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HCM

AUGUST 2020

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WORLD UNITED

Celebrate, reactivate! p20



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Challenges & opportunities

Lockdown was tough, but reopening has brought a new raft of challenges and opportunities, as gyms fight to be seen as powerful delivery partners in the fight against COVID-19, while also being safe for consumers

The vast majority of gyms around the world are reopening and our attention is turning to the next stage of recovery – re-engaging members, winning new customers and proving our worth.

On page 20 we highlight World United, a free global campaign – designed in the spirit of collaboration – to support the gym sector in celebrating and reconnecting.

World United kicks off from 19 September, linking with campaigns such as National Fitness Day in the UK. You can find free marketing resources on the dedicated website.

Fitness remains firmly in the spotlight in the fight against COVID-19, but although there's an appreciation among governments and consumers that being fit is the best defence against the virus and a great support when it comes to recovery, we still have work to do in connecting this fact with gyms as a delivery partner.

The UK government, for example, launched a campaign to combat obesity to help with COVID-19, but has failed to engage with the gym sector in delivery.

It's frustrating we should still be fighting this battle, given the evidence, but that's the reality we face and on page 46, Phillip Mills, executive director of Les Mills, makes the case for gyms, in the context of the pandemic and beyond.

Gyms have the opportunity to offer COVID-19 recovery programmes and on page 32, we talk through ways these can be delivered. With millions suffering, we have the chance to make a real difference.

We're in a battle to prove gyms don't contribute to the spread of the virus. Doing so is vital to staying open and winning back members who are wavering.

Trade associations around the world are fighting back against accusations gyms are spreader environments and collaborating with operator members to gather insight.

Both Fitness Australia and IHRSA have recently published studies which show clearly that gyms are safe, with Fitness Australia finding zero community transmissions after monitoring 6.26m member check-ins across 423 gyms over several months.



LES MILLS WORLD UNITED

The fight is on to be seen as part of the solution

6 Fitness Australia found zero community transmissions of COVID-19 after assessing 6.26m member check-ins at 423 gyms

As engagement efforts pay off and gyms get busier, we must keep delivering safe environments reliably and new evidence may be pointing at ways to enable this.

A study from the University of Eindhoven found having air purifiers in gyms – in addition to air conditioning – gave extra control over levels of viral aerosols.

As numbers grow in gyms, having this kind of knowledge and evidence will be ever more vital if we are to stay one step ahead of the virus and continue to convince decision-makers that we are part of the solution.

Liz Terry, editor
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PHOTO: LANSERHOF

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PHOTO: MATEIX

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HCM

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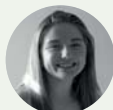
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HCM people



FIBO 2020 will set a new benchmark, ensuring virtual and live trade fairs evolve into a hybrid model, defining a future-oriented format that opens a new chapter in the trade fair industry



**WE NEED A RAPIDLY
RECOVERING FITNESS
INDUSTRY TO BE THE
BASIS FOR FIBO 2021**

Silke Frank

Event director, FIBO Köln

Tell us about the virtual FIBO Köln

Back to Business – that's what it's all about. Especially in the current situation, which has hit our industry worldwide in a particular way and with particular severity, it's vital we exchange ideas and share experiences.

With FIBO@Business, we want to give momentum to a new start for the industry. This is of fundamental importance right now – it's about showing new perspectives, about innovation, new concepts and business cases that are relevant for the industry.

In this virtual format, FIBO also aims to have a critical function as a lead generator.

We all have to leave behind the zero hour that was the lockdown and move forward.

What will the experience be like for visitors?

FIBO@Business and FIBO@Home – which is aimed specifically at consumers – are part of the new normal. They're not emergency solutions.

They'll set a new benchmark for ensuring that virtual event formats and live trade fairs evolve into a hybrid model in the future. The delivery of both events this year will define a future-oriented format that opens a new chapter in the trade fair industry.

FIBO@Business will include numerous international forums, congresses and formats for trade visitors, such as streaming, webinars and product presentations. For consumers, FIBO@Home will have a virtual event format of its own that will bring emotions into homes.



FIBO's global trade fairs will take place virtually or as hybrid events this year

The focus of FIBO@Business will be on fitness, health, physiotherapy, prevention and company health management. The global character of FIBO will also be reflected in the digital trade show.

The European Health & Fitness Forum (EHFF) will kick off on 30 September. This year's event will be held as a hybrid event – online and on-site with numerous top speakers.

Other partners of FIBO@Business are, among others, the German University for Prevention and Health Management with its Advancement Congress, the Fittech Summit with top trends and future topics from the fitness and health industry and global media partner, HCM magazine.

What commercial opportunities are available for exhibitors?

The digital reach of FIBO is considerable compared to many trade fairs, this is a strength which is to the benefit of our customers.

We had already significantly expanded the digital business segment in the past, this year we will supplement this range of digital marketing formats with additional offers, such as product innovation videos and a range of sponsorships.

COVID-19 has accelerated an important process of change throughout the entire exhibition industry and with the investments we're making, we're living up to our responsibility for the health and fitness industry.

This is what we must be concerned about, because we need a rapidly recovering fitness industry to be the basis for FIBO 2021.

FIBO has always aimed to stand for return on investment, how will you deliver ROI with FIBO virtual?

ROI is king. FIBO@Business is being primarily designed as a business platform.

We developed a matchmaking tool, which is used by exhibitors and trade visitors. Uptake of this tool has been excellent. In addition, we'll be offering drop-in meetings and speed networking sessions. They will help our customers to generate leads that are in a healthy proportion to the costs that will be incurred.

What support will be available to help exhibitors excel at the virtual FIBO 2020?

Digitisation has taken a huge leap forward in recent months: in business and in our private lives.

Many of our customers have made a great leap into digital business. That is why there is a willingness to get involved with FIBO@Business.

Every exhibitor will be briefed about the options involved with using the fair by their contact on the FIBO team.

Continuous support will also be provided by FIBO's IT service provider, with whom we have set up the highly intuitive platform.

The EHFF will take place on 30 September. What can delegates look forward to?

As explained, due to the current health situation, the European Health & Fitness Forum will be held as a hybrid event, being both online and on-site.

As usual, many of the top industry stakeholders have shown a strong commitment to the event.

Florian Brauer

Global brand manager FIBO



What are your global plans?

Some of FIBO's key global events are going virtual during the pandemic, opening up opportunities for exhibitors to reach new markets they could not normally afford to travel to.

Each global FIBO event will have its own online event to serve the 'local' market and community, with the content specifically adapted to the respective market conditions.

All our global events are connected, so suppliers can meet the respective local buyers – global connections are the key to success.

What are your plans for FIBO's global events?

We remain deeply committed to the global fitness industry. In Mexico and the USA, we will serve the industry with virtual formats and content. In China we're planning a two-day hybrid event with local people on-site and international content to be streamed virtually.

For 2021 we aim to organise on-site events accompanied by strong virtual offerings. These will have content and matchmaking components.

How will FIBO's cycle of global events help to unite the world of fitness?

We bring together companies, personalities, products and ideas from all parts of the fitness world. We offer the platform for business and for new contacts. We also offer the opportunity for exchange: this is our contribution to strengthening the industry. ●

**ALL OUR GLOBAL EVENTS
ARE CONNECTED, SO
SUPPLIERS CAN MEET THE
RESPECTIVE LOCAL BUYERS**

FIBO KÖLN FAST FACTS

- Will buyers have to pay to attend?
No, attendance is free of charge
- How much does it cost to promote at FIBO?
Between €400 and €35,000
- What types of sponsorship opportunities are available?
FIBO TV, social media, newsletter, website
- What time does FIBO@Business event take place?
8am – 8pm on 1 and 2 October
- Where do people go to attend?
www.FIBO.com
- Where can I see the matchmaking software?
www.reed-matchmaking.com/en/fibo



FIBO's new virtual offerings will allow exhibitors to extend their reach



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I'm Confident we can deliver
50 coach gyms in the uk,
however, I feel the opportunity
is really much larger

Stuart Perrin

CEO Coach Gyms

What's the vision and ambition for Coach Gyms?

Coach has created the UK's first affordable boutique gyms. We're redefining affordable luxury.

We aim to not just deliver, but also to excel in member experience and support and create a fitness revolution. Our members' goals are our goals.

Your first club has opened in Leeds.

What are your roll-out plans?

We have plans for growth. Our next three sites have already been identified and we're looking to have another, which is currently in the design stages, open by the end of the year, despite the pandemic.

The aim is to have between four and six clubs in every metropolitan area in the UK, outside London.

Target locations are inner ring roads, with good visibility and generous parking. We'll follow a 'city takeover' approach, with three miles between each.

Why the name?

When reviewing brands and what they stand for, most try too hard to be cool. Coach Gyms is about love – we love our community and are enabling members to achieve improvements in both their physical and mental health. Most importantly, the member experience comes first in every thought we have.

How would you describe the clubs?

All clubs will have total floor areas of between 10-15,000sq ft, with four studios and a full gym floor with 200 pieces of equipment – including cardio, functional, sectorised and free weights.



We run over 200 classes per month, with Les Mills as a key partner. Equipment is by Nautilus, Star Track, Schwinn, Stairmaster, Concept, Hatton and a number of functional items from Origin, Exigo and Jordan, while the changing rooms will have 50-100 lockers, brass surround mirrors and solid oak beauty benches.

Gyms will open 6.00am to 10.00pm on weekdays and 8.00am to 8.00pm at weekends/bank holiday.

Our member app is powered by Virtuagym and enables members to engage with their community, talk to our team, book and buy.

Tell us about the concept

We're an 18-years-and-over club – our target audience is 25-55 year old females and currently, around 90 per cent of our members are women.

We have a great community here – it's female focused, but men who don't want a huge free weights area and are after an amazing boutique experience join, because we provide that extra bit of luxury.

We're investing £750k per club in fit-out to achieve the look and feel of a bar, while delivering an exceptional training experience for everyone.

Why have you chosen to focus on women?

After working in the premium, mid-market and budget sectors I felt female fitness was often an afterthought and a huge opportunity missed.

Coach isn't 'ladies-only' but female focused. We've created an environment that's non-intimidating, soft in approach and relaxed in terms of things such as communication to ensure the best experience possible for the women who make this their choice.



The first Coach Gyms site has just opened in Leeds

Lengthy consideration has gone into things such as the lighting, luxury finishes in the changing rooms, equipment selection, even the specially crafted playlists in the club. None of this has happened by chance, our community has a voice and we listen!

How did lockdown impact your plans?

It was a challenge but the team rose to it. We used the time to ensure we engaged fully with our community, keeping communications clear.

As we were in pre-sale when we went into lockdown, I took the decision to open the sales office as essential retail, which saw us double the size of our business in the following four weeks, while the industry was asleep and fearing the worst. We came out of it fully prepared for any eventuality.

Tell us about your background

As COO of Xercise4Less, I was part of the team that took the company from a single site to a 52-club estate with over 340,000 members in 10 years.

I learned a lot, but my main takeaways were; listen to your members, they hold the key to your success; invest as much time and effort into your team as you do in yourself, and; always be the hardest worker in the room – this goes without saying!

Investment in people, product and process is critical to the growth and long-term survival of any business.

What are your views on the market?

This is a great time for the industry, with opportunities everywhere – especially for us as a business looking to expand nationally very quickly.

Members should be benefiting as well, because everyone should be bringing their A Game right now and that can only mean better service, better results and more people getting physically active than ever before.

What are your thoughts on JD buying Xercise4Less?

This can only be a positive. A huge brand like JD will bring the investment required back to Xercise4Less and wake the sleeping giant that once was.

I wish the team there every success and look forward to seeing how the product and brand develops over the coming months and years.

How will COVID-19 change the industry?

It will make professionals in the industry more considerate – sharper around processes and more agile when trading is tough and they need to pivot to other revenue streams to continue trading.

Of course, there will be casualties, but as long as you're member-facing, and you listen, there will be growth opportunities everywhere.

Can you share some numbers?

Our first site is approaching the 2k member mark by the end of the first month's trading. We'll see this grow over the next 14 months to 4,500 members.

In terms of usage, we're currently logging 600 unique visits a day at the first location and expect this to grow to closer to 1k visits a day at maturity.

I'm confident we can deliver 50 Coach Gyms in the UK over the next few years, however, I feel the opportunity is really much larger than that.



Once facilities are mothballed they are unlikely to reopen ever again

Mark Tweedie

CEO Community Leisure UK

Mark Tweedie, who was named as the new CEO of Community Leisure UK (CLUK) recently, has called for essential UK government support for leisure facility operators and commissioned a report into the impact of the pandemic.

The report – *Community Leisure UK COVID-19 Impact Report* – published this month, is based on the latest survey data gathered by CLUK, which represents charitable trusts delivering public leisure services across the UK.

In presenting the findings, Tweedie said a significant proportion of leisure facilities in England have not reopened since lockdown measures were eased, and that a third of leisure trusts will face 'unviability' in the next six months, without financial support.

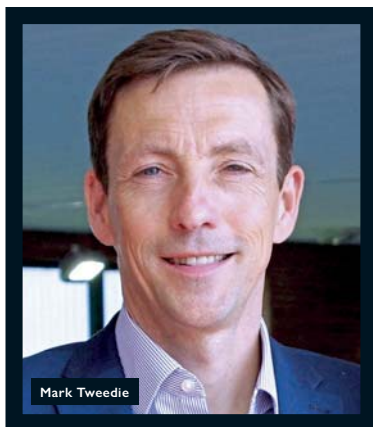
Other key headline figures indicate that nearly 7,000 jobs have already been lost in the trusts sector – and thousands more are set to follow unless financial support is given.

CLUK found the forced four-month closures – and subsequent limited capacities enforced since lockdown – have led to leisure trusts burning their financial reserves to prop up their businesses.

Tweedie told *HCM* that by March 2021 the leisure trust sector will collectively hold only 10 per cent of the financial reserves it had pre-lockdown: "Reducing reserves means increasing financial vulnerability and inability to deal with local lockdowns – or a second COVID-19 spike," he said, "and once facilities are mothballed they are unlikely to reopen ever again."

"If we lose our valuable leisure facilities it will have a negative impact on local economies and on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Half the population use indoor facilities and leisure centres to undertake their regular exercise, says Tweedie



Mark Tweedie



PHOTO: ALFONSO ROMERO/SHUTTERSTOCK

This would be detrimental to current government policies, such as the new obesity strategy and efforts to help tackle diabetes and mental illness.

"Half the population use indoor facilities and leisure centres to undertake their regular exercise – including some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

"A DCMS Select Committee report has already highlighted the urgent need for funding and we know Sport England has made the government aware of the severe impact of the pandemic on public leisure provision – and is continuing to support our sector to secure the additional financial support necessary to avert these serious economic viability concerns."

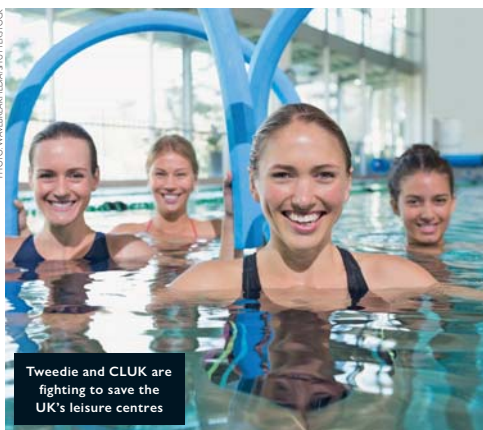
CLUK is calling for government intervention and has launched the #SaveLeisure campaign to rally the industry and stakeholders to support the sector.

Tweedie joins CLUK after 10 years as CEO of Active Tameside (2011 to 2018) and Active Northumberland (2018-2020). He began his career as a PE teacher before moving into sports development and leisure service management. ●

ABOUT CLUK

CLUK represents 3,700 facilities. Its 110 members operate 3,800 facilities, hosted 233m customers in 2019 and have a combined turnover of £2bn.

PHOTO: WAREHAMEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK



Tweedie and CLUK are fighting to save the UK's leisure centres

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World

World United is a brand new global campaign designed to help clubs reactivate paused members, attract new ones and celebrate the return of fitness. HCM gets a briefing from Jak Phillips

Like all the best things in life, fitness is an experience best shared with others, so, after a period when members have been isolated from friends, family and familiar faces, World United, a new global festival of fitness, promises to kickstart the sector's COVID-19 recovery.

TELL US MORE...

The World United campaign has been designed to support the global fitness industry in reactivating paused members and attracting new ones.

The campaign has been conceived and created by Les Mills, but the company has withheld its branding from all campaign materials, so that operators can use it on a white label basis, for the benefit of the wider fitness community.

The campaign is also the third and final phase of Les Mills' recovery support package for its club partners, to help turbocharge their relaunch and drive member re-engagement.

World United will peak from Saturday 19 September 2020 onwards, with a synchronised global launch of live and online fitness events involving tens of thousands of fitness facilities and trainers.

WHY SHOULD WE GET INVOLVED?

Health is one of the world's number one priorities, so it's no surprise that in most markets, 75 per cent of people plan to spend more on fitness and sport.

With this in mind, World United has been conceived as a business accelerator for gyms

The World United campaign offers operators free marketing materials and advice

United

and health clubs, designed to support their relaunch strategies by re-engaging existing members and attracting new ones.

Launch activations will play a strong role in motivating members to attend more often, dialing up the fun factor and offering a strong PR hook to generate added buzz and publicity around participating clubs.

HOW CAN WE GET INVOLVED?

Both clubs and instructors are invited to join the celebration by hosting their own special launch activations or community open days (or weekends) to re-engage paused members and attract new ones.

Clubs are recommended to structure launch activations around a schedule of free workouts, group fitness classes, personal training, instructor meet-and-greets, competitions, prizes and any other ideas that will get members engaged.

In previous campaigns we've also seen operators incorporate live events such as fun runs and collaborations with local businesses offering healthy snacks

and other types of complementary products, to add to the excitement.

In the UK, World United will serve as the kick-off event to a week-long series of activations coordinated by ukactive, culminating in National Fitness Day on September 23.

WHAT SHOULD WE TELL MEMBERS?

Tell them fitness is a uniting force. We're united by our love of strength, of speed, of fitness. Clubs should tap into this and excite members by telling them they're joining the biggest global fitness event of the year, bringing together thousands of clubs and instructors from around the world to celebrate as one.

Clubs should also make sure that members have the event date in their diaries and know how they can sign up to attend.

