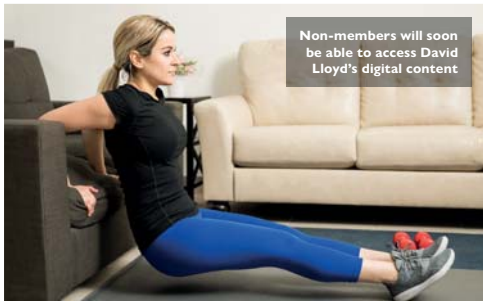
DAVID LLOYD LEISURE

The week after the shutdown, high-end family club operator David Lloyd Leisure launched David Lloyd Clubs@Home, offering virtual workouts for all ages and levels, which can be done in the home or garden.

The classes will be added to over the next few weeks and will be accompanied by expert wellbeing advice and information, and fun activities to keep the younger ones occupied in the weeks ahead, including arts and crafts and superhero workouts.


Live streamed classes will be available for HIIT, strength – using props like tins instead of weights; as well yoga, pilates, mindfulness classes and expert wellbeing advice. There will also be a programme of workout and meditation playlists available on David Lloyd Clubs' Spotify page and new content will be added on a continual basis.

Initially available through the David Lloyd Clubs members' app, the on-demand workouts will also soon be available to non-members in a more basic form through social media and the website, in a bid to broaden the reach of the business.



Non-members will soon be able to access David Lloyd's digital content





"The world is going through some tough times right now and we all have to adjust"

Kresten Juel Jensen

Motosumo has launched HomeTeam, to bring the group fitness vibe into the living room

MOTOSUMO

To make home exercise more sociable, Motosumo launched HomeTeam in response to the crisis, which gym operators can set up in a matter of minutes.

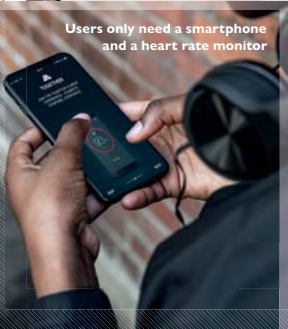
Home users only need a smartphone and a heart rate

monitor – and a stationery bike for cycling classes – and can tune into a live stream, race against other people, compare fitness data and enjoy other interactive features.

Kresten Juel Jensen, CEO of Motosumo, says HomeTeam aims to bring the group fitness vibe into the living room: "The world is going through some tough times right now and we all have to adjust.

"Livestreaming classes are great, but they don't capture the social experience of a real indoor cycling class or HIIT session. With HomeTeam, users can actually work as a team, compare stats or even compete and race against each other."

Available to gym operators on a monthly subscription, HomeTeam costs £106 (US\$124, €115) or, for indoor cycling, £177, (\$208, €192) and there is no binding contract.



Users only need a smartphone and a heart rate monitor



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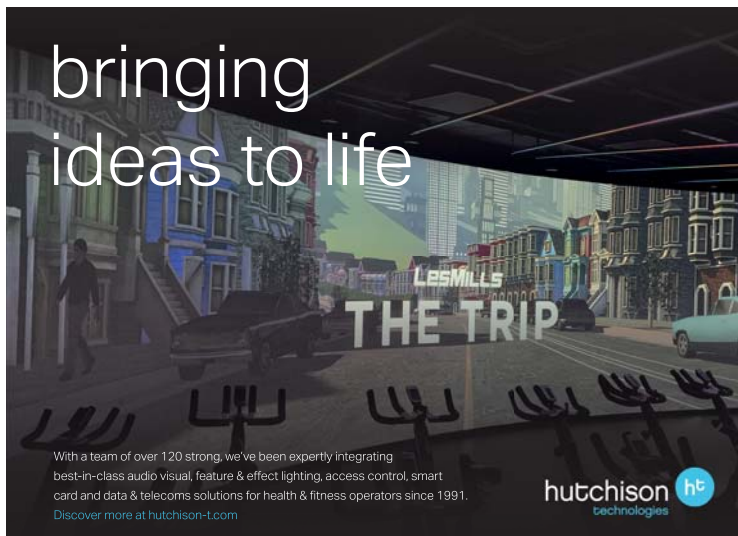
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A new future

As the sector looks into the void of the COVID-19 lockdown and its aftermath, Duncan Wood-Allum presents a blueprint for a positive future

For anyone who works in, or supports public sector leisure, my heart goes out to those who are grappling with the pressures of responding to lockdown and for those who have been furloughed and are waiting for signs of recovery.

I'm going to focus on public sector leisure provision and share thoughts on how our sector's future, post COVID-19 could play out. I'm talking council gyms, health and wellbeing hubs, leisure centres, swimming pools, parks, sports development and health outreach.

National organisations such as Sport England, ukactive, the Local Government Association, Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers' Association and Community Leisure UK have been working tirelessly together with government to respond to the crisis. Consultancies and law firms have been supporting councils in developing positive ways forward with their respective leisure operators and trust partners.

Does any one individual or organisation have all the solutions? Of course not. Many questions are yet to emerge as we deal with the uncertainty and all we can be sure of is that recovery will require one vital ingredient – leadership.

We all know post COVID-19, life for this sector is going to be challenging, but a post-COVID-19 world presents

a once-in-a-generation challenge and opportunity for us all. I believe we have the power to shape the sector's future, to create a fresh chapter for public leisure provision – one that has vision, purpose, hope and meaning.

We must fight for recovery. Accept we're not the only experts. Be humble enough to ask others for their opinion and their advice. Start thinking big, being more comfortable with personal and professional risk. Share with competitors because we want to learn from them.

Seeking out new ideas and being prepared to let go of old ones that are no longer relevant in a post COVID-19 world. Connecting with new people with different skills and knowledge in public health, health, mental health, youth work, adult social care and education; many of whom think differently from us and will challenge our thinking.

We have the power to collectively shape the sector's future, to create a fresh chapter for public leisure provision – one that has vision, purpose, hope and meaning.

The alternative doesn't bear thinking about.

Duncan Wood-Allum is MD of SLC, The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy. Contact: duncan@slc.uk.com

We have the power to shape the sector's future, to create a fresh chapter for public leisure provision – one that has vision, purpose, hope and meaning



The Blueprint

Sector colleagues use lockdown to network, read and share their thinking. They broaden their **knowledge** and search for new **opportunities** and **connections** in public health, social care and education.

Leisure, health and social care leaders come together as one to explore **joined up** service interventions, informed by **skilful** stakeholder management and messaging.

A clear **vision** emerges for the public leisure sector, designed to support the nation and founded on a new **strategy**. The aim is to create a **recovery** and **regeneration** service linked to health and wellbeing and the **rebuilding** of communities and the economy.

Sector bodies have put their tribalism aside and **support** the vision. They focus on articulating and planning what they can do **collectively** for a post-COVID-19 society, not what the government can do for them. The vision is so good it's **investable** – even in a recession.

Both central and local government leaders are **inspired** by the vision and strategy. They grasp it and see it as a key feature of the new 'normal'. They **embrace** it, adapt it and run with it, inspired by the **evidence, passion, enthusiasm, shared purpose** and consistent messaging of a sector speaking as one.

New collaborations and partnerships begin to form. There's a spirit of learning and **discovery**.

National **insight-led** campaigns are launched to communicate the vision and inspire the **mobilisation** of both the active and inactive with an even greater commitment to address inequalities.

New collaborations and partnerships will be needed, based on a spirit of discovery

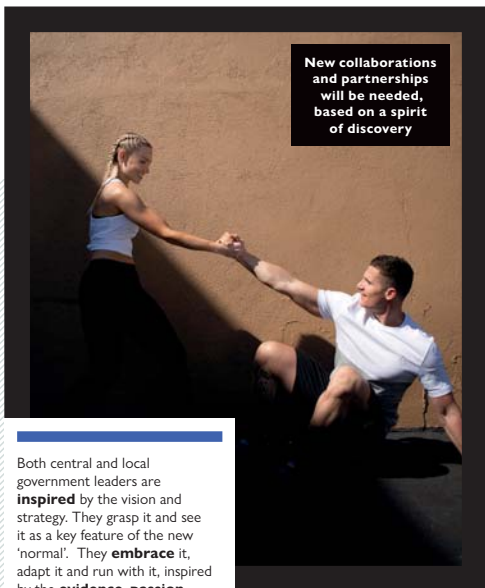


PHOTO LES MILLS

Proportionate universalism and whole systems thinking become key **foundations** for sector learning and service design. Martyn Allison is the leisure sector 'interpreter' for these concepts – I encourage you to be **curious** and find out about them in his LinkedIn articles. They changed my perspective on what this sector should be about. This enables us to ensure we address inequalities as part of core business, not as an afterthought.

Using this insight, leisure operators, trusts and their member organisations **collaborate** with experts in health and other sectors, involving the brightest and most **innovative** team members to explore new offers. This work is supported by national research to provide insight into future predicted **behaviour change** and the needs of a post-COVID-19 society.

A '**new normal**' starts to be defined from emerging evidence and shared experience. Council commissioners and their leisure operators **collectively** learn and share what people are thinking and what their needs will be in the future.

All public sector leisure operators provide transparent **open book access** to their partners for the foreseeable future. Relationships are strengthened as they work tirelessly to agree a **sustainable** way forward together for the next 6-18 months.

Through a clear post COVID-19 strategy, some councils may not reopen some of those **poorly-performing** and ageing facilities, but instead use the crisis to **reimagine** a compelling, affordable locally co-produced alternative.

Sustainable core leisure facilities and services start to **flourish** again, as councils take the opportunity to refocus on needs that can be met through a range of **viable interventions** and partnerships with their leisure operator partners.

These decisions are mindful of ensuring the **strategic alignment** of these partnerships, the economic sustainability of services and the establishment of effective **performance** management. This enables more local data to be used to shape the local offer and provide greater insight nationally to inform the sector as it moves towards a new **steady state**.

The best facilities will reopen, but poorly-performing ones may not



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



We must fight for recovery. Accept we're not the only experts

New markets are reached and engaged with for the first time. Programmes are – at times – **experimental**, with no fear of failure, but a commitment to learning. Promotions and offers are **crafted** to support the vision. They are evidence-based and designed to support longer-term sustainability.

Leisure operators and trusts use the **active environment** as an extension of their core offer – building on the nation's new love of walking, running, cycling, being outdoors. **Parklife** is back, accessible and affordable. They forge **deeper** partnerships with schools and local businesses, responding to the nation's need to move more.

Operational leisure staff start to see a **bright future** through the new vision and purpose. This is reinforced by the **clarity** of thinking shown by their leaders, who feel they're in the best possible position to **thrive** in future. They throw themselves into the recovery stage, with a real belief they're part of the new healthier society and sustainable sector that is **adapting** to support it.



The leisure service evolves into a more valued health and wellbeing service

Training and CPD opportunities begin to reflect the new vision and start developing **capacity** and **capability** in evidence-led health interventions, cross sector collaboration and partnership working.

The commitment to the **preventive health** agenda is redoubled. Public health becomes more established in local government and public leisure services evolve with them. Greater partnerships are fostered with the **voluntary** and sports sectors. Social prescription becomes an essential element of the sector's offer. GP's become a key partner and see the role we can play to support them in keeping their **community** active and healthy.