We know, 'new' and 'free' are two of the most powerful words in marketing. Chances are club members have friends who would also like to attend the open day, so it's a great idea for clubs to encourage them to bring guests along and have membership and

In the UK, World United will serve as the kick-off event to a series of activations coordinated by ukactive, culminating in National Fitness Day on September 23

instructor teams consider the best way to convert these fresh faces into new joiners.

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

To successfully plan, promote, and prepare for World United launch activations, Les Mills has created a campaign to assist clubs, with photography and videos by world leading artists such as Carlos Serrao.

There's no branding on this campaign. It's designed solely to promote participating clubs.

A free online campaign hub has been created with a landing page featuring a collection of relaunch resources, as well as customisable event assets in print and digital, ready for use.

Editable templates have also been provided, so clubs can choose between images, upload their own photos or logos, and edit text fields, to build a complete and personalised campaign that aligns with their brand and supports any other relaunch activity they're already driving.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RUNNING A FITNESS EVENT?

The benefits include:

- Keeping members motivated and improving retention
- Re-engaging lapsed members to prevent attrition

- Attracting new members through cost-effective referrals
- Engaging more members in group exercise – a key driver of retention
- Having an opportunity to recruit new talent to bolster your team
- Continually improving the quality of service and building a buzz in your club
- Building community and staff teamwork

WHAT IF MY CLUB IS OPERATING UNDER CAPACITY RESTRICTIONS?

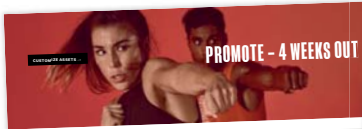
Before planning club events or launch parties, clubs should check COVID-19 safety recommendations to ensure they'll be compliant.

Details showing how to run a live event under social distancing conditions can be found at the World United homepage, along with tips on how to make the most of livestreaming for your club.

WHY IS GROUP EXERCISE ONE OF THE ELEMENTS OF WORLD UNITED?

Research into social exercise tells us workouts are more motivating and enjoyable when we work out together, while we also get better results.


Multiple reports and post-lockdown surveys have also indicated that the social elements of the club, such as group fitness



PROMOTE - 4 WEEKS OUT

CHECKLIST

- COMPLY WITH LOCAL HEALTH & SAFETY REQUIREMENTS
- PREPARE YOUR EQUIPMENT
- APPLY YOUR LOGO TO THE LATEST WORLD UNITED MATERIALS
- UPDATE YOUR WEBSITE
- POST TO MEMBERS
- PROMOTE YOUR EVENT
- ASK YOUR INSTRUCTORS TO POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- PREPARE YOUR CAPTION TO ANNOUNCE YOUR EVENT TO YOUR CLUB
- TALK UP YOUR EVENTS TO OTHER CLUBS
- HOST YOUR EVENT

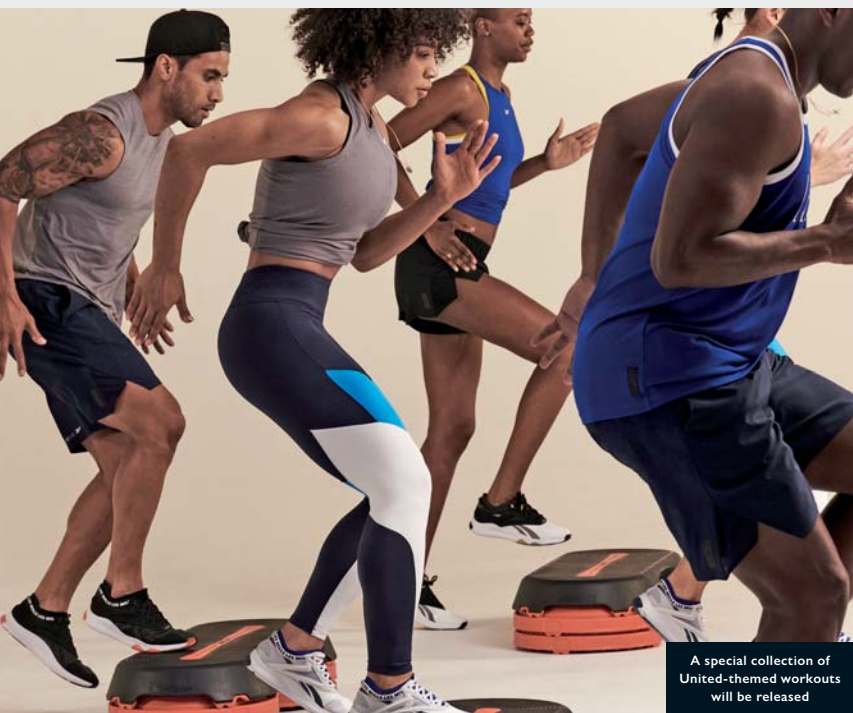


LIVESTREAM

CHECKLIST

- SET UP A LIVESTREAM ON YouTube, Facebook, or Instagram
- SEND A SHORT MESSAGE TO YOUR CLUB
- UPDATE YOUR LATEST WORLD UNITED MATERIALS
- PROMOTE YOUR EVENT
- UPDATE YOUR WEBSITE
- ASK YOUR INSTRUCTORS TO POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- PREPARE YOUR CAPTION TO ANNOUNCE YOUR EVENT TO YOUR CLUB
- TALK UP YOUR EVENTS TO OTHER CLUBS
- HOST YOUR EVENT

Clubs can access free campaign resources and customisable templates



A special collection of
United-themed workouts
will be released

and interactions with staff, are going to be the biggest drivers of recovery.

Anyone who's felt the electricity of a live fitness class will tell you it's one of the most powerful and motivational workout experiences you can get.

Live classes remain one of the pinnacles of club offerings, because they're where people come into their own, build connections and inspire participants to beat their best.

By tapping into this energy and showcasing clubs at their best, events have long been a crucial pillar of building a successful club business.

HOW ELSE IS LES MILLS SUPPORTING THE WORLD UNITED CAMPAIGN?

September 19 will also see the release of a series of United-themed workouts from Les Mills.

This release consists of a special collection of group fitness workouts, designed specifically to re-engage fitness fans in the wake of COVID-19.

Labelled the Les Mills United Release, these

workouts will not feature release numbers and were specially filmed on iPhone during lockdown, featuring 300 of the world's top presenters.

The classes can be launched live in clubs and studios – or, for example, in outdoor spaces – by clubs' instructor teams.

As with any new Les Mills release, the company encourages clubs' non-Les Mills instructors to refresh the content of their classes as well.

ARE THERE SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LES MILLS CUSTOMERS?

With many countries still experiencing restrictions due to COVID-19, Les Mills has made it possible for clubs and instructors to stream workouts and run online fitness classes via the Les Mills livestreaming system.

The rules around a livestream class are the same as for a live class – instructors need to livestream through a club account. ●

More: [HCMmag.com/worldunited](https://hcmmag.com/worldunited)

Rene Moos: Basic-Fit's post-lockdown recovery "very strong"

Europe's largest gym chain, Basic-Fit, has provided the European fitness sector with some optimism, after recording high membership growth in the months following lockdown.

Reporting its first-half year results for 2020, the operator said it had seen higher membership growth

in June and July than it did in 2019, despite continued lockdown-related club closures in some of the markets in which it operates – including the Netherlands.

"The number of joiners in July was around 70 per cent higher than in same month last year – while the number of leavers did not increase," said CEO, Rene Moos.

"During the closure of the clubs, we experienced great loyalty from our members – overall only 9 per cent left, which is even less than the percentage of leavers in prior years in the same period.

"The number of leavers in these two months was similar to the level last year. With these positive developments, we expect our membership base to



Basic-Fit had 'experienced great loyalty' from its members



Only 9 per cent of our members left, which is less than in prior years in the same period

Rene Moos

have recovered from the club closures by September."

Moos added that the pandemic will not affect Basic-Fit's growth in the long-term.

"We have restarted the rollout of new clubs," he said.

"If the positive trends continue

and there are no further large-scale lockdowns, we expect to open around 100 clubs in 2020.

"Our targets have not changed and we expect to reach 1,250 clubs in 2022."

More: http://lei.sr/q3k9W_H

McFit founder Rainer Schaller buys Gold's Gym for US\$100m

Rainer Schaller, the founder of budget gym megabrand McFIT, has added iconic franchised chain Gold's Gym to his portfolio of fitness businesses.

The deal, worth around US\$100m, will see Gold's Gym join the Rainer Schaller Global Group (RSG Group), which already owns and operates three fitness chains – McFIT, John Reed and High5 – and a number of other lifestyle brands.

RSG was selected as the winning bidder in a court-approved auction process held on 13 July.

Following the acquisition, the RSG Group – which



Schaller said Gold's was an 'inspiration' for setting up McFit

has mainly been active in Europe up to this point – has, overnight, become a global player in fitness with more than 900 locations across six continents.

"Gold's Gym is a fitness institution that had a major influence on the industry's development," said Schaller, who is RSG Group founder and CEO.

"It was a huge source of inspiration when I was setting up my first McFIT studio in Würzburg, Germany back in 1997.

"I'm incredibly proud that, in partnership with its current leadership team, we will be able to breathe new life into this iconic brand under the umbrella of the RSG Group."

"Instead of my original idea of slowly approaching franchising in the fitness sector, we are now diving in headfirst. "This is the start of a new era for the RSG Group and I'm really looking forward to its success."

More: <http://lei.sr/c8s7f>

Everyone Active goes digital with Everyone On Demand

Leisure operator Everyone Active has launched a new digital offering, to run alongside its bricks and mortar operations.

During lockdown, the operator – which currently manages 190 facilities – pivoted to create an on-demand package containing five apps.

This initial, temporary, digital offering was priced at £9.99 a month and was designed to help members stay active while gyms were shut.

Everyone Active says the response was hugely positive, with 10,000 people taking up the offer, and enabled it to maintain a relationship with its members and drive much-needed revenue.



“
We spent a long time researching apps and talking to partners
Duncan Jefford

Identifying a market, Everyone Active then proceeded to create a long-term on-demand solution, designed to add value to its membership.

The new Everyone On Demand service includes access to training content



The platform offers content from WithU, Flex, EXi and Les Mills

from WithU, Flex, EXi and Les Mills on Demand.

The operator is planning to deploy Everyone On Demand to keep current members – and entice new ones – by offering membership to all current and new Everyone Active facility members.

“We spent a long time researching apps and talking to partners to ensure we created an offer which would appeal to as many members as possible,” says Duncan Jefford, regional director, Everyone Active.

More: http://lei.sr/a8b2c_H

New law would promote exercise and ‘transform’ US public health

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) is urging US Congress to pass a new law which would encourage healthier lifestyles through physical activity.

ACE says that if the COVID-19 Youth Sports and Healthy Working Families Relief Act – which incorporates the Personal Health Investment Today (PHIT) Act – would be passed as part of the

next economic stimulus package, it would have a “triple effect” that could help transform US public health.

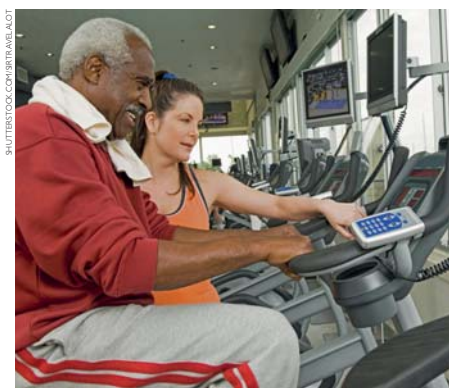
In a statement, ACE said that one of these effects would be to give fitness and sports businesses – which have been battered by the pandemic-induced lockdowns – a crucial shot in the arm.

“PHIT would not only improve health in America, but reduce the strain on our overall healthcare system and provide a consumer-driven economic stimulus to help active lifestyle industries harmed by COVID-19,” ACE said in a statement.

More: http://lei.sr/Q7y5r_H

“
PHIT would improve health in America and reduce the strain on our healthcare system

ACE



PHIT would provide discounts on physical activity expenditures

Schools should teach fitness tech to 'protect kids from risks'

Children and young people need more support to navigate the growing number of digital wellness technologies which track and manage their fitness and health.

According to a new report, 70 per cent of young people – some as young as eight years old – are already using

apps, YouTube videos and digital online technologies to track and manage aspects of their health.

The researchers responsible for the *Digital Health Generation* report – from the universities of Bath and Salford in the UK and University of New South Wales in Australia – say the findings highlight risks and opportunities for young people. They also suggest that more needs to be done to expand digital literacy lessons at school to focus on health.

The report is based on survey data of more than 1,000 young people.

Among the report's findings is that, while young people often draw on the health advice provided through digital health (such as training plans and dietary advice) – many



70 per cent of young people already use tech to track health

were concerned that they would not be able to recognise if they were over-exercising or dieting too much.

Therefore, the researchers suggest that, as a priority, schools should be "supported in educating young people

about digital health as part of the health curriculum".

"Digital health education should promote learning that will benefit young people," said lead researcher Emma Rich.

More: http://lei.sr/M3U5V_H



Young people want to learn more about this topic, but need help in navigating it

Emma Rich

EMMA RICH/WWW.FITNESSUNITESUS.COM

National Fitness Day 2020 to help UK bounce back from COVID-19

This year's National Fitness Day (NFD) will be the "biggest unified celebration of fitness

in UK history", according to plans revealed on 30 July.

The theme for NFD 2020, which will be held on 23 September 2020, will be 'Fitness Unites Us', celebrating the power fitness has to bring communities together during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among those throwing their support behind the campaign is Be Military Fit with Bear Grylls, which has declared its ambition to get 10 million people active on the day – more than double the four million that took part in 2019.



The theme for NFD 2020 will be 'Fitness Unites Us'

Bear Grylls, who will help kick-off the activities on the day said: "Now, more than ever, we need to help our communities to stay active, healthy and positive."

ukactive will once again coordinate NFD, mobilising more than 4,000 members to host free activities that get people moving together in every corner of the UK.

ukactive is now calling for facilities to register their free events via the National Fitness Day website.

More: http://lei.sr/w6G7q_H



Now, more than ever, we need to help our communities to stay active

Bear Grylls

Fitness First unaffected as DW Sports goes into administration

DW Sports said it's working to save its 73-strong gym portfolio after entering administration.

Fitness First remains a separate company and the chain's 43 clubs are unaffected.

DW Sports says it's looking to protect as many gyms as possible, but added it's inevitable that some will close.

"The decision to appoint administrators has not been taken lightly, but will give us the best chance to protect viable parts of the business, return them to profitability, and secure as many jobs as possible," said CEO Martin Long.

"Having exhausted all other available options for the business, we firmly believe this process can be a platform to



"We firmly believe this process can be a platform to restructure the business

Martin Long

restructure the business and preserve many of our gyms for our members, and also protect the maximum number of jobs possible for our team.

"Our commitment as part of the gym sector across the UK, to support the health and the fitness of



DW Sports is looking to save 'as many gyms as possible'

the nation, has not changed and we remain committed to ensuring our members maintain their fitness goals with us where possible."

Of the 73 DW Sports gyms in the UK, 59 are currently open and trading in England and Northern Ireland.

The further 14 gyms in England, Scotland and Wales are not yet able to open, due to government restrictions in Scotland and Wales and – it is assumed – due to being unviable in England.

More: http://lei.sr/54a6w_H

Therme Group to roll out wellbeing resorts across the UK

Following approval to build a £250m wellbeing resort in Manchester, Therme Group has revealed plans to develop and expand its concept in other major UK cities.

"Our aim is to ensure that



"We want a Therme resort within easy reach of 90 per cent of Brits

James Mark

a Therme Group wellbeing resort is within easy reach of 90 per cent of the UK population," commented Therme UK COO, James Mark.

The development plan includes projects – with a similar concept to Therme Manchester – in London, Wales, and Scotland, all of which will be developed at sites located near to city centres.

Work begins on the 28-acre Manchester resort next year, which is scheduled for completion in 2023.

Therme describes its concept as a mix of nature, sustainable tech and culture.

More: http://lei.sr/B2B2P_H



The £250m Therme Manchester is scheduled to open in 2023

JD Gyms buys Xercise4Less out of administration

JD Gyms has acquired the gym estate of Xercise4Less, following the budget chain calling in administrators.

Xercise4Less ran into financial trouble earlier this year after being hit badly by the COVID-19 lockdowns.

It announced in May that it was being sold off by its

investors, directors and shareholders, which included the BGF investment fund and Proventus Capital Partners.

The chain, which operated 51 gyms across the UK, initially brought in restructuring specialist Alan Fort to review its position.

Up until late June, the company was hopeful that a deal could be struck to allow it to continue operations under the Xercise4Less brand.

Those hopes were, however, dashed as its parent company Wright Leisure Topco called in administrators PwC.

The administrators have now confirmed the sale of the business to a subsidiary of JD Sports Gyms Limited (JDG).

The transaction includes the vast majority of the business and assets of the



JD Gyms has acquired 50 of the 51 Xercise4Less gyms

X4L Group, with 50 gyms included in the sale.

Alun Peacock, managing director of JD Sports Gyms, said: "We're delighted to have completed this acquisition which enhances our position in the highly competitive gym

market and which will ensure the continued employment of many hundreds of people. We look forward to re-opening the gyms and welcoming our new colleagues and members."

More: http://lei.sr/C6h3T_H



This acquisition enhances our position in the highly competitive market

Alun Peacock

Gyms on the high street – it's a go as government changes the law

Gyms will be free to open on high streets across England from September 1, following changes to legislation, following intense lobbying from industry body, ukactive.

The new laws are designed to revitalise town centres and will create a huge opportunity for gym operators to extend operations into areas of higher visibility and to build more consumer-centric brands.

The changes relate to the Use Classes Order regulation, which has obstructed gyms and leisure facilities from opening.

A Commercial, Business and Service E Use Class will be created, which will enable



It will soon be easier to repurpose town centre properties

health clubs, gyms, restaurants and a wide range of other leisure operators move into retail units without requiring a planning application or local authority approval.

In addition, a new 'Local Community' F2 Use Class will also be created, which will recognise the central role that outdoor sports and swimming pools play.

"This is a positive step for the long-term success of our sector," said ukactive CEO Huw Edwards.

More: http://lei.sr/u4V5H_H



This is a positive step for the long-term success of our sector

Huw Edwards

Technogym goes up a gear with new launches

Equipment giant Technogym has introduced its new Excite line of fully-connected cardio kit that has now been fitted with the Technogym Live user interface.

Excite has been conceived around four key pillars – tailored training variety, connectivity, space-optimisation and sustainability. It will be marketed as a line that offers the “best ratio between floor footprint and training space”.

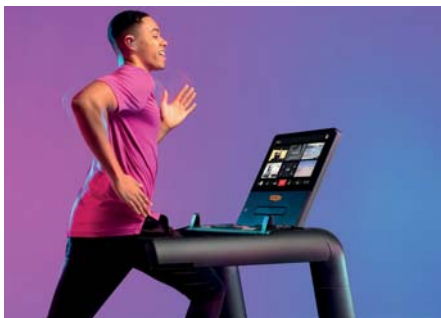
For example, the new Excite Run treadmill has an new deck design, providing greater stability and 13 per cent more space for exercising, while occupying 30 per cent less floor space.



“
Technogym Live represents a key milestone for us
Nerio Alessandri

Meanwhile, the elliptical trainer, Excite Synchro, is marketed as offering the “longest stride in the industry” and has an adjustable ramp – from 5 to 33 degrees.

The new equipment will offer users a personalised training experience by



The new range will offer a personalised training experience

connecting to a wide range of workout content and entertainment options offered by Technogym Live.

Technogym Live features live and on-demand training video content on Technogym's equipment consoles and through the Mywellness app.

“Within our unique digital ecosystem, Technogym Live represents a key milestone of our innovation trajectory to offer end-users engagement,” said Nerio Alessandri, Technogym's founder and CEO.

More: http://lei.sr/2W3Q5_H

Family fitness firm, GetSetGo!, backed by Edition Capital

A new family fitness focused operator is preparing to open its first site in Putney, London, once social distancing eases.

GetSetGo! – the brainchild of entrepreneurs Alina Cooper and Claire Harrison – will offer



“
Putney will be followed by seven sites across London in five years

Alina Cooper and Claire Harrison

families environments in which they can “enjoy active family time and relax”, with fitness, swimming lessons and family activities.

The founders have an ambitious roll-out programme, after securing a “seven-figure” investment – including a contribution from leisure specialist, Edition Capital.

Facilities will include teaching pools, exercise spaces, a restaurant and interactive play spaces.

“Putney will be followed by seven sites across London in the next five years,” the founders said.

More: http://lei.sr/U8v4_Y_H



GetSetGo! looks to provide spaces for “active family time”

Magic pill: a minute of exercise provides health boost to elderly

A single minute of exercise per week is enough to provide health benefits to people over the age of 65.

A team of researchers at Abertay University in Dundee, Scotland, studied a group of 65 to 75-year-olds who participated in either once or twice weekly training



SIT improves the ability to get glucose out of the system

Dr John Babraj

sessions for a period of eight weeks. Each had been living a sedentary lifestyle and had not been taking part in regular exercise.

The participants took to stationary bikes and were asked to cycle as hard as they were able to for six seconds before resting for at least a minute.

They would repeat the process – which is known as sprint interval training (SIT) – until they had exercised for a total of one minute.

In controlled testing, the team found that the once-weekly session was enough to produce improvements in blood glucose control and general mobility.

The results could be significant, because as people age, they lose the ability to



A single weekly session was enough to provide benefits

take glucose out of their blood – potentially leading to Type 2 Diabetes and problems with the heart and liver.

Dr John Babraj, who led the study, said: "We've found that SIT improves the ability to get glucose out of the system.

"While those participating in the twice-weekly sessions observed a greater improvement, those taking part in the single session also observed change."

More: http://lei.sr/3S7a7_H

New research links genetic mutation with inability to exercise

Researchers have discovered a genetic mutation that could reduce a patient's ability to exercise efficiently.

The team – which included staff from King's College London and University Luigi Vanvitelli in Naples, Italy – identified a patient who had a reduced rate of growth, persistent low blood sugar, limited exercise capacity and a very high number of red blood cells.

The researchers carried out genetic and protein analysis of the patient, examined their respiratory physiology in simulated high altitude, measured their exercise

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/HRIZES



The researchers carried out genetic and protein analysis

capacity, and performed a series of metabolic tests.

Following genetic analysis, an alteration on The von Hippel-Lindau (VHL) gene was identified and associated with

impaired functionality in the patient's mitochondria, the powerhouse of the cell that uses oxygen to fuel cellular life. This reduced mitochondrial function efficiency limits the



Reduced mitochondrial function limited the patient's aerobic exercise capacity

patient's aerobic exercise capacity, compared to people without the mutation.

VHL is fundamental for cells to survive when oxygen availability is reduced.

The research establishes the basis for the study of new mutations which are able to affect the oxygen sensing pathways.

More: http://lei.sr/V7U9v_H

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CEO, Discover Strength

**GRETA
Wagner**
Executive Vice President
& Executive Director,
Chelsea Piers

**MICHELE
Melkeron-
Granryd**
General Manager, Castle Hill
Integrative Fitness

**JOSÉ
Teixeira**
Head of Customer
Experience, SC Fitness

**CHANTAL
Brodrick**
Content & Communications
Specialist and Board
Member, Fitness Australia

**SANDRA
Dunne**
Managing Director,
Gym Plus, Ireland

**COLIN
Grant**
CEO, PURE International
Group, China

**ADAM
Zeitsiff**
President & CEO,
Gold's Gym



Everyone's talking about COVID-19 recovery programmes

Some of those who've suffered from COVID-19 face a long road to recovery. What role can the health and fitness industry play in supporting them with their rehabilitation? Kath Hudson reports

Anyone who has suffered from the virus will need to rebuild their physical and mental resilience and the health and fitness sector is perfectly placed to guide them through this process.

In extreme cases, people will need medical supervision to exercise, but there is a lot of middle ground, where recovery can be undertaken at a normal gym, under the supervision of fitness professionals.

Much about the virus is still unknown, but medics are already reporting high incidences of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in post-COVID patients, as well as a wide range of issues with organ damage and reduced lung capacity and scarring.

The impact of SARS can also give us some clues. Studies undertaken in Hong Kong into its long-term effects


showed that two years after they had the disease, 50 per cent of survivors had a much reduced exercise capacity, while 40 per cent still had chronic fatigue symptoms three and a half years after being diagnosed.

Staff delivering the Newport Live COVID-19 recovery programme have noticed the shocking way COVID-19 deconditions the body. Not just the respiratory system, but also the muscles, as a result of reduced mobility. A report published in *JAMA Cardiology* says there are also indications people who have been infected by the virus may go on to have a much higher incidence of heart issues.

Clearly the nation now desperately needs the health and fitness industry's guidance to heal post-COVID patients, so what's the way forward? We ask the experts.



For COVID-19 survivors, the road to a full recovery can be long. How can health clubs support this journey?



Utilise the specialist knowledge of your team and create comprehensive packages for customers

Dr Ursula Levine

**Lanserhof at The Arts Club:
GP and integrative medicine specialist**

The health and fitness industry's role in supporting and rehabilitating people who have suffered from COVID-19 cannot be over-estimated.

Our industry has two roles to fulfil: to rehabilitate those who have had the virus and educate and empower those who have not. 'Prepare, react, repair' is a useful blueprint for the patient to visualise, as we help them build resilience.

A striking feature of the virus is how long the symptoms can last: many people have seen them continue for eight to 10 weeks. Symptoms can go away and race back and it appears to leave a footprint, so this has to be factored into rehabilitation programmes. Recovery involves a cyclical process rather than a straight line of improvement, which must be explained to clients.

The virus doesn't just attack the respiratory system: people have reported fatigue, muscle ache, gut issues and kidney problems, so all those systems and organs need rejuvenating. In response, cleansing dietary regimes, which help the gut and kidneys, are essential.

Operators should also anticipate patients presenting with mental health challenges as a result of the crisis. At Lanserhof, we have found patients have generally been emotionally and mentally discouraged. They complain

of feeling drained and report cravings and a tendency to adopt bad habits. This suggests there is likely to be a spike in addictive behaviour and possible substance misuse issues.

Each operator should now play to their strengths, working out how they can be of benefit to COVID-19 sufferers and then communicating this to potential clients. Lanserhof's USP is cutting edge diagnostics, treatment and therapeutic support and we are using a range of medical therapies in our bespoke treatment programmes, including IV therapy, ozone therapy, micro-immunotherapy, cryotherapy and acupuncture.

Knowledge is capital, so ensure your staff are exceptional in their product knowledge and skills. The more comprehensive the packages you can create, the better it will be for patients and the business. Finally, it is vital to let patients know that they are partners in a strategic approach to improving their healthcare results, not just passive recipients.



We've found patients have been emotionally and mentally discouraged, complain of feeling drained and report a tendency to adopt bad habits



Newport Live is supporting the only COVID-19 recovery programme in Wales that is being used as a clinical trial

Steve Ward

Newport Live: chief executive

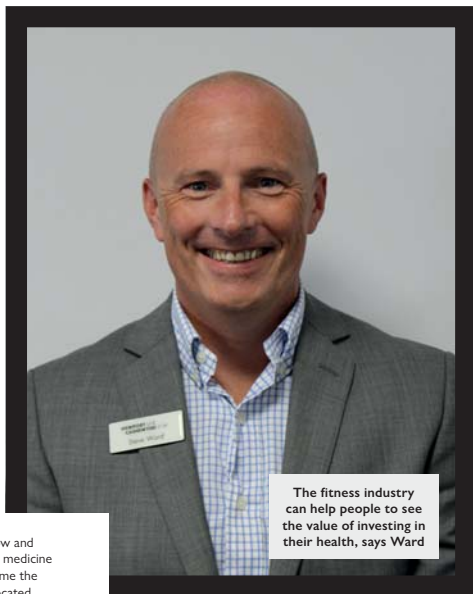
As a sector, we know and believe exercise is medicine and for the first time the Government advocated this, with the daily exercise allowance during lockdown.

The health and fitness industry is brilliantly placed to support rehabilitation and this situation is a game changer that the sector must embrace, especially as we don't know how long the effects of COVID-19 will be with us.

Newport Live is supporting the only COVID-19 recovery programme in Wales being used as a clinical trial.

Created by the clinical team from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, which worked with Public Health Wales, the eight week programme was approved to run at our facilities by Newport City Council.

Patients attend in groups and work with clinicians, physiotherapists, dieticians and National Exercise Referral colleagues. Each programme is tailor-made, in accordance with the individual's health status prior to the illness and the impact of the virus. Each person needs a unique approach requiring psychological support, physiotherapy and lifestyle advice, as well as physical exercise.



The fitness industry can help people to see the value of investing in their health, says Ward

The aim is for those who have participated in the programme to continue to receive support and encouragement to remain active once the eight weeks conclude.

The exit strategy following intense clinical programmes is where health and fitness operators can gain the greatest traction: taking the customer on the next phase of their journey to better health once they leave hospital.

Going forward, partnerships with health providers will be critical in both the recovery and prevention journey.

Restarting the industry will be tough, but we also have a new journey – to help the wider population to see the value of exercise and investing in their wellbeing. The industry needs to shout loudly about the role we have in preventing poor health and advocate that we are the wellbeing service: health clubs are where you come to stay well and get healthier, which helps during times of physical and mental health challenges.



For the fitness industry to have true impact, we should work closely with other professionals, such as physiotherapists

Dr Dane Vishnubala

Active IQ: chief medical advisor


Fitness professionals have the consultation, empathetic, coaching and programming skills which could be adapted to provide a supportive workforce to aid in post COVID-19 rehabilitation efforts. While some upskilling is necessary, instructors with exercise referral or pulmonary rehab qualifications could be upskilled quite easily via CPD – potentially even online.

However, the health and fitness industry's rehabilitation offer does need further development. Insurance companies will need to be at the table, alongside health bodies, to come to a consensus in terms of how rehabilitation will work.

Having clear rules around risk stratification may avoid the need to have GP clearance. For the fitness industry to have true impact, we should work closely with other professionals, such as physiotherapists, to maximise the benefit to the patient.

A robust risk stratification process would assess which patients are suitable for rehabilitation at the gym. High risk people, who have been left with low oxygen levels or possible heart issues, should be under clinical guidance. Those who have made a full recovery, who are asymptomatic and have had sufficient rest following the illness – at least two weeks – could greatly benefit from working with fitness professionals. A slow return to exercise is recommended – it may reasonably take up to three months to return to previous levels of fitness.

People who have experienced significant effects of the virus will likely have suffered mentally as well. Screening for mental health issues and undergoing training to look out for this, such as the Active IQ Mental Health Awareness course, may help to support these individuals. Treatment can vary from cognitive behavioural therapy, group support and other forms of talking therapies.



It may take up to three months for an individual to return to previous levels of fitness, says Vishnubala



The fitness sector should work on developing a standardised model of care delivery using PTs

Dr Ben Kelly

Nuffield Health: head of clinical research



Exercise programmes must be tailored to the needs of the individual, says Kelly

Gyms and leisure centres have a vital part to play in improving the long-term health of the population, both physically and mentally. As a sector we need to think about how we can support the NHS and allied health professionals and define a model which can be adapted to support COVID-19 rehabilitation.

There may be a need for clinical referral to exercise for former COVID-19 patients, so operators will need to make formal connections with referring NHS sites.

As a sector we will also need to work on a standardised model of care delivery using PTs, who will need to be upskilled to deliver rehabilitation programmes. This model should enable processes to remain standardised and allow the specialist knowledge of the condition to be adapted over time. This way the model can be used to support the participants through other conditions as well.

Exercise is as specific as a drug in terms of how it works for people, what they need, when it can be undertaken and how it is prescribed and we need to start respecting it in this way. Everyone should be assessed and the fitness



Exercise is as specific as a drug in terms of how it works for people and what they need, and we need to start respecting it in this way

programmes tailored to the needs of the patient. The inclusion and exclusion of particular activities will very much depend on individual requirements.

Around 30 per cent of all people with a long-term physical health condition also have a mental health problem – most commonly depression or anxiety. To this end, the industry should be working to develop multi-disciplinary practitioners to support both the physical and mental recovery of the patient.

Nuffield Health and Fitness is running a free 12-week pilot to support the rehabilitation of COVID-19 patients, following their discharge from the NHS.

We're working with NHS Trusts to implement this programme, with virtual support for patients, as well as access to our network of gyms to enable consultations. We want to roll this out across the UK, so we can support patients significantly impacted by the virus. ●

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Sheffield's Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre (AWRC) and National Centre for Sport & Exercise Medicine (NCSEM) is creating the conditions to help people be physically active. The director speaks to Kate Cracknell



Rob Copeland

What's your background?

A Sport and Exercise Science degree, then a masters, was followed by a role with Mansfield District Council as a community health and fitness officer.

I then came to Sheffield Hallam University to do a PhD in psychology, with a particular focus on childhood obesity. Twenty years later I'm still here, these days as a professor in Physical Activity and Health.

In particular, and this goes back to my psychology PhD, I'm interested in behaviour change: in how we create the conditions to make it easy for people to be physically active. Most of my work now focuses on this.

Tell us about the NCSEM and AWRC

The National Centre for Sport & Exercise Medicine is an Olympic legacy project from London 2012, with three

branches: one in London, one in the East Midlands and one in Sheffield.

Our focus in Sheffield has always been: how can we transform Sheffield to become the most active city in the UK?

We explore all the different elements that have an impact on people's movement during everyday life: schools, workplaces, the way we move and travel around the city, the environment, people's individual capabilities and opportunities. This all combines to determine how active we are.

Sheffield's NCSEM received £10m in funding from the Department of Health and Social Care, and we used that money to co-locate NHS clinics into three leisure centres – we now run close to 90,000 clinical appointments a year in leisure centres.

This places physical activity at the heart of NHS treatment, changing the way people think about how activity might form part of their treatment, whether

for musculoskeletal recovery, diabetes or weight management. What better way to start that conversation than to have it in a leisure centre rather than in a hospital?

Then came a statement from the International Olympic Committee which said that, if we really want to challenge non-communicable disease, we need to bring together multiple different disciplines to research in a different way.

So, we got to thinking: what would happen if we brought all our different academic departments together, giving them a space to co-locate and collaborate on projects? What if we then placed innovation and technology at the heart of that? If we took some of our learnings from elite sport and translated those innovations into population health?

This was the genesis of the Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre (AWRC). Its vision: to draw all this expertise together to transform lives through innovations that help people move.



The AWRC opened in January 2020 following a guidance note from the IOC

The real novelty of AWRC is the way it brings together a mix of academic disciplines with external agencies and communities

The centre opened in January 2020, funded by £14m from the Department of Health and Social Care for the building itself, plus a further £1m for equipment from the European Regional Development Fund.

How multi-disciplined is the AWRC?

We have software engineers, behavioural scientists, applied psychologists, geneticists, healthcare professionals, physiotherapists, system change specialists, sports and exercise scientists, design experts and public health specialists.

We have sports engineers from elite sporting backgrounds, who bring their expertise – in engineering, aerodynamics, product development, specialist carbon and so on – and apply it to the broader population. We have specialists in robotics and machine learning: the robots in our building can

help people move, support them with medications, help kids with autism to engage with their health appointments – they find it easier to interact with robots and it calms them down.

Many are Sheffield Hallam professors, but we also have visiting researchers from around the world, and the team is so diverse that I will have forgotten someone for sure!

Our facilities are equally diverse. We're one of the only places to have a morphology lab – morphology being the study of body shape and size – where, for example, we're looking at the potential of scanning shape and size, rather than traditional measures of BMI, to predict health outcomes.

We've already used this in Olympic sports and are now applying it to health.

We have one of the biggest movement analysis labs in Europe: 500sq m of space where we can look at everything from how objects fly through the air to supporting people with walking patterns and falls recovery.

I've already mentioned our robotics software lab, which always catches people's attention.

However, the real novelty of the AWRC is the way it brings together this mix of academic disciplines with external agencies and communities. The building makes that feasible, creating a hugely energising and collaborative environment in which to work.



Five strategic themes underpin all AWRC work

What are they? Copeland explains

1 Research into prevention

The first is our research: we want to undertake world-class research that explores the role of physical activity in the prevention and treatment of disease. Within that, there are **three themes**.

The first is **'Healthy and Active 100'**, where the goal is to give everyone in the Sheffield City region the realistic expectation of 100 years of healthy and active life. This is essentially about closing the gap in healthy life expectancy, which is something that lies at the heart of what we do at the AWRC: there's currently an 18-year gap between the most and least affluent areas of the city, and that sort of inequality is simply unacceptable.

Our other **two research themes** explore the power of physical activity to help people live well with chronic disease, so **exercise as therapy**, and the **use of digital and technological innovations** to promote independent lives.