The **academic evidence** to support physical activity interventions builds momentum and influence linked to a more pragmatic and outcome driven approach.

Those public sector leisure operators and trusts with **strong relationships** and partnerships survive the crisis with the support of their partners and take the opportunity to reconnect with their communities through insight-led programming, and an improved **digital** offer. Through a **transparent** and partnership-based approach, they begin to regroup, **recover** and regenerate.

Management fees and funding agreements are necessarily subject to regular review and **fair adjustments** until steady state returns. Investment in leisure, health hubs and active community facilities will deliver the right financial and social **returns on investment** in future, delivering greater benefits to communities and value for money.

The leisure service **evolves** into a health and wellbeing service and becomes even more **valued** by political leaders at national and local levels through this recovery stage. The sector becomes a source of **hope**, recovery and regeneration. It begins to evolve as integral part of an emerging whole system supporting the nation's **wellbeing**.



BIG NUMBERS

Industry analyst David Minton launched his new fitNdata global monitor just in time to catch the headline numbers for the impact of the coronavirus on the sector. He tells us how it's looking

Just a few weeks ago I was writing and talking about the 'golden age' of fitness. The prelapsarian innocence of fitness, when all sectors across the industry were growing.

Then two decades of growth disappeared in just two weeks when all fitness sites closed.

Trend data, built up over many years of auditing the industry, shows fitness to have been recession-proof, but the immediate impact from the coronavirus is far worse than any recession.

Now is the moment of all moments for the fitness community to outfox the lockdown with innovative ideas, since measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 closed down society as we know it.

A NEW SERVICE

In December 1999 I contributed to an article in *Health Club Management* about artificial intelligence. My column – *Aye Al Captain* – pointed out that data remained the industry's most underutilised asset.

I used the analogy of the industry looking through the rear-view mirror at where it's been, rather than looking ahead to where it's going, when it came to using data.


In Dublin last October, at the IHRSA European Conference, the concept of intelligent crawlers cataloguing fitness sites worldwide had been proposed for the first time and as the contagion of fitness closures began to sweep across the world, a new startup – based in London – was using this technology to monitor the impact of the closures.

Launched by the team here at The Leisure Database Company, which has been auditing the UK fitness industry for the past 20 years, the new platform – called fitNdata – monitors the industry worldwide.

fitNdata is the fitness industry's first global platform and will change the way we look at data in 2020. For the first time, fitness trends will be monitored and reported in real-time.

fitNdata is being backed by Theo Hendricks in Holland, Barry Walsh in Ireland and Bryan O'Rourke and his partners at Vedere Ventures in the USA.

With the imposition of lockdowns, limitations of movement and the closure of borders and fitness sites, the intelligent crawlers were – irony of ironies – monitoring the closures and not, as we had planned, the continued expansion of the sector. ►



230 million people
are currently locked
out of their gym

“

the conservative
estimate is that

230 million
fitness members are
in **lockdown** and
unable to use
their gym

“

fitNdata has reached over
100 countries
and collected information on
239,101 fitness sites

The **shocking reality**
is that **64%**
are closed

Those in the fitness industry
can become the new
heroes by helping people
to adopt healthy habits

► IMPACT OF COVID

By the end of March 2020 the World Health Organization, a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health, estimated that 2.6 billion people, or roughly 30 per cent of the world's population, was living under some form of lockdown.

Now, for the first time, the wider fitness family can see the impact of the first pandemic on the industry and its community. The fitNdata platform has reached over 100 of the most populated countries and identified, validated and collected information on 239,101 fitness sites. The shocking reality is that 64 per cent of these are currently closed. The conservative estimate is that 230 million fitness members are in lockdown and unable to use these fitness sites.

The fitNdata platform, by default, has become the de facto source of global fitness data. The platform has also gathered more data, more often, more quickly than ever expected. Once the intelligent crawler has been trained further, it can be put to work in the cloud to deepen the analytics.

One billion data points will be reached this year, with a new 'time-series' database to cope with the daily influx of changes on sites, facilities, classes, internet of (fitness) things and social media activity.

A SECOND GOLDEN AGE

The world's new buzz words: social distancing, self-isolation, flattening the curve and lockdown are part of the new vocabulary, along with the distressing reports on the number of cases and deaths, coming from health researchers.

These researchers, along with the health workers who receive our applause each Thursday, share the platform with politicians and give public information broadcasts.

In many countries, daily exercise is now part of the government guidelines and fitness researchers, academics, personal trainers and instructors could become the new heroes and help change behaviour and attitude towards personal fitness levels.

The pandemic gives the health and fitness industries a chance to work together to improve the health of the world and fitness has a new force, real time data monitoring, ready to track outcomes as we work toward the next golden age of fitness. ●





“

*The pandemic gives
the health and fitness
industries a chance to
work together to improve
the health of the world*

TAKE A NEW PATH

Premier Global NASM has restructured its education offering to create new career pathways to help personal trainers and individuals entering the sector navigate their way to career success. Dan Rees explains the rationale

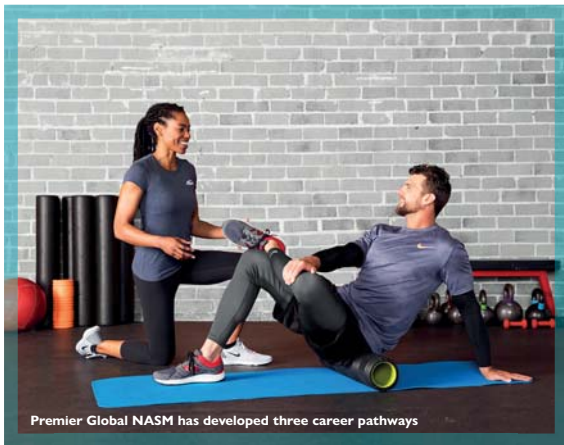
"Sifting through the minefield of qualifications and education programmes to carve out a successful career as a health and wellbeing coach or exercise professional can be difficult," says Dan Rees, commercial director of Premier Global NASM.

To help simplify the process and give individuals a clear pathway to their chosen goal, Premier Global NASM has developed three career pathways: elite fitness trainer, health and wellness specialist, and strength and conditioning coach.



"Our new pathways have been developed to fast-track learners to success, efficiently and effectively, enabling them to become specialists in their chosen field, making them highly employable and in a perfect position to deliver success"

Dan Rees, Commercial Director,
Premier Global NASM



Premier Global NASM has developed three career pathways

"Personal trainers are not all created equal," says Rees. "These pathways will create a new generation of highly employable, specialised fitness professionals with the core skills to apply training to any situation, supported by skill specialisms that distinguish them from the crowd."

"All our learners are now offered an opportunity to choose a pathway tailored to support their own career journey. We empower them to stand out in the market through the provision of relevant, employer-led training and education that supports individual career

aspirations. Our new pathways have been developed to fast-track learners to success, efficiently and effectively, enabling them to become specialists in their chosen field, making them highly employable and in a perfect position to deliver success," he explains.

Each pathway is built on the fundamental coursework required to earn the Level 2 and Level 3 Diplomas in Personal Training, incorporating Premier Global NASM's world renowned Optimum Performance Training™ (OPT™) model, plus training in corrective exercise and nutrition. Building



Learners benefit from Premier Global NASM's online career service

on this solid foundation, each pathway then delivers unique training specialisms.

The Elite Fitness Trainer pathway broadens the trainer's scope by offering additional certifications as a performance enhancement specialist, TRX suspension trainer and behaviour change specialist.

All this is supported by a business development course, giving learners the tools needed to build and manage a successful business, with an emphasis on the delivery of group training.

The health and wellness specialist pathway comes with five additional specialisations, including key areas of focus that allow the trainer to personalise programmes to market segments, for example women, older clients and children.

The strength and conditioning coach pathway emphasises supporting clients to build stamina and power. Content includes the performance enhancement specialisation (NASM-PES) and a Level 4 strength and conditioning course.

These programmes expand the learner's ability to work with clients at every level, from complete beginners to professional athletes.

In addition to the provision of skills and knowledge, learners also benefit from Premier Global NASM's comprehensive online career service.

Here they can access a wealth of information on careers in the sector and further training options. This access continues for two years post-graduation from their chosen pathway.

"These new pathways, coupled with Premier Global NASM's career services portal and close collaboration with the major employers in the fitness sector, enable us to provide learners with a wraparound support system, ensuring they enter the industry fit for purpose with all the tools they need to build a successful career," says Rees. "All our education is based on proven, scientific theory, accredited by ActiveQ and endorsed by CIMSPA.

"Through the creation of these pathways, we help fitness, wellbeing and sports professionals better understand opportunities to build a lifelong career in the sector. Without clear progression goals, many personal trainers get stuck in limbo, unsure how to advance.

"Without the motivation or understanding of how to grow and flourish, many people exit the sector to seek opportunities elsewhere. Our ambition is to attract talent to the workforce and then retain it, elevating standards and improving service delivery," concludes Rees. ●



TEL: +44 (0)203 873 7512

INSTAGRAM: @premierglobalnasm

EMAIL: courses@premierglobal.co.uk

WEB: www.premierglobal.co.uk



BLACKWELL-FROST FRIEND CRAWFORD

Kate Cracknell talks connected health and digital transformation

with Chris Blackwell-Frost, Martin Friend and Rick Crawford

from Nuffield Health's senior management team



*We impacted
1.5 million lives last
year and every year
we challenge ourselves
to go further*



CHRIS BLACKWELL-FROST

CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER

What's Nuffield Health's mission?

We're clear on what our purpose is. We're the UK's largest healthcare charity and that flows through our DNA and into all of our decision-making.

We encapsulate this in a simple mission statement: 'Nuffield Health exists to build a healthier nation'. I know that sounds like a cliché, but it genuinely is the thing that drives all of our activity, the work we do and the way we're moving the business forward.

Sitting beneath that, we have our three guiding principles. Firstly, if we want to build a healthier nation, we need to extend our reach to improve the health not only of the patients and members who use us, but also those who live near our facilities – and even beyond.

We impacted 1.5 million lives last year and every year we challenge ourselves to go further.

Second is our concept of connected health, which Martin will tell you more about.

In brief, connected health means that – no matter where you are on your healthcare and wellbeing journey – as soon as you touch any part of Nuffield Health, we're there with the support and advice you need.

There's a whole loop of getting you fit, maintaining your wellbeing, then – if you do end up requiring treatment, whether that be physio or hospital treatment – putting you back together again and getting you back to fitness.

In this respect, our hospitals, clinics and gyms aren't currently as well-connected as we would ideally like. We're integrated as an organisation – our regional directors now look after the hospitals, gyms and clinics in their areas – and

there are already some connected pathways in place, but there's still more work to be done in this area.

Our vision is for there to be a totally integrated, seamless journey available for all our members and patients across the full breadth of our organisation.

Third, whether through our hospitals, clinical services or gyms, we strive to achieve the highest level of quality and outcomes for the patients and members who use us.

Our bigger vision is to then become an all-encompassing health and wellbeing provider catering to all stages of the healthcare journey, and to do so in a way that extends our reach beyond our members.

How will you extend your reach?

We currently have 31 hospitals, 200 corporate clinics and 112 gyms, and we're looking to grow that number.

From a physical estate perspective, there are currently areas of the UK where we have white spaces: hospitals where there are no gyms or gyms where there are no hospitals.

For 75 per cent of our estate, there's already a gym or hospital nearby, but we're keen to fill in the gaps; connecting our whole estate geographically will allow us to provide a seamless member experience in all locations.

A big one will be the opening of our first London hospital in 2021, but I think it's realistic to say that, in 10 years' time, 85-90 per cent of the population could be served by a Nuffield Health hospital or gym within an hour's drive.

We'll also extend our reach digitally and we're already working hard on that side of our offering.

Over the years, as our business has grown, we've ended up with numerous repositories of data. The 2025 vision is to bring all of that together into a single customer view.

In turn, this will enable us to support people with whatever health services they need, measure the outcomes of those interactions and then provide an even more personalised service on the back of that.

Even if you don't live near a physical building that belongs to Nuffield, you'll still be able to access our services digitally. ►

Nuffield Health currently has 31 hospitals, 200 corporate clinics and 112 gyms



- You can still have a digital health assessment, interact with a virtual clinician and get the support you need.

We expect digital will mostly be used as an add-on to our physical facilities, but if we ultimately achieve our ambition – to stop being such a well-kept secret, and instead become the UK's most trusted health and wellbeing brand by 2025 – then there's no reason why people wouldn't make us their first port of call digitally too.

Quite aside from the triage capability of AI, there's a whole plethora of self-help areas where we can help, and where online is actually an appealing way for people to start.

So, that's the long-term digital vision, but we have to start somewhere, and the starting point is that single customer view. This is the foundation that will allow us to build strong, personalised relationships with members and patients across our full physical and digital network.

What about your flagship programmes?

We'll continue to grow our flagship programmes. These involve us going out into the community to deliver either free or highly subsidised health programmes for those might most benefit from this help, but who can't necessarily afford or who don't have access to our services.

This comes back to our charity status, whereby rather than just looking at things through a purely financial lens, we also measure the value of our initiatives on the basis of social return on investment. We then know where we're having the greatest impact, whether that's assisting those with joint pain to the point that they're able to go back to work, working with those dealing with cancer, or helping children in schools to lead a healthier life.

It's been a huge drive for us to extend these flagship programmes and initiatives over the last 18 months, and we'll continue to build and build them.

We're a charity, so we do look at things through a different lens. Our hospital business is driven by episodic revenue, but if we can get patients through physio to the point where they don't require an operation or other such intervention, then that's a good outcome for us.

Ours is absolutely a health and prevention agenda rather than a hospital-based agenda. People are getting older, so I can't imagine us ever getting to the point where our hospitals aren't required, but our focus is on keeping people healthy and out of hospital as much as possible.

Are the standalone clinics also part of your growth plans?

These are pretty much all corporate driven: we're the largest provider of corporate wellbeing services in the UK, with 100,000 members who use corporate gyms within their places of work. Alongside this are our clinics, but again these are created on behalf of our corporate clients.

I don't see the standalone clinic model being used to fill gaps in our consumer-facing estate. We will still be focusing on creating full-scale hospitals and, at a gym level, using a format that goes no smaller than our existing Fitness & Wellbeing Clubs. However, within that, we're shifting our clinics out of our hospitals and into our gyms, so hospital patients will now use our gyms for their rehab and clinical activity. Ultimately, we want to use our clubs to improve the outcomes of our clinical services, which all comes back to our core concept of connected health.



*By the end of 2021,
every one of our Fitness
& Wellbeing Clubs will
have a physiotherapist
and CBT therapist
on-site*



MARTIN FRIEND

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Tell us more about connected health

Connected health, put simply, is about end-to-end care. It's about a personalised journey that embraces everything from preventative health – our Fitness & Wellbeing facilities – through a middle ground where you might need some diagnosis or physiotherapy, for example, right through to intervention and cure in our hospitals.

It's about getting the support and advice you need from us to improve your health and wellbeing. If you just want to come to us for your fitness, fantastic, but we're seeing more people than ever who want to engage in total wellbeing.

Nuffield Health is unique in its ability to support people throughout this entire journey of health and wellbeing.



■ NUFFIELD STEPS UP IN THE CORONA CRISIS

As the UK's largest healthcare charity, we have a huge role to play in supporting the nation during the Covid-19 pandemic

At this unprecedented time, we're easing the pressure on NHS trusts and teams by making 30 of our hospitals (in England and Wales), our hospital teams, equipment and over 1,000 beds available to the NHS to support patients fighting the coronavirus – as well as people who need urgent elective or cancer care.

Access to our 14 nurseries is also available for NHS and key workers to relieve the strain on employees and their families. We're also reviewing how our workforce across its network of fitness and wellbeing clubs and clinics can support NHS hospitals and patients. We will be reimbursed at cost, meaning no profit will be made, this will be audited by external auditors.

In line with guidance from both the government and Public Health England,

our fitness and wellbeing clubs are currently closed. Membership fees have been frozen and we won't be collecting any direct debit payments until we can re-open our clubs.

We're keeping members up to date regarding re-opening and alternative ways to stay fit, healthy and active during this time, with advice articles and online workouts, as well as activities to help parents maintain and improve the wellbeing and fitness of their children.



If someone is having emotional wellbeing therapy with Nuffield, they get a month's free gym membership

► **How are you structured as an organisation to be able to deliver this?**

As Chris mentioned, we're working to create health communities around the UK where our hospitals and fitness clubs are geographically connected. That's an important starting point: it will ensure the pathways are there to quickly and comprehensively meet the local population's healthcare needs, all within one organisation.

Then, at a club level, we'll work with you to achieve your fitness goals, but if at some point you need an intervention, then we can help here too.

By the end of 2021, all of our Fitness & Wellbeing Clubs will have a physiotherapist and CBT therapist on-site, while half of our estate is already on the Wellbeing Centre+ model. This offers more clinical services – health assessments, pathology lab on-site, potentially a GP on-site – and we'll keep expanding that clinical offering.

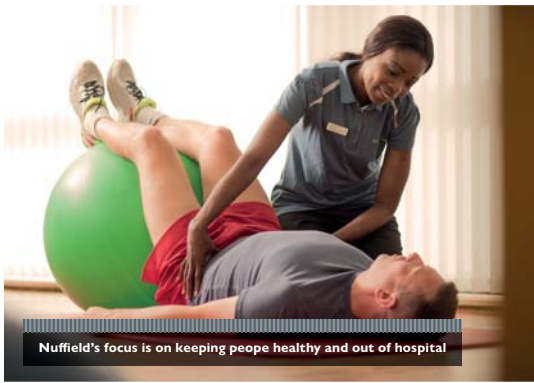
And all facets of our offering are linked. If someone is having emotional wellbeing therapy with us, for example, they also get a month's free gym membership as part of that. Because it's clinically proven that, by exercising while you're suffering from anxiety and depression, you're more likely to reduce your symptoms. I think this is a really important area in which we have a huge opportunity to make a difference to the nation's wellbeing.

Meanwhile, hospital patients who have a knee or hip replacement will have their physiotherapy in the club, and alongside this they get 12 weeks' free gym membership as well as some specialist personal training. It means they recover quicker and it gives them a pathway into Fitness & Wellbeing, with many signing up for membership. That's great.

We don't want someone having an operation and then, six months later, to be knocking on the hospital's door again.

And, of course, all our members have access to regular Health MOTs. These might highlight a medical challenge, a physical challenge, an emotional challenge, and it's our opportunity to flag this to the member and offer them access to a free initial consultation. This is the benefit of having Clinical Services within the Fitness & Wellbeing Clubs and of having multiple service lines within our business.

So that's Connected Health. Once we have our geography sorted, it means we can offer people the opportunity to not only get better, or be cured, but to stay well afterwards.



Nuffield's focus is on keeping people healthy and out of hospital



Nuffield gyms are completely kitted out with state-of-the-art equipment

Are you able to tell us more about the flagship programmes Chris mentioned?

One great example is our cystic fibrosis programme, which has been going for years, working closely with Great Ormond Street Hospital. The research from that programme, demonstrating the benefits of exercise for cystic fibrosis patients, has won awards.

Participants in the programme are offered a free one-to-one personal training session each week at a participating Nuffield Health Fitness & Wellbeing Club – pre-booked to reduce the risk of cross-infection between young people with cystic fibrosis. Each participant works with a specially trained PT, following a tailored training programme to help develop lung capacity, aerobic fitness and general wellbeing.

At the same time, their parents are allowed to come in and also use the club for free. It's about trying to give them an hour that just makes them feel better.

Our SWAP programme for schools is also fantastic. It's a six-week behavioural change programme where we go into predominantly primary schools to educate the children about the four main areas of wellbeing: physical activity, diet, sleep and emotional resilience. We have 325 programmes across the UK at the moment and more schools are actively approaching us. We're now looking at creating a handbook and online tool for schools that aren't located close to a Nuffield Health, and we're starting to provide online emotional wellbeing support for the teachers too.

Our Joint Pain programme is relatively new, but it's already getting great results. Over 60 per cent of those who have taken part are clinically recognised as having significantly improved and are living with less pain. We've had letters from consultants to say they've taken patients off operation waiting lists after they've taken part. Chris received a beautiful letter from a patient with early onset arthritis, who went on our programme and then walked Hadrian's Wall with her family.



Are these programmes available in your clubs too?

The health piece is very important in terms of differentiating our member experience. We're working to embrace more health conditions in our gym programmes, and we're creating a medically-specific portfolio of classes.

Joint Pain is the first: it's already available in 50 per cent of our clubs and we will continue to roll it out across our estate. We're also working with Sheffield University and Sheffield Hallam University on a programme for men with prostate cancer; we're calling it STAMINA. We're piloting that to see if we can improve quality of life. We're also exploring options for a breast cancer programme, and we will be looking at diabetes – at what classes we can design to help patients manage their condition, lose weight and so on.

I'm really keen to look at specialities that impact a lot of people. How can Nuffield Health help people living with these conditions to improve their health or improve their quality of life? That's what our charity is about. ▶



*We're the largest
employer of CIMSPA
professionals in the UK
– 1,700 people across
our business*

RICK CRAWFORD

HEAD OF FITNESS

What role does your fitness team play in delivering connected health?

I have to start with the standards and the quality of our team. We're the largest employer of CIMSPA professionals in the UK – 1,700 people across our business – and that adds a seal of quality and robustness to the fitness professionals themselves. Our medical professionals, be they GPs, occupational therapists, emotional wellbeing practitioners, physiotherapists or consultants, can confidently refer into our fitness teams.

There are pathways within our business to facilitate that too. Recovery Plus, for example – that's the 12-week programme for post-operative patients that Martin mentioned. The physiotherapists work side-by-side with the fitness professionals; there's some specific training that we put our personal trainers through that allows them to do that.

Then there's the flip-side of that, where our fitness professionals might be training clients who pick up a sports injury or a medical condition. Our teams all have internal referral pathways, so they can refer their clients to the relevant specialists within Nuffield Health.