The AWRC is the global research board for Parkrun, exploring its impact on the health of its participants


2 R&D for business and industry

The second strategic theme is about world-leading research and development for business and industry. We want to support organisations – from start-ups to global brands – with their R&D agendas, provided their focus is on innovation to help people move. That movement agenda is a broad one though: it might be a company that's working with people on a stroke unit, getting them more physically active in the very early stages of rehab, or it might be a company that wants to promote active travel. Our Wellbeing Accelerator programme supports all of this, helping organisations gain access to funding and expertise to develop their products and services.

3 Strategic collaborations

The third theme is creating strategic collaborations and partnerships: with the local community so we understand their needs, with other academic institutions, with the health and care sector, with large organisations and companies. Through these partnerships, we gain access to innovations, expertise and populations to support our research and our business agendas. We're the global research board for **Parkrun**, for example, exploring the impact of its programmes on the health and the happiness of its runners.





A key aim of the centre to give everyone in Sheffield City the realistic expectation of 100 years of healthy and active life

4 Innovation for the NHS
The fourth is about creating an innovation centre for the NHS. This is a key part of what we do. The 90,000 clinical appointments carried out by the NCSEM each year embrace more than 20 different clinical specialities. At the AWRC, we have research facilities to match each of these specialities. We develop programmes and innovations designed to achieve even better outcomes for people and, after our own internal testing, then trial them more broadly through the NCSEM. We can ultimately scale innovations nationally if they prove effective. The AWRC is, then, effectively the research arm of the NCSEM and has turbo-charged our research agenda.

5 Education
The fifth and final theme is taking all our research, partnerships and innovation and putting it all into programmes to educate the next generation in what works. We're a university after all: if we aren't training and educating people, what are we doing?

There's currently an
18-year gap in life
expectancy between
the most and least affluent
areas of the city, and this
is simply unacceptable



Copeland's ultimate goal for the AWRC is that first Sheffield City and then the whole of the UK becomes the most active place in the world

ROBERT HARRIS/ISTOCK

There will be hundreds of products, services and innovations available in society, to support people in being active, and our expertise will have contributed

► **What are your long-term goals for the AWRC?**

Internally, we talk about an ambition to be the world's leading centre for physical activity research, but that will only be measured by the impact we have. I'm not really bothered about the label: it's all about the impact. Seeing the ROI of what we do is hugely rewarding and a big part of what drives me personally.

For me, success looks like this: there will be hundreds of products, services and innovations available in society, being used by people across multiple sectors to support them in being physically active, and our expertise will have contributed to all of these. I'm convinced we can achieve that and it's really exciting.

Meanwhile, our research and innovation is already directly influencing

policy around the Sheffield City region – in the field of active travel, for example. But fast-forward, I would like to see our research also influencing national and international policy relating to population activity.

We will have hundreds of training programmes too – for Masters students, healthcare professionals, business leaders – and these will be embedded throughout academia, the NHS and other sectors.

And of course, ultimately the goal is that the Sheffield City region firstly, and then the UK as a whole – as we broaden our reach – becomes the most active place in the world. A place where the inequality gap has been eradicated.

The health and fitness sector has a huge part to play in this, and we will be there to support it with evidence-based programmes that make a real

difference to members. We, and gyms, have a responsibility to close the inequality gap. If, in 20 or 30 years' time, I can point to specific programmes and say 'I remember working with XYZ operator to develop that and it's now being delivered to 200,000 people across Europe', that would be great.

But let me make one important final observation. While the AWRC will be instrumental in achieving all of this, we are only one part of the solution. It's vital that we recognise the whole host of other organisations and partners that are working really, really hard on this agenda: there are local community organisations that have been supporting people in being physically active for decades. We have a shiny new building, and lots of media attention as a result, but our vision will only be achieved in collaboration. ●



What is GO fit doing in its gyms that makes it so sticky? Once people become a GO fit member, very few leave

Sharing a vision



The AWRC is looking at the impact of Go fit's exercise programmes

"Our strategic collaboration with Spanish operator GO fit is incredibly exciting for us," says Copeland. "GO fit is leading the industry in supporting people into lifelong physical activity: it has incredible data about adherence to its memberships across the whole family structure. What we're really excited about is being able to understand and tease out what it is about the model that's so effective. What is GO fit doing in its gyms that makes it so sticky? Because really, once people become a GO fit member, very few leave."

"We're also really interested in the impact of GO fit's exercise programmes on clinical populations. We're looking for best practice learnings around creating a clinical exercise programme

in a non-clinical environment. What's the prescription? How do we maximise the effectiveness among the different populations?"

"We're keen to do more work around prehab for surgery and cancer treatment, too, and are looking to accelerate our learnings using the vehicle of GO fit: its gyms, organisations and populations."

"GO fit is genuinely interested in the latest research evidence, both to drive its programmes and to influence what it does as an organisation. It's very refreshing and what attracted us to work with them. This is, after all, where the value of the AWRC as a research unit meets the fitness industry. We want to work with companies that share our vision, and where we can contribute equally to each others' agenda."

RICOVR: COVID Recovery

🌱 We have a vision of a wellbeing-driven economy – one in which everything we do is measured against a set of outcomes that relate to people's wellbeing 🌱

"We've just established a research and innovation unit around COVID recovery, called RICOVR," says Copeland.

"We've been increasingly concerned with the support that's needed for people who are struggling long-term, particularly in terms of chronic fatigue. People are feeling the effects 90, 100 days post-diagnosis," he explains.

"The role of physical activity isn't well understood when it comes to fatigue. For those with ME or chronic fatigue syndrome, for example, physical activity can often make things much worse. We want to translate our existing knowledge and understand the impact for those recovering from COVID-19."

"Meanwhile, an article published recently in the *British Journal of Medicine* suggested the biggest challenge is likely to be the deconditioning effect from lockdown, as opposed to the effects of COVID-19 itself. That's particularly the case for people with long-term conditions: self-isolation has prevented a whole range of normal activities that would usually make this group less sedentary."

"We now have a duality in society. We're seeing some signs of a rise in structured exercise – cycling, jogging and so on – particularly in affluent areas, although people have quickly got back in the car; we still don't have the infrastructure to make walking or cycling the easy choice."

"But the more worrying trend is a drop in everyday habitual activity, particularly among those who are often the least active in our communities anyway. There will be a lot of work to do in supporting people back into activity and we're working on programmes to help with this."

"Meanwhile, at a city-wide level, we have a vision of a wellbeing-driven economy – one in which everything we do is measured against a set of outcomes that relate to people's wellbeing – as instrumental to any COVID recovery strategy. This is the way they've restarted their economies in New Zealand and Iceland. We believe we can also do it here, in the Sheffield City region."

Adapting to change



Power Plate has been a leader in the field of vibration training for over 20 years, and during the pandemic continues to support the fitness industry. Iain Murray, sales director, UK, talks to HCM about business growth in difficult times

For over two decades, Power Plate has defined the whole-body and targeted vibration training and therapy category. Its products and protocols are used around the world by professional sports teams and fitness pioneers.

Helping users to prepare faster, perform better and recover quicker, Power Plate makes them feel better by stimulating natural reflexes, increasing muscle activation and improving circulation.

Power Plate delivers health, fitness and wellness results, whatever the fitness level or training style, and with accelerated results, it's a great solution for gyms and health clubs assessing their options for re-engaging members into their facilities.

Adapting to change

When the world changed overnight, commercial partners were our top priority. We knew they would need our support with operations, and directly with members. As studios and fitness facilities were keen to deliver classes digitally and fast, Power Plate allowed members to carry on their weekly workouts, live on social media and on-demand via the app.

With commercial clubs closing indefinitely, Power Plate quickly shifted the business to focus on members exercising at home, knowing that these customers would need and want to continue their exercise regimes during lockdown.

Business growth

Power Plate has been fortunate to be able to grow significantly in at-home sales throughout the lockdown period, with the demand for home fitness equipment going through the roof.

Our targeted vibration products (TVPs) have proved a huge success with elite athletes forced to train at home, supporting their performance, recovery and rehabilitation. We have also worked closely with our retail partners to meet the growing demand for effective and efficient exercise equipment at home.

The strategy to shift focus quickly to at-home and elite markets while maintaining close relationships with our commercial settings, has been the driving force behind this success and growth.

Powerplate has a whole range of **future moves** coming to fruition, including the following:

Product:

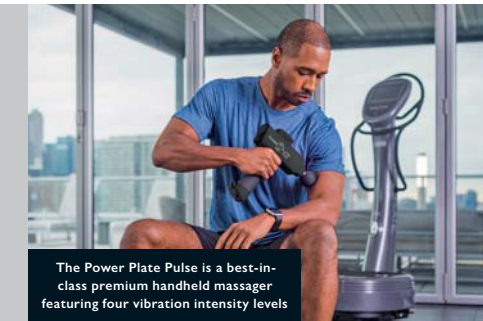
Moving forward, Power Plate has a number of new products in its armory. On the back of the successful launches of MOVE and TVPs late in 2019, first off the blocks is the new 'black edition' range, available from August 2020.

This range consists of new matt black models sitting across our commercial product lines.


Appealing to all market sectors, and with a continued focus on wellness and recovery, this new sleek look will be well placed within a variety of different health and wellness environments.

Growth sectors:

Prior to lockdown, Power Plate teamed up with Fora, Regus and ukactive to deliver education across



The Power Plate Pulse is a best-in-class premium handheld massager featuring four vibration intensity levels



Through its app and series of live workouts, Power Plate has quickly shifted the business to focus on members exercising at home



*Our targeted vibration products
have proved a huge success with elite
athletes forced to train at home*

Education:

Underpinning this strategy is, as always, our internationally renowned education. Director of training and education Steve Powell, and a global network of master trainers, are available to support and deliver both online and face-to-face sessions for customers across all sectors.

It's our mission to widen the understanding and application of vibration training within fitness, health and wellness education.

Power Plate is working in partnership with Cardiff Met University to support its new Masters Strength and Conditioning courses in vibration training as an integral part of their learning pathway.

So as we look ahead to Q3 and Q4 of 2020, there are some exciting projects underway and as we continue to innovate as a brand, we're confident that the growth we have experienced during this period will continue. ●

flexible workspaces in London, in a bid to support workers and encourage corrective posture and movement to combat sitting disease. This work is set to continue as we look to roll out workplace wellness.

The care sector also holds great opportunities for Power Plate and we recently formed a partnership with Berkley care homes to deliver wellness solutions to patients who have suffered chronic illnesses as a result of lockdown and the restrictive measures they have imposed on our older populations.

Elite sport is an additional area of focus with clubs and individuals utilising the wide applications of Power Plate to help them Prepare, Perform and Recover. Our training team supports clubs such as England Rugby, Worcester Warriors, Wales FC, Arsenal and Manchester City FC alongside athletes such as Beth Mead, Raheem Sterling and Anthony Oxelade Chamberlain.



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Mills says it's time to recognise the power of gyms – economically and in terms of health



THE CASE FOR GYMS

It's time gyms and health clubs are recognised as a cornerstone of our global recovery from COVID-19 and given the necessary backing, says Phillip Mills

A recent IHRSA briefing highlighted the benefits of exercise, offering scientific evidence that shows health clubs pose no higher risk of COVID-19 transmission than other public places, when operating under appropriate guidelines.

It noted that "there has not been any evidence of COVID-19 spreading in any US club to date."

So now we are starting to gather the evidence to show gyms are safe, how can we hammer home the solutions they bring when it comes to bouncing back from COVID-19?

Proving value

A study by consultants, McKinsey, found the economic impact of better health among the world's population could add US\$12 trillion to global GDP by 2040 – an 8 per cent boost.

Investing in this area now could help kickstart our global economic recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the health front, a new academic paper by scientist David C Nieman, suggests regular physical activity should be undertaken to reduce our risk of contracting COVID-19. Nieman believes it's as important as physical

GYM MEMBERS ARE 14 TIMES MORE ACTIVE THAN NON-MEMBERS



distancing, hand washing and the wearing of face coverings. He found aerobic exercise increases immunological fitness by increasing blood flow and mobilising white blood cells.

Regular exercise also guards against obesity, and as Nieman makes clear, "reduces risk for hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease – three of the most important underlying conditions for COVID-19".

Meanwhile, research led by Professor Zhen Yan at the University of Virginia found that regular exercise may reduce the risk of complications in people with COVID-19.

Studying an antioxidant called extracellular superoxide dismutase (EcSOD) that's released in the body during exercise, Yan's 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 COVID-19.

Yan urges people to protect themselves by starting to exercise more to boost EcSOD levels.

Demonstrating value

Clearly exercise is vital to our planet's comeback from COVID-19 on a number of important levels, so how do we demonstrate the value of those who provide it?

Lockdown increased the range of options for people to stay active at home, leading some in the media to question whether we still need gyms to service our fitness needs. After all, no one owns the patent to the press up and there's no finer treadmill than the great outdoors – but if this is the case, why are gym members on average found to be 14 times more active than non-members?

One reason is that our facilities don't just serve up fitness, they also give members motivation. We know this remains a key ingredient in regular exercise adherence and is

WORKING OUT ALONGSIDE CAPABLE EXERCISERS CAN INCREASE YOUR WORKOUT TIME AND INTENSITY BY 200%

one of the key reasons our industry exists.

Among the most powerful motivators are the accountability and sense of connection we get from working out with others. Nowhere is this more evident than in a live group workout. Anyone who's felt the electricity of a great class will attest that it's one of the most powerful and motivational workout experiences you can get.

Peer support

Plenty of research shows this sense of connection and accountability pays dividends. Research indicates that members who work out in groups are far more likely to stick to exercise than those who go it alone. Science shows that we get more enjoyment and satisfaction when we work out in a group. And there's evidence that when we're surrounded by the healthy actions of others, it rubs off on us too.

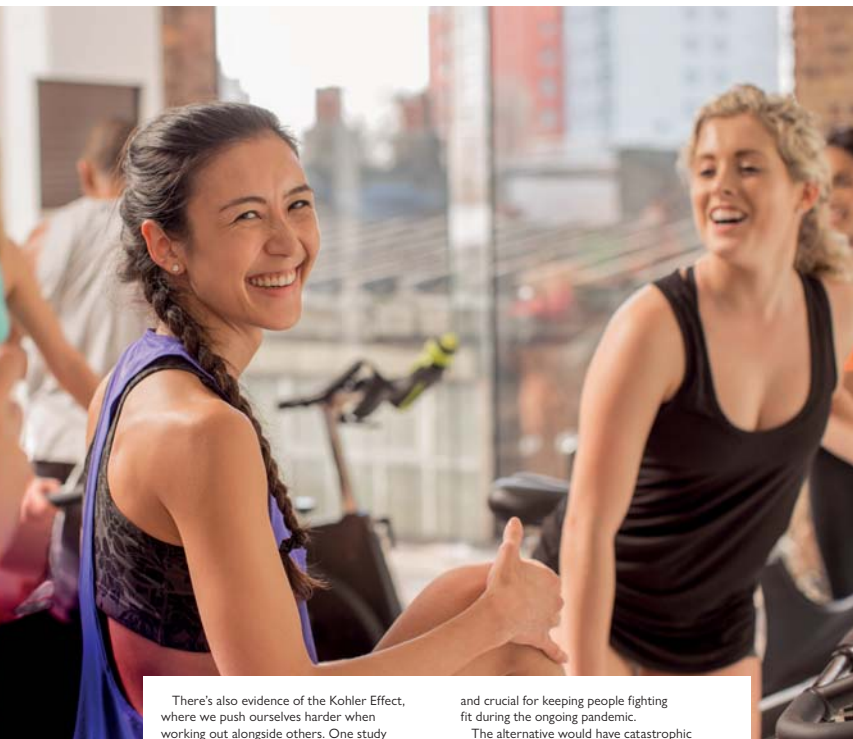
A study published in *Obesity Journal* indicated that when overweight people spent time with their fit friends they lost more weight, and the more time they spent with these friends, the more weight they lost.

This finding is backed up by another study from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, showing that 95 per cent of those who follow a weight loss program with a friend complete it, but just 76 per cent make it to the end if they go it alone.

Exercise has the power to improve everything from general wellbeing to mental health



PHOTOS: LEE'S PILLS



There's also evidence of the Kohler Effect, where we push ourselves harder when working out alongside others. One study compared people planking on their own and with a partner (who had superior ability).

When planking with a more capable partner, people were clearly more motivated, increasing their plank duration by 24 per cent.

A study by Kansas State University found that working out alongside other capable exercisers can increase your workout time and intensity by 200 per cent.

Embracing active habits

Motivation is a key component of an enduring exercise habit and that's why it's so important for society to get back to health clubs globally – and all the things that make them inspiring – as soon as is safely possible.

As the UK government's Chief Medical Adviser, Chris Whitty, said at a coronavirus briefing on 15 April, "There is no situation, there is no age and no condition where exercise is not a good thing... exercise is one of the best things you can possibly do."

Whitty said being physically active is "very important to long-term health"

and crucial for keeping people fighting fit during the ongoing pandemic.

The alternative would have catastrophic consequences for our physical and mental health, not to mention that of the economy and environment: in the US alone, chronic diseases that can be prevented by regular exercise are projected to cost US\$42 trillion between 2016 and 2030.

We know exercise in pill-form would be hailed as a wonder drug. A huge 2013 comparison study of exercise and drug interventions published in the *British Medical Journal* found that being fit was as good if not better at combatting a number of chronic illnesses.

It truly is the best medicine, with the power to improve everything from general wellbeing and musculoskeletal disease to cardiovascular problems, cancers, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression.