It can sometimes be as easy as grabbing the physiotherapist for a few minutes – if they aren't with a patient, the physio will be on the gym floor – and bringing them into

the session to do a quick assessment, offer a bit of advice, maybe suggest a few exercises for the member to do. If they feel the member needs more help, they can make an appointment for them. It works really nicely.

We've also been hearing about a digital journey. Where does fitness sit in this?

In fact, the work really started in the fitness area as a result of our partnership with Technogym and its Mywellness platform. Nuffield Health now has its own wellbeing app – My Wellbeing – which allows our members to download workouts, take part in fitness challenges and track their progress over time, both in and outside of the gym.

In the first instance, it's enabling customers to access content that's relevant to them, including content designed

The gym floor has been divided into zones





A gym transformation programme has so far been rolled out across 46 clubs

■ THE NUFFIELD WELLBEING APP

Nuffield's My Wellbeing app, powered by Technogym, extends support outside the gym, engaging members and providing a full wellbeing service.

Features include weekly workouts such as HIIT, core, family workouts and stretch and mobility; a range of challenges to keep members motivated; access to Nuffield home workout videos on YouTube; activity tracking through integration with Strava, Fitbit and Garmin; outdoor activity tracking through in-app GPS; challenges and activities for kids via the kids' wellbeing pages; links to expert content, such as emotional wellbeing, nutrition and physio articles and advice.

by our experts: workouts they can do with a specific medical condition, for example, or if they're recovering from an injury.

But this is just the beginning; we have huge ambitions for our digital channels. So far, we're only seeing the tip of the iceberg in terms of using these channels to knit our service lines together, but the aspiration is absolutely to use the app as a way for people to connect digitally with all of our services. We're talking everything from booking a GP or hospital appointment, to tracking their Health MOT data and progress, to following personalised programmes based on their health assessments, their injuries, etc.

I absolutely see our app being the hub of how a customer will engage with Nuffield Health, facilitating personalised care both in and outside of our facilities.

What else has been happening in the fitness space?

We realised a few years ago that our physical gym floor proposition needed a step change: equipment, concepts,

layout. We wanted to look at it slightly differently to reflect different demographics, including older users, without alienating our core users; in 2019, our most active members were those aged 70–79 years, with members in this age group visiting on average 26 times a month. For members aged 20–29 that figure was 18, and for those aged 30–39 it was 19.

We've therefore been rolling out a gym transformation programme across our estate, creating fantastic gym floors that are accessible to all demographics. We've completed this work in 46 clubs so far, and in the next few years I expect to have transformed all the clubs we intend to transform.

A lot of thought goes in to making our gyms as welcoming as possible, especially for beginners. You come onto the gym floor and you'll immediately see the less intimidating options, with the more advanced stuff a little further away.

What we've created, in collaboration with Technogym, is a zonal approach to the gym floor. This includes signature areas such as our coaching zone – a non-intimidating space where beginners can get support from personal trainers to try out new equipment and exercises. That's probably my favourite, but there are others too. A mobilisation zone. A self-assessment zone, complete with InBody body composition analysis. A series of small group training zones including our SKILL Zone with Technogym SKILLRUNs and Origin functional equipment for HIIT training with a Nuffield twist. Because even here, we make it approachable and non-intimidating, with beginner sessions and so on.

We've also created a new studio cycling concept, NuCycle. This was first trialled in one of our forward-thinking corporate sites, but has now spilled into our wider offering. We're working with Technogym on this too. We've already introduced it at 25 clubs and it's fast becoming a staple part of our gym transformation programme – we've probably done 15 of these studios in the last year and I think we will put them everywhere we possibly can. ●

It's easy to get stuck in a functional rut, relying on the same old burpees and ball slams. We ask for inspiration on how to put the fun back into functional training

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a white tank top, is performing a pull-up on a silver bar. She has tattoos on her arms, including a colorful one on her right bicep and a script one on her left forearm that reads "the only way to be true". Her hair is flying around as she pulls herself up. In the background, another person is partially visible, also working out.

PUTTING the fun into functional

Les Mills

Bryce Hastings, head of research

The energetic nature of functional training increases the chances of enjoyment through freedom of movement, making it more likely people will adhere to programming.

Even the most effective workout is useless if no one wants to do it, so the ultimate aim must be delivering fun. Our research indicates that a focus on experience is key. While technique and good coaching are important, we know it's the experience that ultimately brings people back and keeps them engaged.

Non-conventional exercises that use external equipment can help to add more interest to a workout. For example, tyre flipping and battle ropes – which are also great for intensity – add an element of complexity and cognitive function. Movements which participants wouldn't necessarily have access to everywhere they go add that extra element of interest.

Bryce's Les Mills faves

Les Mills Grit and Les Mills Tone classes.



The ultimate aim must be delivering fun



Learning new skills can be hugely rewarding



Functional training can assist all sports

Auster Fitness

Andrew Siu,
CEO and system developer

Functional fitness is about learning skill moves, and it has a place in assisting all sports. Learning new skills like handstands or even just proper squat form can be hugely rewarding. Likewise, the basic movements of each sport can be identified, such as reaching, pulling, rotating, etc., and these can all be repeated in a way to make an exercise flow.

These movements can be synchronised and repeated to the beat, creating elegant synched movements. This will improve sporting performance and also be a fun way to train.

Andrew's Auster faves

Power straps and dynamic resistance bands, separately and in combination.

FUNCTIONAL

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Collaboration and competition increase sense of belonging

Pavigym

Daniel López, programme manager

Interaction and community is key. People want challenges, competitions and a good system to measure their progress and results. This is why technology is important. In Prama, we include games during the warm-up – think ‘rock, paper, scissors’ – getting everyone together in pairs or threes.

We also try to include accessories or technological elements from the beginning of each session, in order to encourage users to both train harder and get more enjoyment. Our star exercise is our ‘fast feet’ competition, where users run on the spot and sensors count their steps. It’s the perfect end to the session that encourages both collaboration and competition, increasing the fun factor and sense of belonging for all users.

Daniel's Pavigym faves

The Prama Combo unit – a wall and floor combination with 18 sensors in two square formations, all controlled by software.

Pavigym includes games in its sessions



Matrix's MX4 small group training



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You can do functional training anytime, anywhere



Matrix Fitness

Matt Gleed, head master trainer

Functional fitness can be completely creative and dynamic, a collaboration of interesting circuits, equipment and environments. It's easy to change up the scenery by taking functional fitness into the great outdoors, where fresh air, great views or good weather can inspire new levels of motivation in your clients or members.

Functional fitness is completely transportable, it's the fitness journey that you can take with you when you travel, meaning you can do functional training anytime, anywhere in the world, in some of the most scenic locations.

Matt's Matrix faves:

The Matrix MX4 small group training programme, which is centred around the concepts of functional fitness, working with the Matrix Connexus range.



Offering a range of functional choices is crucial

Precor

Erica Tillinghast, global education manager

The functional fitness spectrum appeals to a broad range of people. For the social, play-based exerciser, incorporating school-inspired games into group workouts provides throw-back excitement for the young at heart.

Gamifying workouts with leaderboards, incorporating new exercises that will help enhance skills outside the gym, and partnering up and including interactive exercises will also add a

fresh lens to functional training.

It's important to remember that 'fun' means something different to everyone. There is no one-size-fits-all workout that will captivate every exerciser. Offering a range of programme choices that map to different exerciser values and aspirations is your best bet to long term programme success and ingenuity.

Erica's Precor faves:

Queenax, paired with Precor's PT workshops, and Precor's new launch, Studio Ignite, a comprehensive high intensity interval training programme.



**Incorporate
school-inspired
games to provide
throw-back
excitement**



**Remember the relevance
to real-life movement**

Physical Company

Lawrence Price, master trainer

We know how important standalone compound strength is but developing functional training is the bridge from the squat rack into everyday life, sports and full human potential.

The key is to remember the relevance to real-life movements and not to fall into the trap of pursuing overly elaborate exercises and routines at the expense of sensible training methodologies.

Many people struggle to connect with traditional fitness methods but find great enjoyment in being able to express themselves physically through the multitude of formats functional training brings – from dance to cross training fitness tests.

Lawrence's Physical Co faves:

Physical Company wall balls and battle ropes.

FUNCTIONAL



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Games help people let go of tension and frustrations

Technogym

Stu Gatherum, educator and master trainer

Functional fitness is a real winner because it is so versatile. I define it as training someone to be fit for what they have to do. Once you understand exactly why the client has come to the gym, you can use functional fitness training to achieve that. Functional training helps people be more successful in their day-to-day physical tasks.

I always encourage trainers to introduce games, especially in warm ups. Games help people let go of tension and get rid of any frustrations they've brought into the gym. This kind of play and movement help people feel less self-conscious, which can be a key barrier for many – especially at the start of a session. Games get the heart-rate up and get people using the space and moving in different ways. It's a great way to encourage people to loosen up and relax into the session. It will also bond a group quickly.

Stu's Technogym faves:

Technogym speed ladders, jump ropes, plyo boxes, slam balls and Skillmill.



Street recommends the Synrgy360 rig



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There's something about being outside that adds a smile to any workout

Life Fitness

Paul Street, national health and fitness manager, Serco Leisure

Getting involved in a group fitness functional offering can really increase the motivation and fun. It adds a social element too, as people stay around and chat afterwards. To boost the fun further, we've experimented by adding a light-hearted, competitive element to some of our functional sessions.

What's also proven popular for us is having the ability to shift a session outdoors and use our training yard. There's something about being outside that adds a smile to any workout. Interestingly, we're seeing people smiling even when they work out in the wind and rain! While people love working out in the sunshine, there's definitely a special kind of camaraderie that comes from exercising as a group when the weather's not so nice.

Paul's Life Fitness faves:

The Life Fitness Synrgy360 rig.

Games help people to feel less self-conscious





Crosstrain with functional equipment to prevent boredom



Encourage members to train for something

Escape Fitness

Ben Hackney-Williams, head of content

My advice is to encourage members to train for something. Book a 5k, 10k, half marathon, or whatever kind of event you're interested in, and then crosstrain with functional equipment. It will mean that you don't get bored of only running, for example, but you still improve through plyo jumps, squats, or cardio workouts.

Ben's Escape faves:

Escape's Strongbox – an all-in-one workout station.

Pulse Fitness

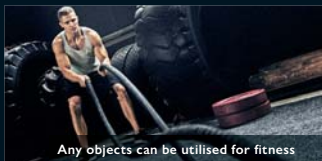
Ben Steadman, business development director

I love the ability to use weird and inanimate objects as workout tools. With functional fitness you can just use the environment around you and focus on your own body weight as your main resistance.

When I was training as a Prison Service PTI, we used to race using wooden benches, med balls, sticks and about anything else we could lay our hands on. We utilised team games that were both functional and fun. The fact you have so many exercises and formats available to use in functional fitness gives you so much flexibility.

Ben's Pulse faves

Medicine balls, kettlebells, plyometric boxes, ropes, rings and bands.



Any objects can be utilised for fitness



Use weird and inanimate objects

SOFT POWER

With the coronavirus pandemic forcing gyms across the world to temporarily close their doors, staying connected to your members digitally has never been more important. Software suppliers tell Steph Eaves how they're contributing

VIRTUAGYM

Joeri Nanov,
global director of marketing

How does you enable operators to keep in touch with members when they're not at the gym?

By using our personalised branded fitness app, gym and studio owners can stay connected with members at all times.

The app keeps clients engaged through push notifications and allows members to easily access digital training plans and the world's largest 3D workout library (which can be done at home).

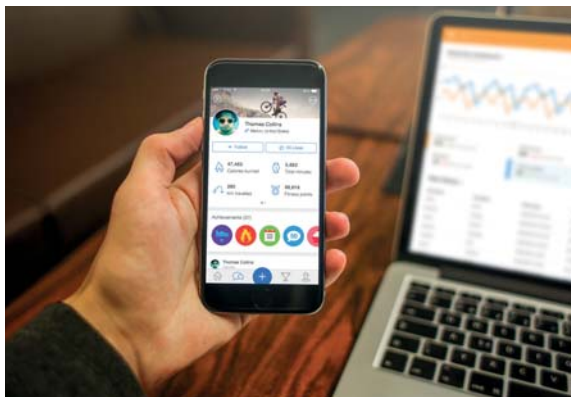
What facility does it have to help clubs build a community of members?

Our Community Club feature means customers can mass-message members or target them individually with one-to-one messaging.

"Virtuagym @Home is a new seamless integration of our Virtual Trainer and Video On Demand features to help gyms and studios take their businesses online"



Joeri Nanov



The app allows club operators to assign workouts and track progress

Helping our customers build a community is a key focus for us. Our app has a social sharing feature that allows members to create personal profiles, post updates and pictures to share their progress and stay connected outside the gym. It allows fitness professionals to set challenges and track their members' successes on a leaderboard. That means you can reward the most active members in your digital community.

In what other ways will your software support operators to rise to the challenges presented by COVID-19?

Virtuagym @Home is a new seamless integration of our Virtual Trainer and

Video On Demand feature to help gyms and studios take their businesses online. It includes thousands of animated workouts and provides gym members with access to bespoke training plans, which are carried out in-app and performed by 3D characters.

The tool helps health club operators to mass assign a variety of workouts and track progress of their members. Video On Demand offers digital workouts that members can do at home without equipment – different categories and difficulties make the feature suitable for all types of audiences, from hardcore workouts, cardio, Zumba, HIIT training and dancing to meditation and yoga classes.



Content is customisable with Fisikal, and can be imported or created from a library of pre-loaded videos

FISIKAL LTD

Rob Lander, CEO

How does your software enable operators to keep in touch with members when they are not at the gym?

Our solutions enable push-out of regular messages. These can be sent via email and push notifications to achieve a variety of outcomes: eg. automated, generic messages sent to large groups of members or bespoke messages to sent to individual members.

Members can also send messages when they have queries or need advice. Our software enables a two-way, 24-hour support system. During a time when limited physical contact is advised, this will be crucial.

What facility does it have to help clubs build a community of members?

Through our solutions, operators can embed social channels, eg. Facebook,

Twitter and Instagram, within the platform and apps, creating a branded environment where all communications between facility and members and member groups can take place.

The platform also enables the creation of Smart Groups. This feature allows operators to send content via video and PDF to specific groups of

“Virtual classes, workouts of the day, training plans, nutritional advice, assessments and PARQs are all possible”



Rob Lander

members or staff, helping ensure individuals receive only the information which is relevant to them.

In what other ways will your software support operators to rise to the challenges presented by COVID-19?

It enables operators to move the fitness experience into a digital environment, maintaining contact and services without physical intervention. Virtual classes (either stored in an open-access library or unlocked at specific times), workouts of the day, training plans, nutritional advice, assessments and PARQs are all possible, delivered direct to members, wherever they are located, via an intuitive app.

Content is customisable and can either be imported or created from our library of pre-loaded videos. During times of physical distancing, our solutions also enable two-way communication. This creates opportunities for social interaction when individuals may feel isolated. ▶

LEGEND CLUB MANAGEMENT

Sean Maguire, **CEO**

How does your software enable operators to keep in touch with members when they are not at the gym?

We provide automatic functions for bulk communication by email, text and mobile app notification, as well as displaying notifications on member accounts online and on the smartphone.

In addition, we offer expert support services through our Legend Leisure Services division to provide these campaigns at short notice on behalf of and to an expert level for clients.

An LLS run campaign is particularly useful at times when clients may be without some key staff.

What facility does it have to help clubs build a community of members?

Legend's online capabilities, combined with its powerful smartphone app and its integrated digital marketing services (web/email/SMS/app/social media), allows

clubs to highly customise communication to each individual member and membership segment, and therefore build a close knit community of members based on the insights and personalised communication campaigns available as standard in Legend.

This is further supported by the automatic alerting and calls to staff action driven by Legend BI.

In what other ways will your software support operators to rise to the challenges presented by COVID-19?

Legend's payment services and business continuity planning are powerful benefits to clients during these unprecedented times. Payment services include the Legend BACS Contingency service, which has been offered free of charge to clients, which allows Legend to act as a backup payment processor for direct debit in the event of an issue with club admin or key personnel.



Sean Maguire

"Legend's payment services and business continuity planning are powerful benefits to clients during these unprecedented times"

Legend business continuity means clients can all work from home on Legend without disruption. It also ensures that Legend's services, up-time guarantees and around-the-clock support hours are maintained.

ASHBOURNE MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Grant Harrison, **sales director**

How does your software enable operators to keep in touch with members when they are not at the gym?

Our member app, YourApp Plus, allows club staff and personal trainers to contact individual members via an instant messaging portal. Personal Trainers can broadcast virtual workouts to all members as well as assign them to specific clients. We also equip each club with a management dashboard. Here they can send out emails, texts or push notifications to specific groups of members and targeted individuals.

What facility does your software have to help clubs build a community of members?

When members initially download YourApp Plus they have the ability to tick areas of personal interest, which then highlights those with similar fitness

habits and goals. Additionally, clubs can upload challenges and leader boards to their app with the aim of bringing members that share similar interests together. We have seen huge success from these features, combined with the instant messaging, in creating communities within clubs.

In what other ways will your software support operators to rise to the challenges presented by COVID-19?

The integrated nature of our payment collection and software solution has allowed Ashbourne to react quickly to the current situation. Rather than simply freeze all direct debits, we worked with partner clubs to create a workaround that allowed loyal customers to contribute to the club and reduced cancellations. An email was sent to members giving them the option to



Grant Harrison

"We worked with partner clubs to create a workaround that allowed loyal customers to contribute to the club and reduced cancellations"

contribute a portion of their direct debit, the full direct debit or freeze their membership. We've also updated our software to engage members while their club is closed, by creating an on-demand workout video library.



Members can share their home workouts and participate in group challenges via the FitSense member app

CLUBWISE

Joanna Taber, marketing manager

How does your app enable operators to keep in touch with members when they are not at the gym?

The FitSense member app provides a great platform by which to provide a remote service, by allowing clubs to create and send tailored workouts to members using the FitSense Workout feature. FitSense mobile push notifications also provide a crucial communication channel and can be used to notify members of new workouts, offer training advice and tips for staying on track and motivated as well as status updates on the temporary closure.

What facility does it have to help clubs build a community of members?

The FitSense member app has community-building features including a

feed that integrates with social media. Members are able to keep up to date with other members of the club, as well as share their at-home workouts, support each other's efforts and participate in group challenges.

In what other ways will your software support operators to rise to the challenges presented by COVID-19?

To further strengthen FitSense for use as a remote training platform, we are working on some developments that will allow clubs to offer an automated remote service through weekly workout plans, designed by fitness professionals.

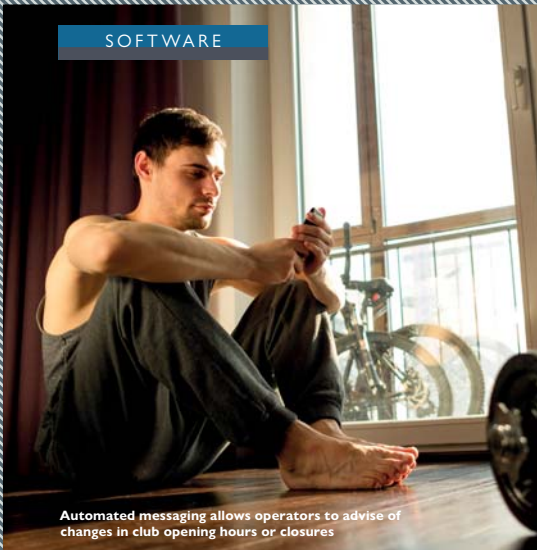
Workout plans will be sent to members using our integrated automated CRM tool. Members will be notified of new workouts via push notification and email. This automated service will take the pressure off clubs, freeing them up to focus on their opening strategy.



Joanna Taber

"We're working to enable clubs to offer an automated remote service through weekly workout plans, designed by fitness professionals and sent to members using our automated CRM tool"





Automated messaging allows operators to advise of changes in club opening hours or closures

PREMIER SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

Leonie Wileman,
chief operations officer

How does your software empower operators to keep in touch with members when they're not at the gym?

Automated marketing is a vital tool for keeping in touch with members when they're absent from the club. It can help you to advise of changes in opening hours, cancelled classes, or explain the steps you're taking in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Simply select the audience criteria for your message, create your template and schedule it to be sent to members via either email or SMS, at a time of your choosing.

How will your software support operators to rise to the challenges presented by COVID-19?

If you decide to run at reduced capacity or close your business, Core can help to make the process as simple as possible. There are several steps you can take within the software, depending on your business requirements. These include scheduling options such as limiting



Leonie Wileman

"Financial options include reducing membership rates to discourage cancellations, pausing direct debits, or extending memberships to cover time lost through business closure"

online booking or rescheduling/cancelling classes from home.

Financial options include reducing membership rates to discourage cancellations, pausing direct debits, or extending memberships to cover time lost through business closure. All the while, you can monitor any revenue lost due to COVID-19 through cancellation reason codes.



Anthony Franklin

"Fibodo commercialises the sale and delivery of interactive online one-to-one and group training sessions, providing a far greater experience and communication channel"

FIBODO LIMITED

Anthony Franklin,
managing director

How does your software enable operators to keep in touch with members when they are not at the gym?

Fibodo empowers individual PTs, and therefore gives them the tools to engage members online. This has three key benefits: members continue to be motivated and provided for whilst away from the facility, PTs are assisted in maintaining revenue and client bases, and the operator's brand is championed by its key audiences throughout.

What facility does it have to help clubs build a community of members?

Fibodo commercialises the sale and delivery of interactive online one-to-one and group sessions, providing a far greater experience and communication channel between members and grassroots providers. Communications are at the heart of everything Fibodo does, whether this be posting notices, sharing session videos or notes with members. We captured all session data in a bespoke analytics dashboard, so the operator can understand individual PT performance member trends.

In what other ways will your software support operators to rise to the challenges presented by COVID-19?