As the world adjusts in the wake of this major health pandemic, with lessons learned and safer processes in place, it's time for governments to recognise the vital role of gyms in society and take meaningful action to support them. Our COVID-19 recovery depends on it. ●

Threat of more lockdowns will drive the growth of digital that can be monetised

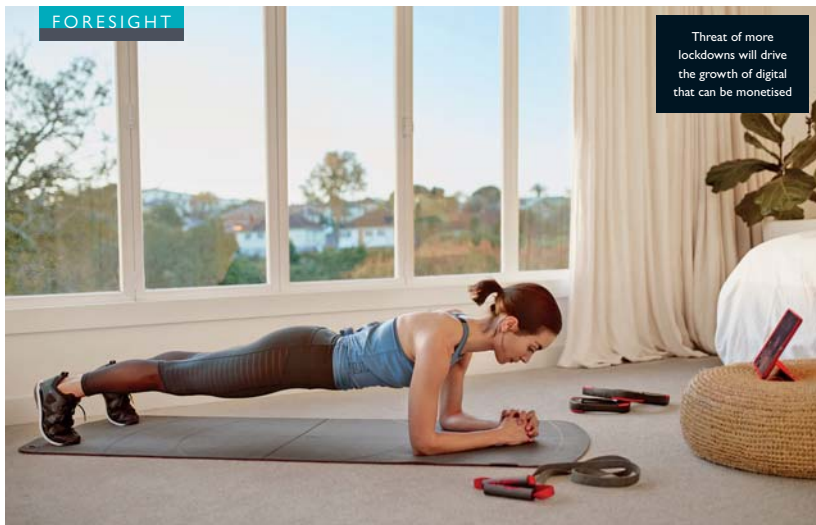


PHOTO: LEE'S MILLS ON DEMAND

Top 20 trends

- 1 Hybrid gym model
- 2 Outdoor fitness
- 3 High street gyms
- 4 Diversification
- 5 Strength training
- 6 Fit tech
- 7 Multi-brand businesses
- 8 C-19 recovery programmes
- 9 Overfatness
- 10 PE
- 11 Pandemic insurance
- 12 Mental health support
- 13 Eliminating male bias
- 14 Swimming
- 15 Post-exercise heat
- 16 Catering for introverts
- 17 Trim trails
- 18 EsOD
- 19 Lobbying
- 20 Senolytics

Numbers do not indicate a ranking

HCM

Fitness trends

COVID-19 has changed the world as we know it. This year's

HCM Fitness Trends have been updated to reflect the new reality of the challenges being faced by operators globally

LAND GRAB

1. HYBRID GYM MODEL

The pandemic has seen operators the world over pivoting to digital to create live streaming or on-demand workouts to keep members engaged, with many services being offered free of charge to maintain a connection with members.

Although clubs are reopening, they are doing so under threat of closure through possible second lockdowns, meaning the pivot to a hybrid gym model has begun, with software companies and operators working to merge digital and physical into one seamless offering for members.

We expect to see an increasing focus on monetising digital, while empowering members to work out wherever they feel comfortable via apps, live streaming and virtual classes.

This is opening up a new competitive landscape where existing providers vie with operators, equipment suppliers and app and software companies for market share of the hybrid gym market. We expect to see rapid change as a result, with a major land grab already underway.

ENJOYING THE FREEDOM

2. OUTDOOR FITNESS

One of the greatest areas of demand from consumers when it comes to their health club offering over the next few years will be all forms of outdoor fitness.

COVID-19 is 18 times less transmissible in the open air, making things safer, while the psychological benefits of outdoor fitness are well documented in terms of improving mental health.

People have had their movement restricted for months and are placing a high value on being outdoors in nature and enjoying some freedom.

Expect brands such as The Green Gym and Bear Grylls' BMF (Be Military Fit) to see rapid growth, as exercise beyond the four walls becomes hugely popular. We may also see new competition in this area.

Health clubs with outdoor spaces are freshening them up and doing outdoor programming, while clubs without green space are finding their nearest park (or car park) and programming in outdoor fitness sessions.

Running and cycling groups are also increasingly popular.

The next trend will see outdoor fitness being creatively weather-proofed for the extremes of the summer and winter months in both northern and southern hemispheres, as outdoor fitness becomes a regular part of the health club offering.

PHOTO: LIES VILLIS



The next stage of outdoor fitness will be weather-proofing for the extremes of summer and winter

NEW LOCATIONS

3. HIGH STREET GYMS

Gym operators are still not making an impact as major consumer brands in many parts of the world, partly due to a lack of visibility by consumers.

Now this may be about to change, as governments look to revitalise failing retail areas by allowing gym operators to open shopfronts in these locations.

There will be issues with parking to resolve, but there will also be first mover advantages for operators who find a successful high street gym model that enables them to raise their profile with consumers and cement their brand as a market leader.

Falling retail rents also make viable deals increasingly likely.

LEARNINGS FROM COVID-19

4. DIVERSIFICATION

Operators that make it through the pandemic will vow to never again leave themselves so exposed to limited revenue streams and will move to diversify at the first opportunity.

We expect to see moves into other sectors, as well as increased activity in areas such as mail-order retail, F&B – including home delivery – streaming subscriptions, health checks, sleep, health insurance sales, etc. Some delivered under license, others through partnerships.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/TANOBURITO

NEW PRIORITY

Strength training is a new priority

5. STRENGTH TRAINING

New guidance issued by chief medical officers in both the US and the UK places an increased emphasis on the importance of building strength and balance for adults.

Adults are advised to undertake strength-based exercise at least two days a week to help delay the natural decline in muscle mass and bone density that starts from around the age of 50. This is a major reason why older people lose their ability to carry out daily tasks and succumb to falls.

The new guidelines follow decades where cardiovascular exercise received more attention and was more often requested by gym and health club members and more likely to be recommended by trainers.

We expect new exercise modalities to spin out of this focus on strength, with strength training becoming popular as an addition to HIIT training, as well as being a more popular option in its own right.

DYNAMIC INNOVATION

6. FIT TECH

The coronavirus pandemic has put fitness and health in the spotlight, as evidence continues to emerge about morbidity factors in relation to COVID-19.

Although there are exceptions, the majority of people who succumb to the disease or experience it more severely have underlying health problems – the vast majority of them lifestyle-related.

We expect fitness to assume far greater importance from a public policy point of view going forward, with governments – after decades of paying lip service to prevention – finally inspired to get behind an effective preventative agenda.

Tech will drive a major move towards prevention



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALAMY

Because of the scale of the challenge, we expect them to look to the fitness industry to be an effective partner in achieving this goal. We also think fitness technology will be deployed to drive interventions, engagement and reporting on initiatives relating to this work and that this will happen at scale.

With all major tech organisations already heavily

invested in the fit tech space and a wealth of start-ups bringing new products to market, we also expect the consumer market for fit tech to grow rapidly as people look for support in relation to taking more responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

The scale of the challenge is such, that we will need to harness technology to deliver.

OPTIMISATION

7. MULTI-BRAND BUSINESSES

Fitness business with a diverse portfolio of brands catering to a wide range of markets look set to proliferate, as operators in the industry look for ways to optimise opportunities and spread risk.

Expect to see investors backing companies with a portfolio of brands, each catering to a different market vertical and with these often configured to create 'city takeovers' – critical mass in key locations – to create economies of scale to drive down core costs.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

8. COVID-19 RECOVERY PROGRAMMES

Convalescence from COVID-19 has been found to be a long process for many people and there is increasing evidence it can also trigger Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

This will leave thousands in need of rehabilitation if they are to regain their health and vitality and – potentially – improve their health beyond pre-COVID levels.

This need presents important opportunities to health and fitness operators and we expect to see high-level COVID-19 recovery programmes being offered, with staff trained to ensure safety.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MICROJEN



It's possible to be a healthy weight, but still be overfat, if the body stores fat viscerally

HEALTH FOCUS

9. OVERFATNESS

Evidence is associating vulnerability to COVID-19 with unhealthy levels of body fat, leading to a renewed focus on both obesity and overfatness.

The body mass index (BMI) is the standard measure for estimating obesity-related health risk, but BMI extrapolates body fat percentage based on height and weight.

The formula can't assess how or where the body stores excess fat and it's estimated that BMI misclassifies a significant proportion

of people who are at higher disease risk from excess fat, meaning they can be 'overfat' even though they may not be overweight.

A study in the UK found excess body fat raises the risk of dying from COVID-19 by 40 per cent, while a study in New York found it was the biggest factor, after age, in hospitalisation.

More people are overfat in the 30 most industrialised countries than are obese and overweight globally.

JOE WICKS EFFECT

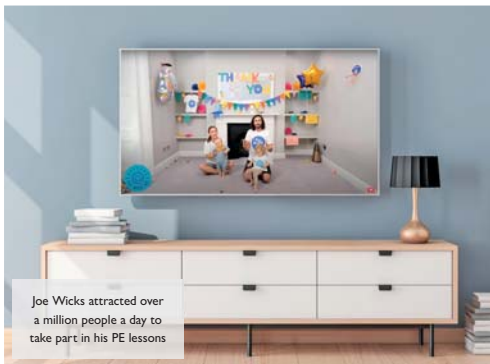
10. PE

Celebrity trainer and motivator Joe Wicks hit the headlines in the UK during the lockdown by stepping up with his daughter Indie to offer a daily workout at 9.00am every Monday to Friday for kids on his The BodyCoach TV YouTube channel.

Called PE with Joe, the sessions were designed to replace the usual school PE lessons and Wicks pulled out all the stops, sometimes wearing crazy costumes and creating sessions bursting with energy to engage children (and parents) in some serious exercise, combined with silly fun.

PE has been a less-than-fashionable area of activity in recent years, but we expect Wicks' inspired take on the PE lesson to lead to a revived interest in school PE as an exercise category.

Wicks had already spent four years touring schools promoting exercise and is now said to be in talks for his own TV show based on the PE lessons.



Joe Wicks attracted over a million people a day to take part in his PE lessons

With kids' exercise a priority and childhood obesity a global crisis, a new focus in this area is long overdue. Kids today are tech-savvy and will have

been influenced by online workouts during lockdown. We think virtual PE lessons in schools and at home will be a natural extension of this trend.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/CUSTOMDESIGNER

PANDEMIC INSURANCE

11. MORE INSURED

Health and fitness operators who had the foresight to take out (useable) pandemic insurance have been few and far between – not many have been fortunate to have the backing of their insurance company during the COVID-19 crisis.

Those that did have found their future secured.

We expect to see a new interest in business interruption insurances of all kinds, as operators seek to protect their position in relation to any future business disruption of any kind.

INCREASINGLY VITAL

12. MENTAL HEALTH

The pandemic has accelerated the incidence of mental health issues and health club operators have the opportunity to do something to help.

We expect more health and fitness operators to launch mental-health-related services and specialist mental health memberships – in-club and virtual – to support members who need ongoing access to support.

Mental health services will be delivered in partnership with specialist organisations who are experienced in this area, to ensure people who need support are looked after by experts.

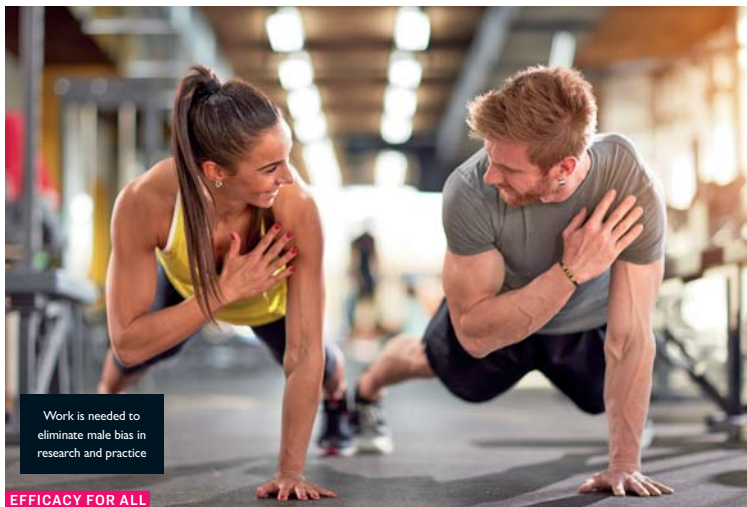


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/LUCKY BUSINESS

Work is needed to eliminate male bias in research and practice

EFFICACY FOR ALL

13. ELIMINATING MALE BIAS

Historically, most of the cells (and humans) studied in medical science have been male and so most of the advances we've seen in medicine and exercise science have come from the study of male physiology.

This means we understand less about pretty much every aspect of female biology when compared to that of males.

Drug trials have also historically been biased towards men, meaning even today

some drug dosages are calibrated for male physiology and typical body size.

Some of the studies that have defined the world of exercise – for example, the 1982 Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial (MRFIT) – which looked at whether dietary change and exercise could help prevent heart disease – only examined male subjects. This specific piece of research studied 13,000 men and no women.

We expect there to be an increasing awareness of the importance of eliminating male bias when it comes to research and the prescription of physical activity interventions.

A significant number of women are taking part in regular exercise and it's vital their needs are understood. We hope the field of exercise science will commit to eliminating male bias in all studies going forward.

CAN'T DO THIS AT HOME

14. SWIMMING

The lockdown has made the whole fitness industry focus on its USPs – what are we really charging for? What can people 'only' do in our gyms and nowhere else?

Streaming, virtual and digital fitness have come into their own during the pandemic, but they've shown some people that they don't need to go to the gym all the time.

As the most popular leisure time activity, pool swimming is one activity offered by many gyms that's hardest to access anywhere else, unless you're lucky enough to have a pool at home. A significant number of gym goers have been taking to social media saying how much they miss their swims.

With its pleasurable weightlessness, swimming is almost the complete exercise – offering strength and cardiovascular training, as well as flexibility, so can be a valuable part of a balanced exercise regime. The only extra needed is weight-bearing exercise.

Being in water is also very healing and good for the body, as well as offering a number of mental health benefits.

When gyms fully reopen, we expect there to be a new enthusiasm for swimming and for health club operators to refocus their energies on areas of provision which can't be enjoyed elsewhere, such as access to specialist equipment, advice and activities that use wet areas of clubs.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MICROGEN



Clubs with pools will find their popularity grows in the years following the end of lockdown

AMPLIFYING EXERCISE

15. POST-EXERCISE HEAT TREATMENTS

Staying warm after a workout can amplify the effects, according to new research – *How post-exercise heating strategies affect endurance performance* – sponsored by ACE, the American Council on Exercise.

Researchers tested three groups – a control group, one that spent 30 minutes in hot water and another where people wore sauna suits following their workout.

Both passive heating strategies were equally sufficient to raise core temperatures, and

both stayed below the temperatures (102° F/ 39°C) that might increase the risk of heat illness.

After three weeks, the mean VO₂ max and lactate threshold changes in both the hot water immersion and the sauna suit groups were "statistically significantly greater" when compared to the control group, according to the researchers.

When it came to change in running economy, only the people in the immersion group showed a significant improvement, with the sauna suit not registering,

Researchers said post-exercise heat interventions allow people to "augment their training without adding volume and/or intensity, meaning they can achieve performance gains without increasing the risk of over-training or injury."

Post-exercise passive heating can also be used to "preserve training adaptations if a client is travelling or trying to preserve fitness during an off-season programme," they said. They also suggest not going beyond the 30 minutes or above the temperatures used and

encouraged the adoption of good hydration practices.

With many operators increasingly training athletes and serious amateurs who care about performance, these relatively straightforward-to-apply interventions offer new opportunities to improve services.

We expect gyms to better exploit facilities that enable the delivery of post-workout heat treatments and to ensure their exercise professionals are trained to deliver them safely and effectively.

More: HCMHandbook.com/ACE

PHOTO: UNSPLASH/IRAN-CHERODOLLOU



Spending 30 minutes submersed in hot water after a workout amplifies the effect of the exercise



WELCOME ALL

16. CATERING FOR INTROVERTS

In a world set up to reward extrovert behaviour, introverts are commonly misunderstood and judged – labelled as shy, lacking in confidence or even boring.

The difference between introverts and extroverts is how they respond to the neurotransmitter dopamine: a chemical released in the brain that provides the motivation to seek external rewards.

Put simply, extroverts recharge with people and introverts recharge on their own – gyms tend to be extrovert environments.

Many perform poorly when it comes to catering for introverts, but there's much that can be done to change operating procedures to make gyms more welcoming – ensuring some equipment is placed in a quiet corner where more introverted members feel comfortable exercising, opening studios early to enable them to come in and find their spot and taking time to make them feel welcome.

We think operators will begin to recognise that introverts find the gym challenging and that introvert-friendly operations will develop.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JOHN STUDD

Introverts will come to your gym if you adjust your operations to their needs

RETRO REVIVAL

17. TRIM TRAILS

Big in the 80s, we think trim trails will make a comeback as a result of the pandemic, given they offer a straightforward and relatively cheap way to facilitate outdoor exercise.

The obstacle race sector has boomed since trim trails were last in vogue and we expect a new generation of trails to be developed – in part to play to the needs of frustrated obstacle course competitors who will not be able to take part in outdoor racing for some time, due to social distancing rules and ban on large gatherings.

Trim trails will be reinvented for the 'obstacle-race' generation



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DELAN DINDJESIN

SURVIVING CORONAVIRUS

18. EcSOD – FITNESS TO OFFSET THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19

Approximately 80 per cent of confirmed COVID-19 patients have mild symptoms and do not need respiratory support. Professor Zhen Yan at the University of Virginia set out to find out why.

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.

He studied an antioxidant called extracellular superoxide dismutase (EcSOD) that's released in the body 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 COVID-19. EcSOD does this by hunting down free radicals, binding to organs and protecting tissue.

"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," he said.

Research suggests that even a single session of exercise increases the production of the antioxidant, with cardiovascular exercise thought to drive the highest immediate levels of EcSOD production. However, strength training increases muscle mass, also playing a part in the equation.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JOCCOLIND

New research shows exercise can help people survive COVID-19 by promoting the secretion of the antioxidant, EcSOD



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/IMAGELEW



Operators and trade associations will commit to exerting more political influence

EXERTING INFLUENCE

19. LOBBYING

The health and fitness sector is a young one and has largely focused on growth, mergers and acquisitions to date.

However, the pandemic has highlighted an almost total lack of awareness of the sector among governments worldwide, with operators and trade associations struggling to make their voices heard when it comes to COVID-19 support and reopening packages.

As a result, we expect to see a new focus on lobbying, with operators making funds available to support increased lobbying via trade associations, as well as committing to their own direct lobbying efforts.

With the world's leading gym operators now multi-billion dollar companies, the time has come for the sector to gain some serious influence.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JOIGA MILTSOVA

Certain fruits have senolytic properties



NEW APPROACH TO AGEING

20. SENOLYTICS AND SENOSTATICS

The science of cellular ageing is complex, with new discoveries being made in the areas of senolytics and senostatics.

These two types of substances act on tissue to flush out old cells (senolytics) or to suppress cell death (senostatics).

Although some substances found to have senolytic effects are heavy duty drugs, such as repurposed anti-cancer molecules, it's also known that some foods – for example, those containing the plant flavonoid, Finestin (strawberries, apples and grapes) can remove senescent cells from the body.

As the fitness and wellbeing sectors move closer, insight into natural anti-ageing interventions will be sought after.

Health club operators are increasingly offering advice on lifestyle and nutrition, so having the knowledge to advise members and customers on the latest trends in nutrition and health will be important as we seek to widen our remit as an industry.