Fibodo has created fit4thefight, which aggregates spare capacity from all PTs so partners can promote through a simple channel. fit4thefight went live on March 30th and already has 30,000 available bookable sessions. ●

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**Michael Kay, Leisure Manager,
English Lakes Hotels**



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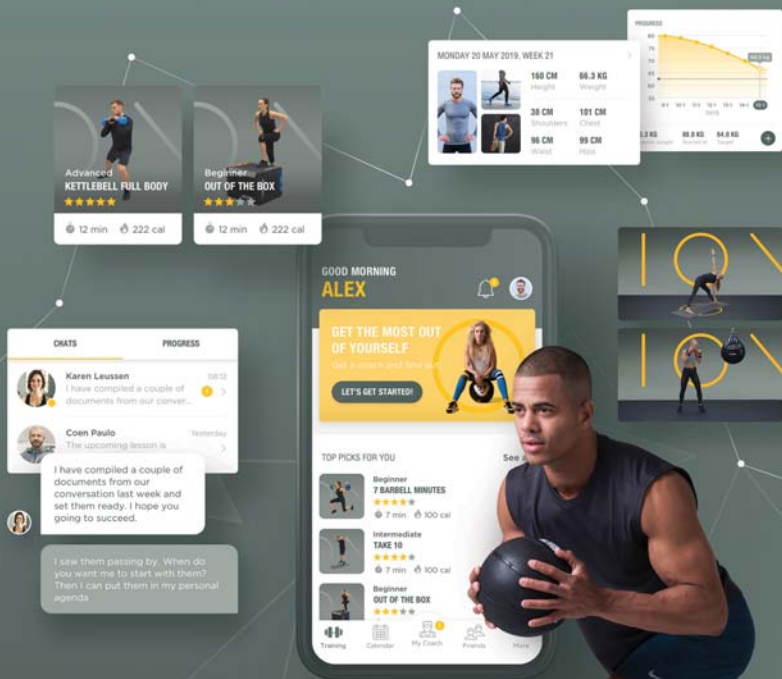
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PURE

Energy



PureGym scales up Funxtion's digital integration

With the spread of COVID-19 forcing more people into isolation, PureGym worked with Funxtion to rapidly include a digital on-demand workout offering to support members at home

COVID-19 is causing incredible disruption across the globe, forcing people out of daily routines and advising that they stay home. A digital solution such as Funxtion can future-proof your business and allow 24/7 connection to members, extending brand presence outside the four walls of a facility in order to support, engage and motivate members, even at a time when they can't be physically present.

In 2019, as part of its strategy to create an unrivalled digital member experience, PureGym teamed up with Funxtion – experts in interactive digital fitness – to deliver an extensive library of exercises,

workouts and personalised training plans direct to members, via the PureGym app.

With the spread of COVID-19 forcing more people into isolation, PureGym worked with Funxtion to rapidly include a digital on-demand workout offering to support members at home.

PERSONALISED TRAINING

Ranked second in early January under 'health and fitness' in the iOS App Store, the PureGym app enables its member base of over a million people to tailor their fitness experience based on personal preferences, goals and schedule.

In addition to tracking gym activity, the app offers instant access to hundreds of exercise tutorials, personalised training plans and digital support.

"This new integration is an important step in our digital development," explains Lucian Weston, head of business development at PureGym. "The exercise tutorials, created by Funxtion, are a fantastic feature, which provide our members with specialist support 24/7, helping ensure they train effectively and safely, even when they're not under the supervision of our gym floor trainers."

"Funxtion has been a great choice of digital partner based on the quality of provision, ease of integration, and shared

vision on future innovation. I'm confident that working together will enable us to continue to deliver an industry-leading product that enhances the experience of all our members," he said.

Ernst De Neef, Funxtion CEO, adds:

"At Funxtion, we're working around the clock to create a suite of digital products that will enable our partners to keep their members engaged and training during such unprecedented times."

"We're delighted and excited to announce our partnership with PureGym. Our integration enriches the PureGym digital member experience creating an environment that encourages loyalty."

Funxtion is working with operators around the world, helping to enhance and enrich their digital offerings. With a range of custom-branded, pre-recorded workout content, virtual classes and a streaming platform, Funxtion has a solution for every need.

In most cases, Funxtion can get operators up and running with a quality, custom-branded fitness content streaming service within a matter of days.

Find out more:

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raimo@funxtion.com

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"We're working around the clock to create products that enable our partners to keep members training during these unprecedented times"

Ernst De Neef, Funxtion

wattbike

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With the software, each rider's details are recognised automatically to personalise the bike's resistance

Wattbike partner on world-first group cycling software

Wattbike has partnered with Intelligent Cycling to transform indoor cycling with innovative new technology that enables automatic personalisation for riders in a group cycling class

Wattbike has partnered with Intelligent Cycling – innovators in indoor cycling technology – in an exclusive deal to bring world-first technology to the industry, and transform indoor cycling into a truly smart, connected experience.

Providing a new, unique class experience, the Intelligent Cycling technology will connect to each Wattbike AtomX in the class independently, personalising the resistance reaction on each bike to match the needs of the rider. This allows for everyone in the group to follow the same workout, but at an intensity that suits their fitness level.

PERSONALISED WORKOUTS

Designed to create a motivational journey for the member, enhanced programming options for the instructor and a better business tool for the club owner, Intelligent Cycling software will put each rider at the centre of their own personalised, immersive smart workout.

Brian Overkær, CEO and founder of Intelligent Cycling explains: "Intelligent Cycling develops software to raise the

game of indoor cycling. Technology that really impacts a class, regardless of which instructor is coaching.

"Wattbike has a high penetration into the clubs and is the only truly smart bike that can connect with our software to initiate an individualised user experience on a whole new level."

With patented technology, the Wattbike AtomX already gives riders a fully connected cycling experience. By combining this smart technology with Intelligent Cycling's newly updated

software, each riders' details will be recognised to automatically personalise the ride and adjust the bike's resistance for each individual, allowing a group of varying abilities to work out together at the same relative intensity.

Overkær adds: "We deliver modern-age technology, which sets us apart from our competitors who still require buyers to additionally spend thousands on hardware, just for software set-up. Our system requires no maintenance or additional hardware, just the download itself. Users can even log on from anywhere to join a class via their smartphone."

Richard Baker, CEO of Wattbike comments: "With this partnership, we've been able to deliver software that connects directly with the bike of the rider, altering it to the exact ability of that particular user, changing resistance to suit the portrayed environment and intensity of the ride. Welcome to the future of indoor cycling." ●



"This is the first truly smart group cycling solution. Welcome to the future of indoor cycling"

Richard Baker, CEO, Wattbike

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Creative group exercise flooring is expected to be a massive trend once lockdowns are lifted

FLOOR SHOW

With members stuck at home, now's the perfect time to plan some cost-effective upgrades to your clubs. Suppliers explain how a flooring refresh could help attract members back in-club as the pandemic eases

ESCAPE FITNESS

PAUL LIPSCOMBE

How can flooring help gyms bounce back after lockdown?

After spending so long in isolation, people are going to yearn for that community spirit we have in the fitness industry.

Creating effective group exercise or fitness programme flooring is going to be a massive trend, as people will want to engage, train together, challenge each other and enjoy the community feeling of classes rather than exercising alone in traditional CV or free weight areas.

What are your tips for a cost-effective flooring upgrade?

The best idea is to utilise what you already have. Use line marking on existing rubber or vinyl to refresh or add colour, or use a different colour 4mm rubber laminate over existing floors to save having to replace the whole floor.

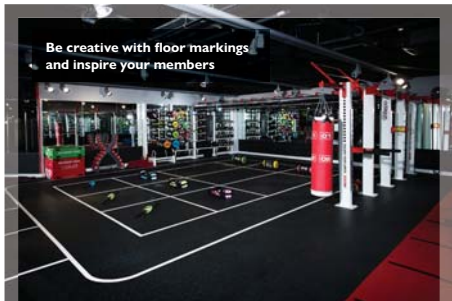


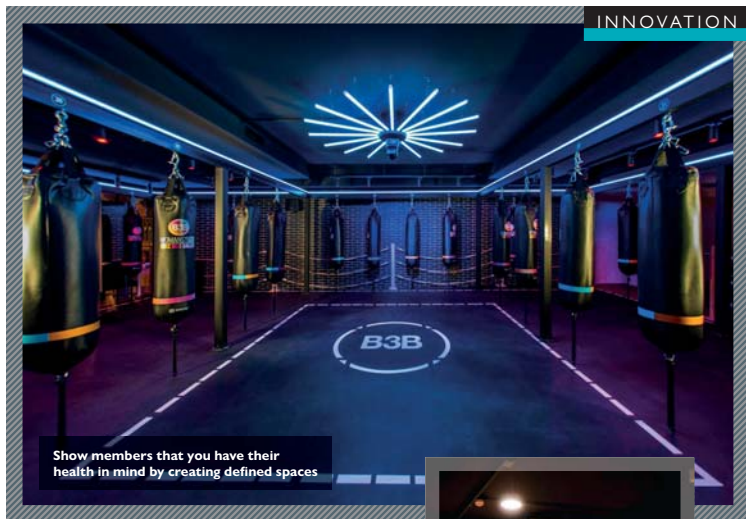
TIP

“The best idea is to refresh what you already have”

PAUL LIPSCOMBE

Be creative with floor markings and inspire your members





Show members that you have their health in mind by creating defined spaces

PAVIGYM

KENNY WATTAM

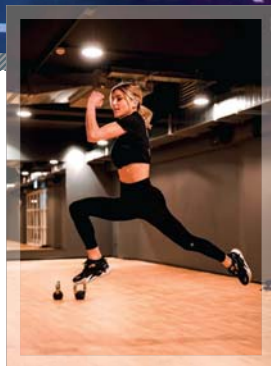
How can flooring help gyms bounce back after lockdown?

Showing members that you've got their health and safety in mind is really going to help them decide to invest in you. Social isolation has become a buzzword recently, and creating isolated spaces and independent workout spaces is going to make users more comfortable when returning to the gym. Doing this through markings on impermeable, easy-to-clean, antibacterial flooring is a simple and cost-effective way to do it.

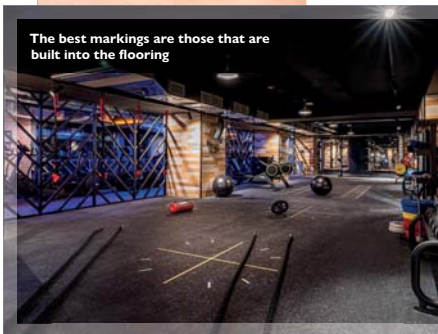
What are your tips for a cost-effective flooring upgrade?

The best way to think about flooring is as an investment, and investing in the safety of members is always a safe bet. Look at impermeable and anti-bacterial flooring in order to offer a cleaner and safer environment than your competitors.