THE SHAPE OF DIGITAL

The data generated by tech platforms such as Funxion, gives us insights into how people exercised during lockdown and the likely shape of consumer digital engagement going forward, as Karen Euser reports



PHOTO: VASINLEESHUTTERSTOCK

Digital workout preferences changed as lockdown progressed and gyms reopened

The fitness industry was driven digital pretty much overnight in order to survive lockdown and as a result, the number of online workouts available rocketed to an all-time high.

Since March, we've analysed over 300,000 workout 'plays' through our platform and as the weeks have rolled by, digital fitness trends and changes in consumer behaviour have begun to emerge and change.

THE FINDINGS

We track 100 different workouts, varying in length from four-minutes, right through to 30-minutes.

Immediately after lockdown, there was strong demand for shorter, higher intensity bodyweight workouts – in particular four- or seven-minute HIIT workouts.

It came as no surprise that the initial interest was in shorter workouts using bodyweight resistance, as people adjusted to working out at home rather than in the gym and to being without any gym equipment.

But, as time went on, the statistics showed a growing interest in longer workouts, as people got fitter, gained confidence in their ability, got more used to working out at home and searched for more ambitious sessions. At this point, we noticed a shift towards workouts lasting between 15- and 30-minutes – a big increase on the 4-7 minutes.

There were also noticeable spikes in downloads of equipment-led workouts, as consumers equipped themselves with kit, such as dumbbells and kettlebells.

Interestingly, kettlebell and dumbbell workouts have seen the highest percentage of returning users.

We also saw a rise in demand for more holistic classes, such as meditation. The longer people were required to stay at home during lockdown, it seemed that the more mental health support was needed, so we ramped up the provision of content in this holistic category.

These classes saw a sharp rise in popularity and we can see from the analytics that this demand continues to rise.

In terms of timings, we find most people – around 80 per cent on our platform – prefer to exercise in the late afternoon, or early evening.

When it comes to gender split, 66.7 per cent of the audience is female and 33.3 per cent male but when it comes to completing workouts, women lead, with a workout completion rate of 66 per cent, compared to men, who complete 40 per cent of workouts, on average.

QUALITY OR QUANTITY?

Despite the initial drive to just get digital content up as quickly as possible, the more competitive this market becomes, the more consumers are attracted to quality.



GENDER comparison

- 66.7% female
- 33.3% male

WORKOUT completion rate

- Women 66%
- Men 40%

AGES engaging

- 18-24 17.4%
- 25-34 30.8%
- 35-44 14.1%
- 45-54 16.2%
- 55-64 11.2%
- 65+ 10.3%

NB: 21.5% of users are 55+



When it comes to completing workouts, women are in the lead with a rate of 66 per cent, compared to men, who only complete 40 per cent of workouts

In the early days of lockdown, there was an understanding that the quality of sound, picture and setting may not be perfect, but as time went on behaviours showed demand for quality over quantity.

This indicates that clubs need to invest in their digital offerings in order to establish strong and long-lasting relationships with members.

Around 50 per cent of users we track view content on non-mobile devices, so quality does need to be high.

ENTICING NEW AUDIENCES

With a health-focused crisis such as COVID-19 comes an increased awareness among the public of the importance of staying active for physical and mental wellbeing. This is driving fitness regulars to continue their routines from home, but also attracting a new, relatively sedentary population to explore what the whole fitness industry has to offer from the comfort of their own homes.

They appreciate the fact that barriers, such as gymtimidation, embarrassment or low self-esteem, don't factor when it comes to getting access to exercise.

This indicates that at-home fitness could be the 'soft' introduction the fitness industry needs in order to engage with more sedentary populations. If this is the case, how can we utilise this engagement to keep people motivated during the transition to club membership?

We notice that 21.5 per cent of users are over 55, indicating that this age demographic is utilising technology as well as younger populations and that people in this bracket are willing to work out from home.

This is useful insight for health clubs when it comes to programming exercise for specific age groups.

The biggest user group is the 25-34-year-olds at 30.8 per cent, however, the combined force of the other age groups means 69.20 per cent of all users are in younger (18-24 > 17.4 per cent) or older age groups



Kettlebell and dumbbell workouts have seen the highest percentage of returning users



Pre-COVID-19, the digital fitness market was expected to be worth US\$27bn by 2022. The pandemic is expected to speed up this growth rate

(35-44 > 14.1 per cent; 45-54 > 16.2 per cent; 55-64 > 11.2 per cent and; 65+ > 10.3 per cent), so programming needs to optimise these opportunities.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TRAINING PATTERNS

Pre-COVID-19, the digital fitness category was expected to be worth \$27.4bn by 2022, growing at a rate of 32.6 per cent year-on-year; however, the impact of the pandemic is expected to speed up this growth rate.

The increase in both demand and supply has meant thousands of people across the globe are now experiencing working out at home and this will permanently change the way many consumers exercise.

Instagram has become the number one gym in the world, with influencers and celebrities as its lead coaches. It already owns this space and gym brands are playing catch-up by producing their own content, to ensure members don't look elsewhere for their home fitness.

Now people are returning to the gym, there's an emerging demand for a wraparound service to merge digital and physical and create a hybrid model.

● Karen Euser is with digital fitness company, Funxtion

TOP 5 downloads

APRIL 2020

- 1 30-minute dumbbell
- 2 7-minute Pilates
- 3 3-minute cardio
- 4 20-min dumbbell
- 5 30-min yoga

MAY 2020

- 1 10-min stretching
- 2 30-min dumbbell
- 3 20-min kettlebell
- 4 20-min dumbbell
- 5 30-min yoga

JUNE 2020

- 1 20-min bodyweight
- 2 20-min kettlebell HITT
- 3 10-min stretching
- 4 30-min dumbbell
- 5 21-min yoga

Source: Funxtion

A smiling woman with short grey hair is making a heart shape with her hands. She is wearing a light blue t-shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus outdoor setting.

E G Y M

Strength Is Immunity

Overcome challenges in a post-COVID-19 fitness industry with the EGYM Immunity Plus Solution.

[Find Out More](#)

Jamie Bunce

How would you describe the Inspired Villages model?

Rather than old age being a time when people struggle through years of illness, we aim to reduce residents' physical – as opposed to chronological – age, helping them genuinely enjoy their later years. Our strapline poses the question: "The best years of your life?"

Our goal is to keep residents active and well – socially, physically, mentally and financially. This allows them to look after themselves, in the comfort of their own homes, for a lot longer than they probably would if they were living in a traditional, open market house.

Ours is a lifestyle business: every village has a gym, studio, sauna, steamroom, swimming pools, restaurants, cafés, bars, meeting spaces and libraries.

Access to all of that is included in our package.

Customers do pay for meals and drinks out though.

Importantly, we see ourselves as being caring, not carers. Our villages are not care homes nor gated communities: residents and guests are allowed to come and go as they please, at least in normal times. They live their own lives, on their own terms. We're there if they need us, and we do have some assisted living as well as palliative care for those who already live with us: we can look after people in their own homes for as long as it's safe for us to do so.

But our primary focus is on people's health and wellbeing. That's good for the NHS, for social care, for society – but most importantly, it's absolutely excellent for the individual, because they feel better about themselves and they get more out of life.

Jamie Bunce is developing the wellness retirement village model in the UK

The CEO of retirement village operator Inspired Villages talks to Kate Cracknell about wellbeing-focused communities and handling the COVID-19 crisis

What's your background?

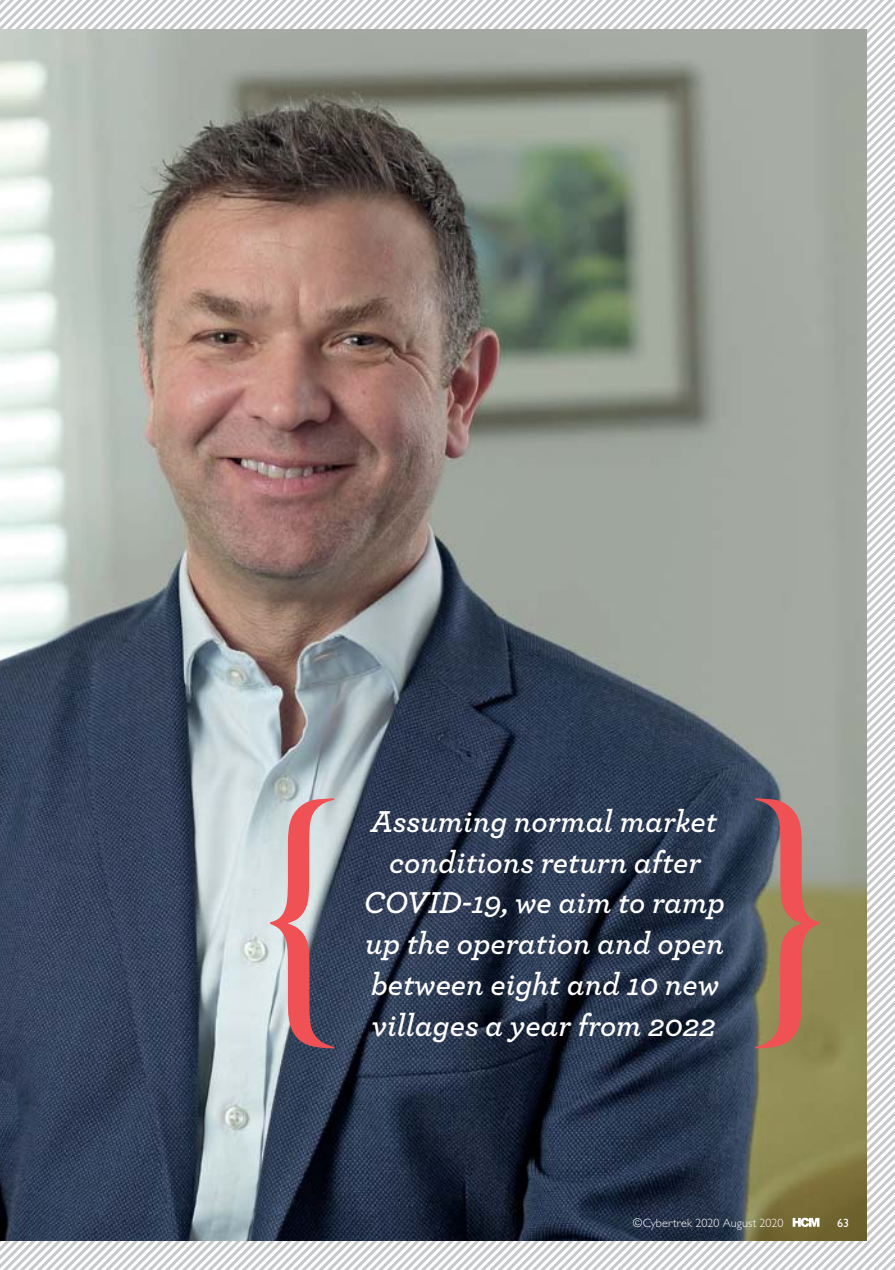
I've come from a retail background and interestingly, I would say the mechanics of retail are very similar to those of retirement villages. You need to create environments people are really proud to live in, that people want to visit and revisit, where people like to spend time.

You also need a very strong operating business that helps deliver service excellence – the sort of standards you would expect from a high-quality hotel. Because our residents are like hotel residents, except they spend on average eight to 10 years with us; hotel residents will typically spend a few nights in a hotel.

What has been the Inspired Villages story so far?

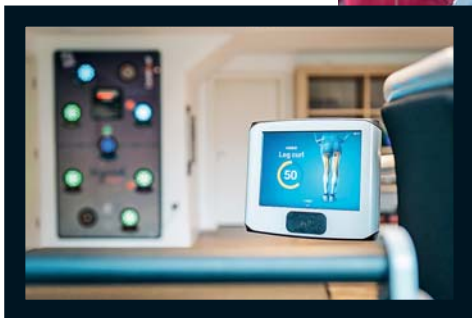
In 2010, myself and three colleagues founded our first retirement operating business. We worked with landowners and other parties to come into the sector, developing villages for other organisations as well as optioning sites for ourselves. We also had a joint venture with Places for People, developing villages at Austin Heath and Gifford Lee.

A pivotal moment came in August 2017, when Legal & General purchased our company and those two sites at Austin Heath and Gifford Lee. We shared a vision with Legal & General – to deliver a much-needed solution to people as they age, an independent living model that was distinctly lacking in the UK – and we formed a partnership to create our retirement communities.



Assuming normal market conditions return after COVID-19, we aim to ramp up the operation and open between eight and 10 new villages a year from 2022

All Inspired Villages have fully equipped gyms with full time staff to encourage engagement



In November 2017, we bought a company – Renaissance Villages – that had four villages, and we still operate those same six villages today. In addition, we have one village under construction and we're already building the community there. Before people even move in, we get to know them, allowing them to become firm friends of the village.

Assuming normal market conditions return after COVID-19, we aim to ramp up the operation and open between eight and 10 new villages a year from 2022.

How are you ensuring that you don't get impacted by the COVID-19 care home scandal?

First and foremost we've been concentrating on the safety of our residents and colleagues, however, we've also recognised the importance of differentiating what we offer compared to care homes, because people deserve clarity on the housing choices they have in their later years.

Our Inspired Voices video, as well as our Virtual Village Centre have been key tools for showing that the lifestyle we offer is very different from what you would expect a care home to deliver.

The retirement villages sector is still nascent in the UK and it's important for us and our fellow operators to keep talking about what we have to offer – through marketing, the press, social media, speaking in webinars and through word of mouth – to give older people in society the housing choices they deserve.

Why did Legal & General choose to invest?

Legal & General is one of the oldest insurers in the UK – a household name – and its social purpose is strong.

It has a senior living business that looks after 10 million pensioners a week, and it uses its capital to help create communities. Our businesses are therefore very much aligned.

We're a purpose-led business that wants to do the right thing for people: we put the customer first in every decision we make. It's that social conscience that led Legal & General to invest in us.

It's a very active, very long-term investor, which means we can look long-term too. This allows us to make the right decisions for our residents, focusing on positive outcomes at a very customer-centric level.

We consider ourselves very fortunate to have Legal & General's investment in our company.

We measured the impact of the EGYM equipment we installed in our gyms and saw a 35% increase in core strength over a six-month period, while the percentage of residents using the gyms went up from 10% to over 50%



What's your target market?

In planning terms, people always talk about the over-55s, but 55-year-olds don't want to live in these types of settings. In your late 60s maybe, if you've had a health scare, but our youngest residents are generally in their mid-70s.

Our eldest resident is 103 years old. He's a lovely guy and Legal & General's pin-up. He goes to the gym three times a week in his three-piece suit.

Each of our villages has around about 200 residents, with a mix of independent and assisted living, and you can either buy or rent, depending on your financial circumstances and goals; if you have a final salary pension, for example, you might want to rent and save your capital for other things.

We operate at the top end of the mid-market, although we're looking at options to launch a high-quality, mass market concept as soon as the market allows.

What sort of wellbeing programmes do you offer?

Within each of our villages, we have somebody – or a series of people – who are dedicated to the wellness and wellbeing of the residents in the village. Some of them have to be more proactive than others; in some villages, the residents are very active in their own right. But to



Villages are located in natural settings with plenty of outdoor space





The reaction wall is great for motivation

ensure all remain active, there are professionals within the village whose sole focus is wellness and wellbeing.

These on-site 'wellness navigators', as we call them, are able to design a wellbeing programme for every resident on a very personal basis, whether they've had a fall, want to get fitter, or want to have the strength to unload a washing machine full of wet clothes.

But it's all done totally on residents' terms. One minute our wellness navigators will be doing a gym workout, the next minute they'll be running a swimming class or leading a walk. Then, in the afternoon, they could be playing Scrabble or having a game of chess. It's a vocation, not just a job. We match people's personal purpose to the role they play in the village, and our team are with us because they love what they do.

Tell us more about the physical activity side of things.

This isn't about people training for a competition, although we did have one lady in her 70s who loved the fact she beat my time in the New York Marathon by 35 minutes! Generally, though, it's about helping people get the most out of their lives as they get older: we have people living with us whose quality of life has been dramatically enhanced by a new focus on health and wellbeing. We have residents who have come out of mobility scooters and can now walk around the village. We have people who, in their 80s, are learning to swim. These are real-life benefits.

We try to make exercise fun, too. Our gyms – we have one in every village – include Rugged Interactive reaction walls. There was one lady in her 80s who was recommended to do squats: a minimum of 10 was the target. She felt there was no way she could do that, so we put her in front of the reaction wall and asked her to press the lights when they flashed red. She ended up doing 15 squats without even realising it.

We also have inter-generational activities. We held an inaugural cricket match last year, for example, at our village in Warwickshire. We convinced the local cricket team to play our group – comprising residents, residents'

families, staff and our families – and we had an afternoon of cricket. At one point, we had a gentleman in his early 80s who admitted to not having been on a cricket pitch for 50 years. He was batting with a 14-year-old and I could see his biological age decreasing in front of my eyes, such was his joy at getting back in front of the wicket.

That type of thing isn't difficult to do, and I believe it's beneficial for the younger generation too: I can see our seniors playing a role in addressing obesity rates among children.

Rather than seeing older age as a steady decline, we're trying to ensure it's the best years of our residents' lives – a time when they're able to do things they wouldn't have done before, and when they're able to do them because they feel much healthier. That's what aged living should be.

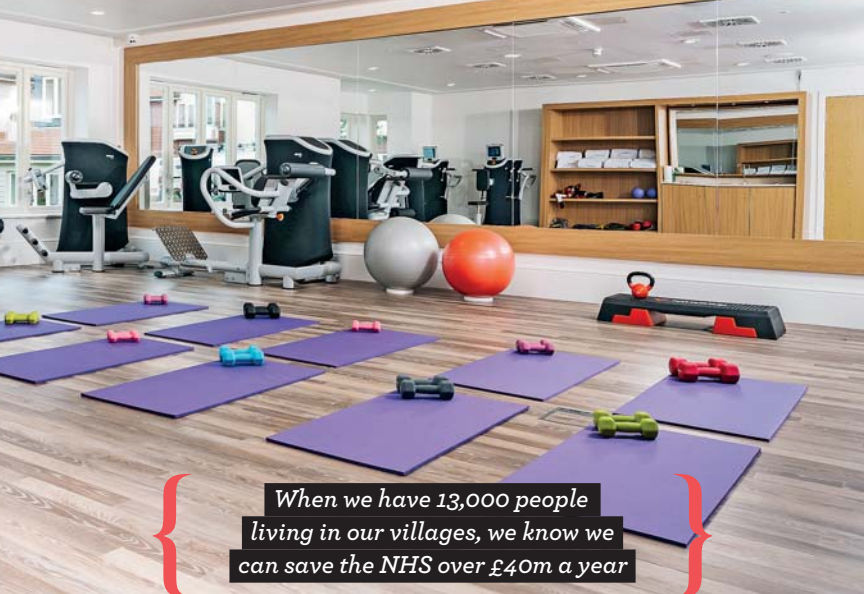
Can you tell us more about the outcomes you're achieving?