For functional zones, the best markings are those that are built into the flooring. They don't rub off or stick out, and won't absorb any dirt or liquids. We're expecting that group training will undergo a huge change after this pandemic, so think about either leaving bigger spaces between each work station, or maybe adding extra floor markings so that users aren't sharing floor space during workouts. ▶



The best markings are those that are built into the flooring



TIP

“Look at impermeable and anti-bacterial flooring”

KENNY WATTAM

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Use products made from high quality recycled rubber

Tips from TVS:

Functional training can involve dynamic movements utilising multifunctional rigs, kettlebells, slam balls, battle ropes, sleds and even tractor tyres. It's important that floor finishes in these training zones provide adequate protection to the structural slab as well as sufficient grip and cushioning underfoot.

Use products that are made from high quality recycled rubber mixed with EPDM colour granules, and bound together with a polyurethane elastomer. These products are comfortable for customers to walk on and absorb impact and room noise.

FUNCTIONAL FUN

- Reward your members for their months spent in isolation with an exciting new functional zone



Tips from PaviFLEX:

Functional training markings allow members to experiment with a variety of speed, reaction, coordination, agility, balance, rhythm and strength exercises.

Use functional training circuits made with insertions of the same rubber in different colours, so the markings will never disappear. ●

Functional training markings allow members to experiment with different exercises

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PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness



Precor's online resources will keep members engaged during the lockdown, says **Steve Carter**

Precor has developed a set of resources for gym operators that are designed to keep members engaged throughout the pandemic.

Resources include a series of 'Master Trainer' at-home workout videos and online advice pages, as

well as an online wellness guide, that operators can share with both their trainers and members.

The resources are designed to keep members active while at home, as well as provide advice on how trainers can optimise clients' training programmes at this time.

In addition, the company is offering its online home workouts to existing customers free of charge, for them to share with their members to encourage them to keep active.

"Our content library offers free resources to help members maintain their health and wellness routines, including at-home



workouts, fitness tips and mindset and nutrition advice," says Precor UK MD Steve Carter.

"As well as information for personal trainers, there's a simple guide to

engaging with members via social media and advice on products and guidance for deep cleaning facilities."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

PRECOR



"Members' health and safety is our number one priority"

Steve Carter

FLEX transforms any barbell into a smart gym, says **Heather Lawton**

GymAware, a fitness equipment company based in Australia, has created Flex, a tracking device that collects performance data from weight training.

Distributed in the UK by Perform Better, Flex is a lightweight device that can attach to any barbell magnetically and uses 16 laser optics to measure the weight's vertical displacement from the closest surface, either the floor or ceiling.

Users simply fit the Flex to the barbell, which then collects data, such as the weight's vertical displacement, height, dip, power and velocity, and



"Flex turns any barbell into a smart gym by providing real-time feedback on each and every lift"

Heather Lawton

sends it to the Flex Stronger app, where users can track their performance either by repetition, set or session.

It can also track increases in strength and load, as well as technique improvements, and can be

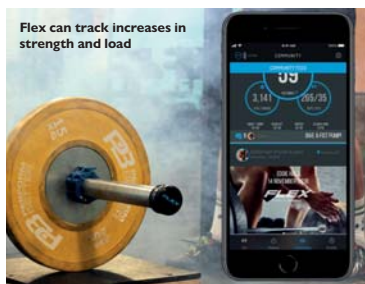
used by personal trainers to motivate clients, track their progress, set goals and create personalised programming.

"Flex turns any barbell into a smart gym by providing real-time feedback on each and every lift. Combined with

community features and accurate technology, it is the perfect solution for anyone wishing to train at the next level," explains GymAware MD Heather Lawton.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

GYMAWARE





"Our iFit powered machines are unlike anything else available on the market"

Dan Toigo



iFit is designed to help operators to connect their fitness ecosystems

Investment in the iFit platform will drive engagement and retention, says **Dan Toigo**

Fit, an interactive fitness streaming platform from Freemotion Fitness, has received significant capital investment, worth US\$200m (£164m, @181m), from Pamplona Capital Management, that will enable its parent company, Icon Health & Fitness, to accelerate the platform's growth.

"This growth capital will allow Freemotion customers to offer their members iFit, the best-connected fitness

and workout experience through our content-driven equipment," says Dan Toigo, senior VP and MD of Freemotion.

"It puts Freemotion in a unique position to help operators connect their fitness ecosystems by joining the dots between gym and home – subsequently enhancing member attraction, retention and revenue."

Billed as the 'ultimate solution to engage,

motivate and inspire', iFit combines digital instructor-led content with intuitive technology that auto-adjusts to the user's needs.

Designed to offer an immersive workout experience, iFit offers an expansive library of digital workouts led by a comprehensive cast of more than 100 trainers, including Olympic athletes and celebrity trainers.

Users simply choose a workout and once streaming

is underway, iFit's smart technology automatically adjusts the speed, incline, decline and resistance of the machine to mirror the on-screen training, allowing users to get the most out of their workouts.

"Our iFit powered machines are unlike anything else available on the market," adds Toigo.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

FREEMOTION FITNESS

Tracy Morrell introduces the Booty Builder to the UK market

Booty Builder is set to make its UK debut following a new distribution partnership with React Fitness.

The Booty Builder, first launched in Norway in 2015, is a range of selectorised plate-loaded hip-thrust machines that deliver the 'ultimate glute workout'.



"We're thrilled to launch this product in the UK at a time when glute workouts are booming"

Tracy Morrell

Available in two versions, Platinum and 7.0, the Booty Builder is designed to make hip-thrusting – a glute exercise that improves the exerciser's speed, strength and power by teaching optimal hip extension – easier and safer.

The machines feature a patented design with raised feet, which places users in the optimal position to isolate their glutes and achieve a deeper range of motion.

"We've created a product that people want, and now we're focused on taking it to an even wider, global audience through our distribution partners," says Booty Builder inventor and CEO Haakon Larsen.

"We have a diverse range of customers, including



many notable sports teams and fitness clubs. This proves that there's a real demand for the Booty Builder and huge potential for it to take off in the UK."

Tracy Morrell, director of React Fitness, says: "We're thrilled to be launching this innovative product in the

UK at a time when glute workouts are booming.

"The Booty Builder has proven in multiple countries that it can generate great results. We look forward to replicating this in the UK."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

REACT FITNESS



The Octane Rō has a MultiGrip handlebar and a large LED console



"The Octane Rō is a fantastic HIIT option offering so much more than traditional rowers. In conjunction with the small footprint MTX Max x-trainer and AirdyneX bike, it completes the Trifecta of non-impact, HIIT training machines"

Neil Campbell, general manager, Octane Fitness UK Ltd

Octane's newly launched rowing machine completes the Octane Trifecta, giving users an intuitive, total body, low impact workout, says Neil Campbell

To help meet the growing demand for CrossFit and HIIT, Octane Fitness is presenting fitness facilities and exercisers with a new cardio package that adds variety and motivation for small group training, HIIT, circuit workouts and more.

With the new Octane Rō™ rowing machine, the Octane Trifecta™ is now available and comprises of the Octane Rō™ rower, Octane Max Trainer® cardio machine and the Octane AirdyneX™ bike.

New rowing machine

Refining the overall rowing experience, the Octane Rō solves the typical hassle of strapping into and getting out of the pedals on a rowing machine. With a patent-pending design, the quick-release foot straps enable exercisers to efficiently insert their feet onto the footplate and

pull up the handle for a secure fit. For an easy exit, a simple push of a button releases the straps.

Everyone from beginners to athletes benefits from total-body, low-impact Octane Rō workouts, as combined fan and magnetic brake resistance delivers a broader range of intensity levels to accommodate easy rowers up to the more grueling HIIT sessions.

The MultiGrip handlebar offers different hand positions for greater activation of the upper-body muscles. Even more, the large LCD console is backlit for readability, and features an additive calorie meter that motivates exercisers to keep pushing.

Users can choose from six preset programmes, including the Max 14 Interval routine, made popular by the Max Trainer cardio machine.

For small group and circuit training workouts, MAX CIRCUIT facilitates use by multiple exercisers in rapid succession.

The space-efficient Octane Rō rowing machine also has transport wheels, and can be stored compactly when not in use by tipping up the machine on its base.

Unique HIIT product package

The powerful combination of the Octane Rō, Max Trainer and AirdyneX exercise machines differentiates fitness facilities and invites participation from exercisers of various abilities in small group training, HIIT and circuit workouts. This highly durable trio of machines benefits users with ease-of-use and intuitive movements; total-body, low-impact exercise;

progressive resistance; similar consoles with motivating feedback; and challenging variety.

Simple to get on and get going, the Max Trainer cardio machine has no required adjustments and offers instant intensity changes for the user, inspiring exercisers to challenge themselves by keeping an eye on the same type of calorie meter as the Octane Rō rower. The premium AirdyneX bike enhances the traditional air bike with a custom-designed, 26-blade performance fan and single-stage belt drive, which together increase efficiency so riders can generate more power. ●

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fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

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Savanta ComRes research found that 37 per cent of people are working out with their kids

SHUTTERSTOCK/ZEPHYRUS

Exercise in lockdown

The good news? People are changing their exercise habits in lockdown, becoming more active and spending more time exercising with their children, according to new research

The restrictions on movement caused by the coronavirus lockdown are transforming the UK's exercise habits, with home fitness workouts, cycling and walking now the most popular methods of exercise, according to a Savanta ComRes study commissioned by Sport England. The study is the first to examine how the unprecedented lockdown has impacted on people's exercise habits and shows a huge interest in fitness and wellbeing, as people have the time and opportunity to exercise and stay healthy.

Savanta ComRes found a quarter (25 per cent) of people now regularly undertake home fitness workouts – this number is far in excess of the UK's gym membership penetration level, which currently stands at 15.6 according to the 2019 *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report*, from David Minton's Leisure Database Company (LDB).

More than half of adults in England (59 per cent) are using their government mandated daily activity time to go for a walk and get out in the fresh air. The government has persisted on maintaining

“ A quarter of people now regularly undertake home fitness workouts – a number far in excess of the UK's gym membership penetration level of 15.6 per cent

this freedom where other nations are obliging citizens to stay indoors at all times. It has also mandated that all parks remain open for the duration of the shutdown to enable people to spend time in green space where possible.

Exercising with family

One of the biggest changes people are reporting is the company they keep during exercise – more than a third (37 per cent) of those doing home-fitness sessions – often using live streaming or online platforms – are involving children in their household in the exercises.

Cycling is also proving to be a popular family activity, with 22 per cent of those who are cycling, doing so with their children or family groups.

The research also shows how the lockdown – and the threat of coronavirus in general – have led to

people recognising the importance of physical activity to staying healthy.

Nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of adults say it's more important to be active, when compared with responses logged before the outbreak.

Mental health

A larger majority of people (67 per cent) also believe exercise is helping with their mental health during the shutdown.

The research also shows, however, that some people are finding it harder to be regularly active than others. These include older people, those on a low incomes, people who are living alone and people who live in urban areas.

The study of 2,043 English adults was carried out in early April 2020. ●

Sport England Survey into Adult Physical Activity Attitudes and Behaviour

pulsebeat

STAY CONNECTED WITH NEW FITNESS APP - TRAKK

Gyms are not the only place for fitness. As an industry, we need to do a better job staying connected with members regardless of where they are, throughout their lives. We believe **TRAKK**, our brand new app, does this better than anyone else.

TRAKK is the next evolution of PulseMove. It's an innovative app that will transform the way both operators and gym goers are able to track and log workouts. It will provide unrivalled member fitness tracking and programming.

There's still quite a lot of work to be done to get a higher use of connected solutions within clubs. While the gym will always

have a place in people's fitness routines, we know that more and more people want flexibility to work out on their own terms.

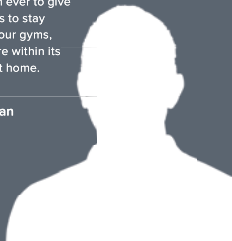
As an industry, there are many areas where we can improve and that's where **TRAKK** plays an important role. It will allow gym members to keep track of their workouts in and outside the gym, and become the ultimate training tool, ultimately improving retention and providing additional revenue streams for operators.

In this edition of PulseBeat, we focus on the evolution of Connected Fitness with a focus on our new app which offers a library of free, curated workouts including

150+ instructional exercise technique videos.

Given the current climate, it's more important than ever to give people options to stay connected to our gyms, whether they're within its four walls or at home.

Ben Steadman
Business
Development
Director

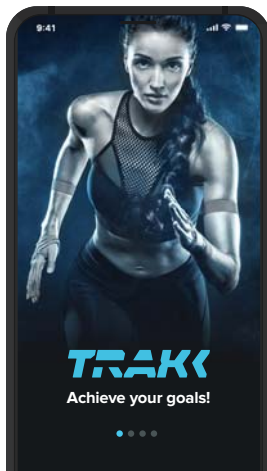


EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT CONNECTED FITNESS

For years, consumers have been demanding more convenient ways to workout. And now, more than ever, growing numbers of people are needing to stay fit at home. This shift is more prevalent than ever, but even once the fitness industry returns to normal, this trend is not likely to slow down. While it's a time of great uncertainty, one thing is clear: this shift in consumer behaviour creates business opportunities to meet these changing expectations with solutions that make exercising more connected and accessible for all.

Here are a few of our key takeaways on the Connected Fitness market:

- Convenience is key. This trend is impacting every industry. Fitness is just the latest industry in a long line.



- The more unique, the better. It's an increasingly crowded market so your offering needs something different to make it stand out.
- The market is growing. Some reports claim digital fitness is growing exponentially year-on-year, compared to just 4% for the traditional gym industry.
- Innovate or be left behind. The industry is changing rapidly. You may think change is happening fast now, but this is the slowest it will ever be. If you're not sure how to incorporate digital into your business, get educated and learn. A business that makes exercise easy and accessible will make big gains in 2020 and beyond.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Parklife Project comes to Sunderland

Pulse Soccer has recently been awarded a new contract to launch three soccer hub facilities in partnership with The FA, The Football Foundation and Sunderland City Council.

The hubs form part of the 'Park Life' project which aims to get more people involved in football at a grassroots level and are the third instalment as part of the scheme. The sites will be operated by Leisure United with Pulse Soccer acting as a strategic partner to the council, The FA and Football Foundation.

Pulse Fitness is also supporting the project, with Downhill Football Hub having its own community use gym. The facility is home to a brand new gym which has been fully kitted out with the very latest in cardio, strength and functional training equipment from Pulse Fitness.

Wyndham Hotels

Pulse Fitness has been appointed as a preferred equipment supplier by Wyndham Hotels and Resorts. The five-year deal will cover 9,500 hotels around the world including China, Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Turkey, Germany, the UAE and the UK.

With more than 300 pieces of award-winning fitness equipment and three different product lines, Pulse was selected as an ideal supplier to service their three and five star hotels across the globe.

Liverpool University

Pulse Fitness has completed a full upgrade of the fitness facilities at the University of Liverpool. The team has completely reconfigured and transformed the existing space, taking it from an 95 station gym to a 120 station gym.

Pulse Fitness offered a complete solution to appeal to students and staff alike, modernising both the facility and the equipment. The new facilities boast the latest equipment from Pulse Fitness including the Premium Cardio range and key pieces from its Premium Strength line.

Since officially opening, the gym has gone from strength to strength achieving over 40,000 visitors in the first month alone.

NEW KIT FROM PULSE FITNESS KEEPS THIRD SPACE, ISLINGTON MEMBERS ENTERTAINED, ENGAGED AND MOTIVATED

Q&A

with Rob Beale,
Fitness Director for Third Space



Probably one of London's most exciting luxury health group brands, Third Space originally opened its first club in 2001. Today, the group has six clubs across London including its most recent opening in Islington which includes brand new bespoke strength equipment supplied by Pulse Fitness.

We sat down with Rob Beale, Fitness Director for Third Space to find out more.

Tell me more about this latest club?

The club opened in January this year. It has a wide mix of state-of-the-art training facilities including, for the first time, a dedicated space for families, Little Space.

At the heart of the luxury health club is the 7,000sq ft arena of flexible training which includes a custom-built track, rig, performance cardio area and dedicated strength training area complete with innovative state-the-art strength equipment from Pulse Fitness.

Pulse Fitness has supplied us with 15 stations from its Premium Strength line complete with 10.1" screen consoles. What stood out for us about their line, was the console element as they allow our members to easily track their reps and see their exertion levels.

Why was it important to have bespoke equipment?

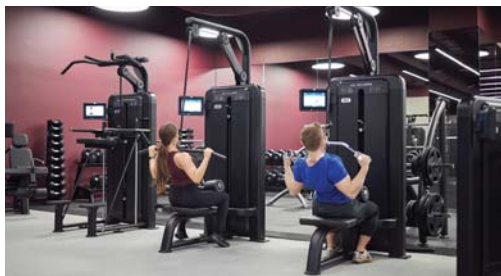
When designing a new space, we have a very specific vision of how we want a club to look. It needs to have its own unique identity while staying in line with the aesthetic of the Third Space family. This ethos also extends out to the equipment we have in our clubs and the suppliers we work with.

All the equipment supplied by Pulse Fitness was created especially for us in a sleek sand black design with our own branding and logos to reflect the look and feel of Islington.

Our members also have a high level expectation, so it was important for us to work with an equipment supplier that could reflect the needs of our members.

How have you found working with Pulse Fitness throughout the process?

We have been thoroughly impressed by Pulse Fitness. Their strength equipment incorporates the very best in British design alongside some of the most innovative and advanced technology from around the world. The team have truly understood the expectations of our members and have supplied strength training solutions which enhance our luxury offering.



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING NEW EQUIPMENT: THE REAL QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING!

As a gym operator, it's important to ensure that your facility stands out. One way is to ensure you have the best equipment possible.

If you're looking to invest in new equipment there's a few things that you should consider before you buy.

Who actually uses my gym?

First and foremost, think about your audience. Make sure you think about what type of workout your members are looking for and keep them at the forefront of your mind.

What types of training does my team offer to members?

You'll also need to think about what you are trying to deliver. For instance, if your facility is very PT focused, equipment that is targeted at small group training would be more valuable vs your usual gym equipment.

How connected do I want to be?

With most gym users using their own digital tracking device, you'll want to consider whether the equipment your purchasing integrates with most devices. Member tracking can be an invaluable retention tool. For instance, our new app **TRAKK**, can provide your members with feedback so that they can see and track their own progress, whilst allowing trainers to monitor this. This will help keep them engaged.



How can I ensure I'm getting the most value from my budget?

When considering your budget, think about what makes your offering unique. For example, if you know that the CV section of your gym is always in high demand, you may want to invest more heavily in premium treadmills, vs. strength equipment.

At Pulse Fitness, all of our equipment is available in three different lines: 'Classic', 'Club' and 'Premium' range. Depending on your budget, what level of digital programming and customisation you require, we can offer a variety of options to ensure you get the best value for your money.

What's the aftercare package like?

This is the most important question to ask. It's all well and good having great equipment but should something go wrong, you want to make sure you're covered. Be sure to ask your chosen supplier about their service and maintenance package. At Pulse Fitness, we

offer our clients anywhere between two and five years after care depending on their needs.

With access to an online portal for gym owners to log any issues, our service team works 364 days a year, around the clock to fix an issue. We offer three bespoke packages ranging from our standard offering to our premium all-inclusive offering depending on a client's level of needs.

If you've asked these questions, and you're confident with the answers, you're on your way to a great investment that will keep members engaged and coming back for more.

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD: WHY CUSTOMISATION IS KEY



Fitness kit has evolved to a huge extent over recent years, many brands are comparable on features, quality and servicing. In this sea of sameness, we must think beyond standard options, if we truly want our facility to stand out.

Challenge your kit supplier on their standard options and don't be afraid to ask for alterations and additional features. Something as simple as bespoke upholstery can make a huge difference to achieving the desired look and feel in your facility. Ask if you can co-brand the kit; at the new Third Space Islington, our Premium Strength range looks stunning, badged with their brand logo in a specially crafted silver plaque.

Bespoke isn't just limited to aesthetics either, challenge your partner to create treadmills with a steeper incline or

greater top speed, or bikes with a greater resistance or an built-in fitness test.

As a company that designs, tests and assembles our kit in the UK, we're able to deliver all these things and we encourage you to demand more as we all work towards greater facilities for customers.

Creating a consistent brand throughout your facility will help you stand out from a crowded market place, and your equipment is a key part of this. Make sure yours truly reflects the look and feel you're going for.

If you'd like to discuss a bespoke and any personalised gym project, get in touch with our team today – sales@pulsefitness.com

SPOTLIGHT ON

SUSPENSION TRAINING FROM STEVE COLEMAN, MASTER GLOBAL TRAINER FOR PULSE FITNESS



In my 16 years as a personal trainer one of my absolute favourite pieces of equipment has to be the suspension trainer. It is by far, one of the most versatile pieces of kit and I carry one with me to most clients using it daily. It's compact and clever design allows for a full body workout almost anywhere, which of course in current times is fantastic.

The suspension trainer is suitable for anyone to use, from the absolute beginner to the advanced and confident gym goer with differing levels of strength and fitness. It is functional, fun and challenges the body in all planes of movement adding massive value to anyone's workout bringing in new dimensions that other pieces of kit simply won't cover.

From core exercises, lower body and upper body workouts to flexibility, strength and HIIT workouts this really does tick all of the boxes. The benefits to the client are massive and can give a far greater workout than any static machine when used correctly.

Where possible gyms should try to include the use of suspension



trainers to the gym class program and also when taking clients through a new training program.

This will equip the client with the tools necessary to incorporate this piece of kit into their daily workout routines increasing

their strength, flexibility and reducing the risk of injury thus keeping them coming back and using the gym indefinitely.

This is one piece of kit that should not be underestimated for its functionality, versatility and simplicity.

PULSE FITNESS IS PROUD TO BE A SUPPLIER OF THE AUSTER SYSTEM

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to be progressed or regressed with ease. And finally, Auster's gymnastic grade Power Rings have a smooth and premium feel. They are the first on the market with the strap fixed to ring improving workout experience and safety. Rings allow members to take training intensity up a gear, helping to develop pull ups and dips and increase workout options.

Available in 10 bright and beautiful colours, Auster looks great in any fitness facility, no matter the colour scheme. All carabiners and adjusters are made from aerospace-grade aluminium which means no rust or discolouration.

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