Data shows that, among the residents living in retirement communities like ours, there are 46 per cent fewer GP visits and 31 per cent fewer hospital admissions compared to the national average. They also spend just one to two days in hospital on average, as opposed to two weeks among those living in their own traditional homes in the open market.

And that's our goal: we know people are living longer; we're here to help them live better for longer. The pressure we take off the NHS as a result is significant: we calculate that we save the NHS £3,500 a year for every person who lives in our villages.

We've also measured the impact of specific interventions. We did a project with hero wellbeing and ukactive at our Milbrook village in Devon, before coronavirus. We gave 31 of our residents a Fitbit and asked them to walk 10,000 steps a day. Between them, they walked 15 million steps in three months.

Installing EGYM equipment
led to an increase in gym
usage from 10 to 50 per cent



*When we have 13,000 people
living in our villages, we know we
can save the NHS over £40m a year*



Access to wellness
facilities are included in
the residential package

The average age of this cohort mirrored that of our villages – 79 years old – and this activity programme brought some incredible results for them. Cognitive function went up from 38.2 per cent to 72.4 per cent and their overall wellbeing scores – essentially, how positive and happy they felt – went from 38 per cent to 43 per cent.

We also measured the impact of the EGYM equipment we installed in our gyms. Among those using it, we saw a 35 per cent increase in core strength over a six-month period. Not only that, but the percentage of residents using the gyms went up from about 10 per cent to over 50 per cent. It's unimposing, easy equipment to use.

How have you been controlling the spread of COVID-19 within your villages?

As soon as news broke globally about the spread of the coronavirus we put together a response team that communicated regularly and swiftly and put in place a four-stage plan to protect our residents and our colleagues that aligned with government advice, and at some points, exceeded it.

In essence we created a shield around each of our villages, whereby we closed the villages to external visitors, implemented even stricter hygiene protocols in areas residents can access, delivered groceries and cooked meals to residents' doorsteps if requested, and created a 'buddy' system that meant every resident received a call from a member of our team every day to check in with them.

In keeping with our ethos of promoting holistic wellbeing we've also organised socially distanced activities within our extensive grounds or through digital classes to ensure self-isolation isn't isolating for

our residents. To support this, we created a Virtual Village Centre on Facebook that allows our residents, and any over 65s who are interested, to access games, fitness videos, cooking videos, gardening tips and much more, as well as connect with each other. We've grown this community to over 7,000 followers.

By doing all of the above, we've effectively minimised the need for them to leave the safety of their homes.

To keep our colleagues safe, we were able to easily pivot to home-working for our office-based teams, meanwhile, we only asked a smaller number of our village team members to keep working within the villages. This not only kept them safe, but also minimised the risk of coronavirus being brought into the villages by colleagues moving in and out.

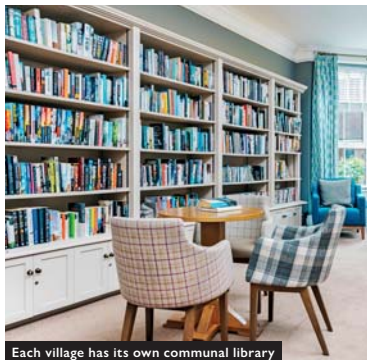
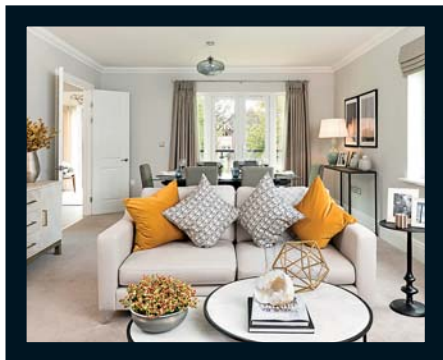
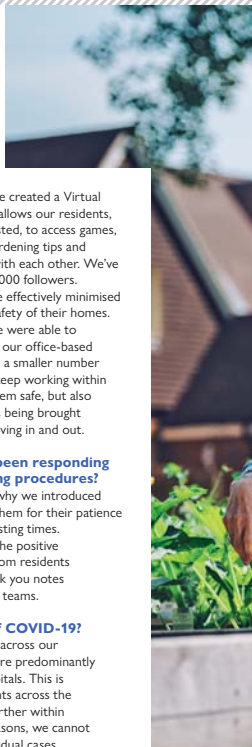
How have your residents been responding to your lockdown operating procedures?

We're grateful they understood why we introduced the measures and have thanked them for their patience and fortitude in what are very testing times.

We've been overwhelmed by the positive response across all our villages from residents who have sent us numerous thank you notes as well as nice gifts for the village teams.

What's been the impact of COVID-19?

We've had three unrelated cases across our villages, which we understand were predominantly linked to unplanned trips to hospitals. This is out of around a thousand residents across the UK and these have not spread further within our communities. For privacy reasons, we cannot share further details on the individual cases.



Each village has its own communal library



Research shows that around 5 per cent of the population have been infected by the coronavirus, which would equate to 40 of our residents. We're grateful to our diligent village teams and co-operative residents for the fact the number of cases in our villages is considerably less than that.

What are your growth plans as a business?

Our partnership with Legal & General has allowed us to move on at quite a rapid pace, with an extensive development pipeline in place, which is fantastic because it will allow us to make a tangible difference to lots more people's lives. By 2024, we're looking to get to around 50 villages, looking after around 13,000 residents.

And further to my comments above, obviously that will benefit the NHS too. When we have 13,000 people living in our villages, we know we can save the NHS over £40m a year.

Our main challenge is to change people's perceptions of what we offer, because it isn't a common model in the UK yet. The vast majority of people, when they move in, say they wish they'd done it earlier, but at

INSPIRED VILLAGES IN NUMBERS

Typical project value: £100m

Villages open: Six

Villages under construction: One

Typical village size: Approximately 200,000sq ft

Properties per village: Around 150 single-level apartments

Property price range: £200,000–£1,000,000

Average property price: Around £375,000

Service fees: £5,000–£6,000 a year

Residents per village: Approximately 200

Average age: 79 years

Staffing levels: 35+ team members per village



We have residents who have come out of mobility scooters and can now walk around the village. We have people who, in their 80s, are learning to swim. These are real-life benefits

the moment only 0.7 per cent of UK adults over the age of 65 look to live in a retirement setting. That compares to 8 or 9 per cent in the rest of the world.

So, we're on a myth-busting mission. We want to showcase how living in retirement settings is a really positive part of life.

How has the pandemic impacted your development pipeline?

Retirement villages fill a crucial gap in the housing market by providing specialist housing that enables those in their later years to enjoy healthier, independent lives for longer.

Our success in preventing the spread of coronavirus across our villages thus far is testament to our model, and the fact that April 2020 was our strongest month yet for receiving planning permissions shows that more and more planning committees are recognising the valuable contribution we can make to society.

We received planning permission to develop a £215 million retirement village in Kingswood, Surrey, a £60 million scheme in Turvey, Bedfordshire, and phase two of development at Ledian Gardens, our site in Leeds Village, Kent. On top of that, our partner, Legal & General, acquired a site with planning permission in

Caddington, Bedfordshire where we will be building a £120 million retirement village. Altogether, these schemes mean we are on track to deliver 2,500 homes for over-65s over the next six years.

Do you intend to evolve the model?

We will have a growing focus on technology and AI, exploring ways we can use this to enhance social interaction and the support we provide.

We already have high-speed broadband in every village, and we teach IT skills to our residents so they can be cool grandparents. But we can do even more.

In the new villages, on an opt-in basis, we're trialling ways of using technology to better support residents. We're looking at algorithms across the village so we can see how people live their lives. If someone puts a kettle on every morning at 7.00am, and then one morning they don't, that could prompt us to knock on the door and just make sure they're alright. We're also looking at harnessing the fall protection alerts on the new Apple Watch, so we can be immediately alerted if someone has a fall.

I'm very keen that technology doesn't replace hand-holding though. It has to be there to enable a better quality of hand-holding.



Villages are based around wellness and health, with facilities to support residents

Has COVID-19 changed the market?

The pandemic has exposed a lack of options in terms of accommodation and care for older people in this country. I hope very much that care homes get the funding and support they deserve to carry out care for the very vulnerable older people they support – there will always be a place for care homes.

From the perspective of the retirement village sector, I believe that there will be growing awareness that what we offer – an independent lifestyle focused on holistic wellbeing – with discreet, flexible care support on hand if residents desire, is key to alleviating the strain on the social care system.

If you could ask the government for one thing, what would it be?

The UK Government talks about the burden on the National Health Service of our ageing population, but at the moment the UK planning

system does not overtly support our sector. We have 18 sites stuck in planning at the moment.

We lobby government regularly, asking it to look at ways to support the creation of such purpose-built environments; demand is only going to increase as the population continues to age.

There's even the potential to turn these villages into a new style of community hub where people come in from outside to access the services, which could become even broader: children's day nurseries, a wider leisure offering, hairdressers, shops and so on. This is certainly something Legal & General is looking at through its Future Cities project.

But even the current model can save so much money for the NHS; as I say, Inspired Villages is set to save over £40m a year for the NHS by 2024, and we are just one operator covering one tiny section of the market. Our sector can do so much to help, if government would just support us. ●



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RAPID RESPONSE



Professional mystery shopping outfit, Proinsight, set its shoppers the task of evaluating a range of online workouts to see how they measured up. David Hopkins reports

When the lockdown was announced on the 20th March 2020, the stark reality of freezing 10.4m gym memberships hit home to fitness operators everywhere. The immediate question was, how could the sector – which is so crucial to so many people – stay relevant with the doors shut?

Almost without missing a beat, many operators started up a programme of online classes. Luckily for them a lot of their younger staff are digital natives and understood how they consume content. What followed was an object lesson in rolling up your sleeves and getting on with it, with the majority pivoting to digital.

HATCHING A PLAN

After the initial shock of having to manage the lockdown of my own business had passed, my colleagues put forward the idea of mystery shopping the wide range of new digital workouts that were coming to market.

We realised we had a unique opportunity to 'live test' the response of the industry and to gauge how customers were feeling to capture this moment in time and learn from it, so that we had insights to share.

We all wanted to keep fit during lockdown, so it was logical for us to tackle online workouts and at the same time, generate information that would be of use to our clients and to the wider health and fitness sector.

Our report on how the market reacted – *The quickest pivot in business?* – is aptly named – we were astonished at how quickly health club operators responded and ultimately, we were able to test 50 classes in all.

Before we started mystery shopping, we evaluated the digital landscape for the industry prior to COVID-19, so we could make comparisons. Before lockdown, there was a lot of content freely available, mainly on YouTube and Facebook, while some of the better-known brands in the sector offered paid subscriptions. However, within our large client base of operators, the provision of remote or online classes

least
popular day
TUESDAY

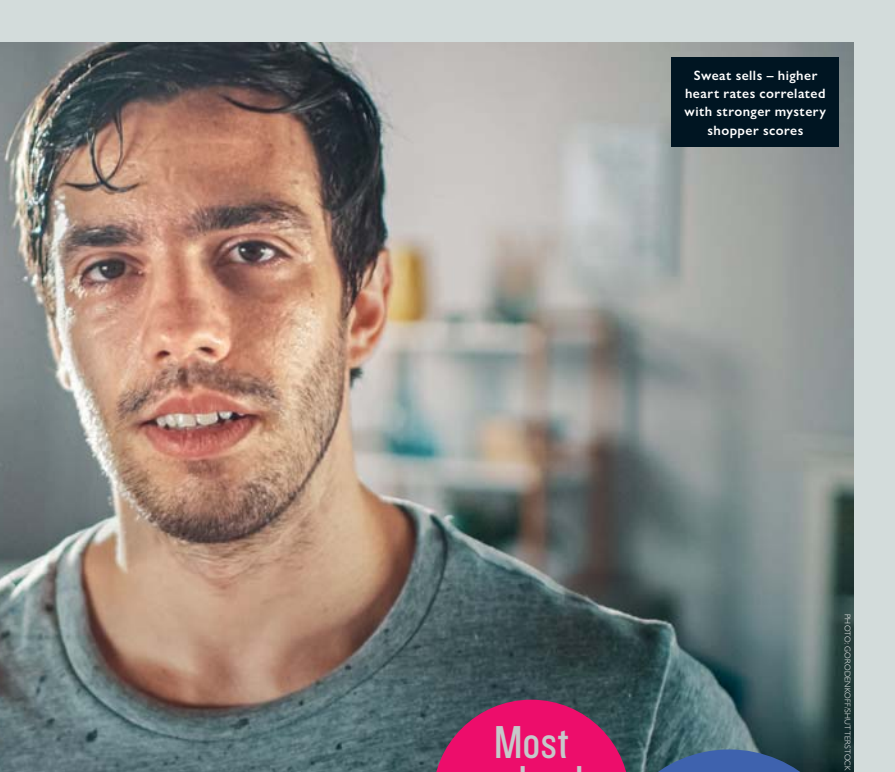
was either a long way down the development pipeline or just not considered a realistic part of the strategy, making the speed of the pivot even more astonishing.

ABOUT THE MYSTERY SHOPS

One of the company benefits we offer to our mystery shoppers is a free Myzone belt and this proved to be very helpful in our quest to understanding the digital offerings we were going to be testing.

Our mystery shop of online classes covered things such as class instruction and provision – in the same way we do with on-site classes, but with the addition of obvious questions about getting online. There were also a number of Myzone-related questions which were developed in collaboration with the team there.

When it came to choosing operators to mystery shop, there were two caveats, they had to be offering their own original content and it had to be either free for our mystery shopper or they had to already have a membership with that health club brand.



Sweat sells – higher heart rates correlated with stronger mystery shopper scores

PHOTO: CORBIS OUTLINE / SHUTTERSTOCK



Two operators scored over 90% for their online workouts – *BOX12* and *David Lloyd Leisure*

Most popular day
MONDAY

Instructor acknowledged user **80%**

Average class duration
30 minutes

Highlighted
health &
safety

62%

Classes
started late
25%

GETTING DOWN TO IT

Four mystery shoppers were used, to help with consistency – three men and one woman. All were young, were experienced fitness class users and they each wore a Myzone belt for every class.

Out of the 50 operators we mystery shopped, 17 had the Myzone system. All the classes tested were either HIIT, boxing, circuits or body weight training and all were booked using the means available to general consumers.

The biggest section in the mystery shopping process related to the instructor and we can see now how important this is from the Joe Wicks phenomenon; Wicks has a natural warmth and inclusive style that comes down the line, straight to the person doing the class and really resonates with people.

HOW INSTRUCTORS PERFORMED

Their engagement scores were high, but there were also areas for improvement and it was clear more can be done to improve instructor orientation with digital.

Some were not briefed up to prompt on technique or to share information about the muscle groups being used, while others missed opportunities to extend the connection with consumers by giving shout outs or inviting them to attend future classes. Many did not invite consumers share their experience on social media.

If operators are to develop a hybrid offering that includes digital classes alongside their in-house classes, there is a need to review, learn and look at the specialist skills set required by the new breed of instructors that will be involved in delivering the online classes.

Lockdown made finding professional environments to film in a difficult challenge for operators. Going forward it would be advisable to consider some basic guidelines about audio, lighting, branded clothing and clean and tidy spaces. The branding of these classes represents a huge opportunity to cement identity with new customers.

Before I go into the detail about overall performance, some honourable mentions: Two operators scored over



*The results showed
a direct correlation
between mystery
shopper score and the
intensity of the class*

OVERALL RANKINGS

POS	Location	Total
1	BOX12	93.9%
2	David Lloyd Leisure	91.1%
3	Rowbots	87.8%
3	Myzone virtual classes	87.8%
5	Fitness4Less	86.4%
6	Les Mills	82.5%
7	Glasgow Life	81.8%
8	Third Space	81.6%
9	1Rebel	80.0%
9	Barnsley Premier	80.0%
11	Pure Gym	79.5%
12	Active Luton	77.3%

Source: Proinsight

90 per cent – BOX12 and David Lloyd Leisure – both performed well across the five sections tested. For context, the average score was 62 per cent across the 50 operators. Third place was tied between Myzone's own virtual classes and Rowbots, both on 87.8 per cent.

The first key finding is one that relates to the inclusion of the Myzone technology in the process. The mystery shoppers wore their belts for every class, not just for the 17 operators that utilise Myzone in their programmes.

This turned out to be an inspired move, as it allowed comparison of class intensity using hourly averages in three key metrics; Myzone MEPs, heart rate increase and calories burned. This protocol was underpinned by checking the resting heart rate for comparison.

We found a correlation between mystery shopper score and the intensity of the class. Classes in the top quartile had an average intensity of 198 MEPs per hour, while those in the bottom quartile were 142 MEPs per hour.

**Mystery shoppers
tested 50 online
fitness classes**

**Most popular
channel
Facebook**

**Average
classes
offered
per week
15**

The same applied for average heart rate increases and calories burned, with top quartile classes displaying, on average uplift of +16 bpm and +161 more calories burned when compared with the other classes.

What does this mean? Do well-run classes achieve more for the consumer by giving them the results they want? It looks that way from our findings, although more data would be welcome to test this hypothesis further and to extend into other types of user groups.

Another key finding relates to the thorny issue of payment for online content. As referenced, there was a lot of free content available and produced by instructors and brands from around the globe. You can do a HIIT class with a funky New York instructor, or a yoga class with a yogi based in India, all at the click of a button.

RESULTS WERE VALUED

Shoppers said they would pay more for classes they felt they were getting more out of – those of higher intensity.

The average our shoppers were willing to pay for content was £15 per month. For the better-scoring classes in the top quartile, the shoppers were – on average – willing to pay £4.73 more per month than for those in the bottom quartile.

What can we draw from these initial findings? First that we need more hard data on how customers are feeling about online classes, as this survey did not check every class type, workout type or consumer type.

There are many more questions to be answered:

Does a pre-recorded library of content fulfil members'

needs, or do they crave the interaction provided by live broadcasts? Do consumers see digital as a part of their ongoing health and fitness journey, beyond lockdown? How should operators position their online offering – as a pure retention tool, or as a commercial proposition? Should operators train staff to become superstars, or should they revert to using third party providers?


We don't have all the answers, but we're committed to supporting the industry on the new path to normality.

● **You can access the report in full here:**
www.HCMmag.com/mysteryshop



Reopening down under

Gyms and studios across New Zealand and Australia have gradually been reopening their doors since mid-May. Steph Eaves talks to five operators to find out what their experiences have been, and what advice they have for those following in their footsteps



Snap Fitness says it has achieved 90 per cent of pre-COVID attendances

Snap Fitness, Australia and New Zealand

Ty Menzies

Clubs: 220 in Australia, 56 in New Zealand

Reopened: New Zealand clubs: 14th May
Australia: Varied by state – from 15th May to 22nd June

"Attendance levels are around 90 per cent of pre-COVID numbers, even with restrictions. We've had really positive feedback from our existing members about the measures in place, especially cleaning. Some new members have said our model feels 'clean and safe' in comparison to the larger box clubs."

"The biggest challenge we face at the moment is not being able to operate 24/7 in some states, given this is one of our core offerings. Secondly, the varying restrictions in each Australian state."

"When it came to the management of space, in some clubs we're able to utilise outdoor spaces, or in our larger clubs, to break out into areas where we could get more people in-club for a workout."

"It's very much about providing a community for our members where they feel safe and are able to achieve great results. We're also very focused on providing technology and digital offerings to our members."

We've been able to maintain the majority of our workforce



"Keep open communication with your internal team members. If you're transparent about what's going on, and have a solid plan in place, it provides clear direction and comfort. Also, ensure you work closely with your local government and fitness governing body to have all the right information first hand."

"We created a health and safety plan to support our network and explain measures clubs were taking. As guidelines were released, we've aligned them with our internal plan and made adjustments as required. Key focus areas were around club standards, team training, cleaning and managing capacity."

"We've been able to maintain the majority of our workforce during the COVID shutdown and through the other side."



We're developing our other revenue streams within the club – programmes, such as our Peak Epigenetics programme and our Running Hot Coaching

Peak Fitness and Health, New Zealand

Neil Wagstaff

Clubs: 1

Reopened: 14th May

"We reopened with around 70 per cent of our members in the first week while restrictions were still in place. Everyone was positive, and excited to be back. One month in, we're operating at around 80 per cent of previous revenue levels, and are confident this will continue to rise gradually over the coming months."

"The biggest challenge for us has been mentally getting our head around re-opening our business while having to restrict the number of people who enter it!"

"We're developing our other revenue streams within the club – programmes such as our Peak Epigenetics programme and our Running Hot Coaching."



Reopening the business with restrictions on numbers has been a challenge

"To enable us to continue to offer group fitness, we measured out and marked 2m square areas on the floor, and set up each square with all the equipment necessary for any class. This meant members didn't need to collect or return equipment – stopping the usual huddle effect at these points. We also removed all our spin bikes from our spin studio and positioned them in between each 2m square."

Members were required to fill up the room from the front to the back – to prevent walking through each other's 'bubbles'. We implemented a booking system for classes and reduced the maximum number from 25 to 12."

"We asked members to RSVP to newsletters with their updated contact details, for contact tracing purposes. Doing this in advance prevented bottlenecks at reception when people returned. We also sent a survey out to members to gauge what percentage we could expect to return immediately."

"In terms of products to buy, first off, get a ULV fogging machine. Don't even bother trying to re-open without one. This can be used to quickly and efficiently disinfect and sanitise everything."

"One hundred per cent of our staff is working again. We have seven part time employees, plus 13 subcontractors."

"Communication is key. Keep smiling. Show up for your team and your members. Be there to welcome every member that comes back through your doors. Take everything else off your schedule – just be around to chat to members and staff. Thank them for their loyalty and support."



Ask for help, accept help; you're not meant to do this alone. We got permission from our landlord for free use of a bigger space on the premises. People want to collaborate and support

Grassroots Yoga & Health, New Zealand

Veronica King

Clubs: 1

Reopened: 18 May

"Our community is so excited to be back and we've had a really great return rate. At 12 people per class we've had a full house in almost every class. I think people are desperate for connection."

"Reopening with distancing has been the most difficult. Fortunately overheads were reduced while we were closed, but once we reopened they went back to normal even though our capacity had reduced by half."

"Our biggest liability at the time of closing was the thousands of dollars we'd collected in pre-paid passes, which are still being honoured. So we decided not to offer any more passes for three months. The model has shifted to a much more manageable monthly membership, which is easier to pause and part-refund if needed."



Veronica King: people are desperate for connection and eager to be back

Grassroots has the same costs, but half the capacity coming out of lockdown



"We got permission from our landlord for free use of a bigger space on the premises to accommodate more than 12 people in our peak classes, which was brilliant. People want to collaborate and help – you just have to ask."

"As a result of a significant price increase by Mindbody, we made a full software switch to the New Zealand-based Gymmaster. In the long-term this is much more affordable and will make life easier, thanks to their integrated Zoom platform, which we use for online classes. We are using the yoga studio option called Serenity."

"I reduced the team of contractors, reopening with seven teachers versus the 11 we had prior to lockdown."

"Going forward, we're planning to get things automated and running efficiently as possible, to keep a model that can easily adapt to the change in restriction levels. My instinct is that we will be dealing with changes back and forth for some time."

"If in doubt about whether something compromises people's health, don't do it. Implement the highest standards you can, so people feel safe; don't cut corners rushing to get back to how you were. Ask for help, accept help; you're not meant to do this alone."



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REOPENING



6

Les Mills Clubs, New Zealand

Brett Sutton

Clubs: 12

Reopened: 15 May 2020

"We've had an uptick in online sales since we reopened, so our website has proved very useful. We use Microsoft PowerBI and Dynamics CRM to keep track of what's happening in real time."

"Our main focus is on reactivating members who put their membership on pause, while at the same time ensuring our people are confident and optimistic about what lies ahead."

"The biggest challenge has been getting clarity from the government regarding studio/room limits. The second biggest challenge was that distancing requirements put pressure on our popular classes and we had to turn people away from certain classes."

*Four weeks since
opening our doors and
we are at 88 per cent of
our normal attendance*

"Working with our sister company, Les Mills International, we offered our members Les Mills On Demand for free during lockdown, allowing members to train from the comfort of their own homes."

"Reopening has gone well and members have been very respectful of the measures we have in place. Four weeks since opening our doors we're at 88 per cent of normal attendance."

"We've opened our doors with around 70 per cent of our previous staffing levels."

"Do scenario planning, keep members and staff informed, think about your reputation. People will remember how you treated them and what you did in this period."

Les Mills has had an increase in online sales since reopening





Be prepared for frequent change and ask your members for feedback. They're your bread and butter and often possess great insight in regards to expectations

Total Fusion, Australia

Leon and Michelle McNiece

Clubs: 3

Reopened: 3 June

"Each of our studios is fitted with industry-leading air purification systems. These systems are equipped with UV light sterilisation and can stop the growth of 99.99 per cent of all microorganisms and common germs that go through the filters."

"We paid particular attention to our staff briefing and made sure that on top of all the hygiene protocols, we implemented a safe speaking and supportive environment to handle any enhanced stress our team may face throughout these uncertain times."

"We created a spacing campaign titled 'Room to Move', which prompts members to keep social distancing up, while doubling as an encouraging slogan that promotes the safe moving space we have in our studios."



The McNieces consulted with members to create a realistic timetable of classes



Each gym is fitted with an air purification system and UV light sterilisation

"Our app-booking and check-in system was helpful in eliminating physical touchpoints at our receptions."

"Attendance has been extremely high and our safe-opening measures have been well received. Members respect that measures are in place to ensure their safety and understand the more considerate they are, the better chance we have of returning to normal sooner!"

"Having timetables on standby that best coped with our anticipated member demand has been a bit of a juggle. To combat this, we sent out a brand-wide survey asking members about their readiness to re-attend and their class expectations to help shape the most realistic reopening timetable and plan."

"Everyone is now back at work and returning to normal hours."

"We're continuing to populate our virtual library so that those waiting to come back still have some form of movement inspiration every day. We're edging closer to normal every day and are continually training and adjusting our plans to reflect government directives as they come."

"When it comes to best advice for reopening, we'd recommend taking baby steps – be prepared for frequent change and ask your members for feedback."

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RIG REJIG

Suppliers are offering programming for rigs to enable operators to tackle social distancing challenges, create a boutique feel and reduce the intimidation factor. *HCM* gets the lowdown from key suppliers

ERICA TILLINGHAST

PRECOR

The right programming is vital if rigs are to enrich the member experience rather than sit unused on the gym floor. Precor's Queenax rig system is a versatile platform, with attachment locations and storage solutions to support most functional environments.

We offer a number of pre-configured Queenax options with attachments to enable functional training, from suspension fitness equipment and rebounders to plyometric platforms.

Precor is also launching Studio Ignite, a comprehensive, high-intensity interval training programme, to support its Queenax platform by pairing HIIT cardio with functional strength stations.

Studio Ignite offers six months of programming that can be screen-cast to

Programming can be screen-cast to monitors within the facility

monitors within the facility and comes complete with in-depth trainer coaching and business support for operators.

Additionally, we now offer the Sony Advagym app with a Queenax movement library built in, so operators who subscribe can provide digital coaching to their customers at any time.

This complete package of equipment, training, business guidance and education is designed to help operators compete against popular boutique facilities.



To manage social distancing we're suggesting limiting circuit training and focusing instead on offering class-style programmes where all exercisers have their own equipment. This avoids the frustrations involved with moving stations and having to clean equipment while trying to keep heart rates up.



To maintain social distancing, limit circuit training, instead keeping participants in one station



Physical Company offers a series of 30-minute small group training workouts to be done on its rigs

**Workouts are kept
fresh with new plans
released every quarter**

JAMES ANDERSON

PHYSICAL COMPANY

We're very flexible when it comes to the design of rigs and the stations that are included.

We seldom sell an off-the-shelf rig and, just as rigs are customised, so is training and support. For every bespoke rig we create, we deliver a package of training tailored to the individual site and its end users.

We also offer modules of workout programming incorporating different stations and exercise options, to allow instructors to build effective, compelling programmes that maximise workout opportunities on their specific rig.

Our APEX programmes – a series of eight, 30-minute small group training sessions – embrace everything from high intensity to recovery and health and mobility to core training. New plans are released every quarter and instructors are provided with step-by-step programme guides and a web-based exercise video library.

Our approach to social distancing is to create different stations around the rig, but these generally leave people around 1m apart – not enough for social distancing with current guidelines. As a result, we recommend that operators utilise every alternate station to maintain distancing until guidelines are amended.

Circuits will be off-limits for now unless gyms can equip stations with multiple items – battle ropes, suspension trainer, mat, medicine ball, etc – so each participant has what they need for a workout without moving between stations.



TOM ROOKE

INDIGO FITNESS

In the post-lockdown climate, the hard surface of the training rigs means they're easy to clean and disinfect after every class. With the addition of floor markings, every individual user can have their own training space, socially distanced from the rest of the class, with dedicated equipment and their own section of rig, making it easy to reduce any fears of cross contamination for the end users.

The key to having the most effective, engaging training space is to make it truly multifunctional. With this in mind, we're constantly evolving our rig offering with new designs, attachments and floor markings to ensure its versatility.

We're reviewing our offering in light of the current situation with COVID-19. A key part of what we do is design and consultation – we work with customers to create the entire functional area, from

the flooring, with bespoke zonal marking, to a tailored functional rig designed to fit perfectly into the space available.

It's easy to just cram as many attachments as possible on a rig, but we work with the customer to understand what they want from their functional classes and programming, then provide them with the tools and flexibility to deliver the best group exercise experience possible.



Dedicated equipment makes it easy to reduce any fears of cross contamination



The hard surfaces of rigs are easy to clean and disinfect – perfect for the current climate

**Dedicated equipment makes
it easy to reduce any fears
of cross contamination**



The MX4 Active programme focuses on improving flexibility, balance and stability in less fit or older members

MATT GLEED

MATRIX FITNESS

Our Connexus range includes rig solutions designed to host a full selection of functional training equipment. The range is completely scalable and includes the Connexus freestanding rig and the wall-mounted Connexus Perimeter.

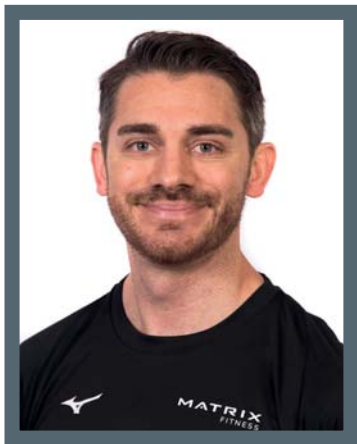
Connexus rigs support the Matrix Fitness MX4 small group training programming, which consists of 156 30-minute HIIT workouts programmed to work on cardio, power, strength and endurance.

To offer a more specialised workout for those who are less fit, or for the ageing population, MX4 Active provides 25 more workouts, each 45 minutes long, focusing on improving stability, balance and flexibility, to help facilities serve a wider range of ages and abilities.

We offer an implementation guide to help operators incorporate the MX4 Training System into their existing offering. This includes staff training and a step-by-step launch timeline designed to answer operator questions.

Matrix Connexus rigs have two vertical adjustment points set up to support distancing, whilst the benefit of multiple attachments means that an individual or a small group workout can abide by social distancing recommendations throughout.

With so much variety available, entire PT sessions or small group training classes can be held in one place, without having to move around the gym and allowing for an easier clean afterwards, ready for the next user.



New rig options

TRX extends its rig training, while Core Health & Fitness now offers Throwdown commercial products

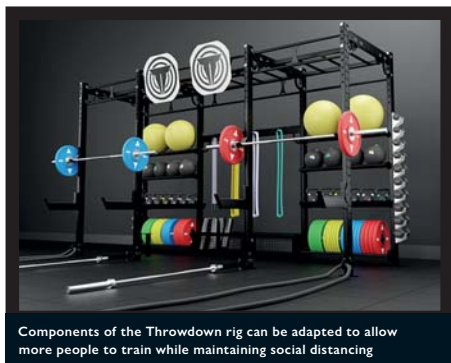
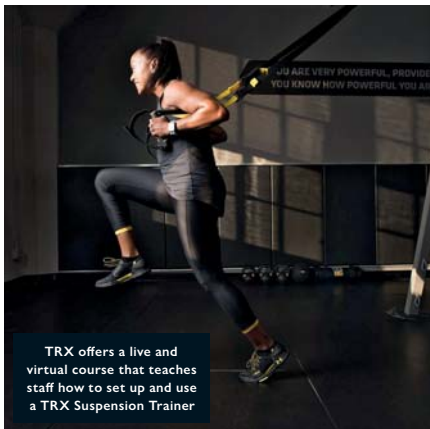
■ TRX STUDIO LINE

TRX Studio Line rigs can be used to create functional training zones with customisable suspension anchoring and built-in storage, while emphasising design and aesthetics to suit the needs of each member, space and activity.

When it comes to training staff to enable them to optimise the use of the equipment, the company offers a seven-hour, interactive and live virtual course, which shows how to correctly set up and use a TRX Suspension Trainer.

This teaches them how to properly perform a variety of suspension training exercises, adjust resistance and stability for all exercises, progress and regress exercises for all fitness levels, and cue and correct common faults.

Graduates of the TRX course are invited to join the TRX CORE trainer network, a membership platform that gives access to a TRX certification, workouts and content, business and marketing tools, income opportunities and exclusive events. ●



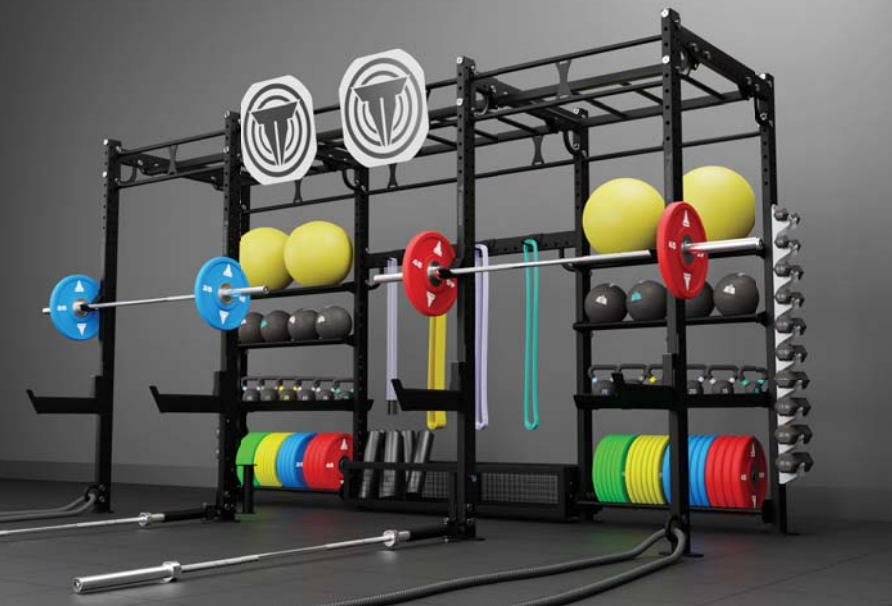
■ CORE HEALTH & FITNESS

Core Health & Fitness is now offering Throwdown commercial fitness products, including the XTC, a hyper flexible rig, which has been engineered to create different training zones, which allows for groups of members to train simultaneously.

Throwdown's commercial fitness equipment offerings have been designed to enable trainers and members to mix it up and create flexible and challenging exercise environments. Rigs are designed to be flexible enough to work in both large and small spaces.

In the current COVID-19 situation, components can be adapted and areas marked out to allow more people to train while still maintaining social distancing.

The Core Health & Fitness instructor education portfolio includes Throwdown as part of the company's HIIT training programme.



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The Throwdown XTC Standard Rig series has been expertly engineered to maximize training zones, enabling groups of members to train simultaneously. Tricked out with everything from squat stations to target training, these rigs are ideal for functional training. PLUS! The XTC comes available in 14', 24' and 34' lengths to accommodate various facility sizes. No matter your space, we've got you covered!

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SAFE SPACE

THE CHANGING ROOM EXPERTS



Ultimate locker install

Safe Space has created a new locker space for global franchise, UFC GYM, which both maintains its brand image and delivers operational support

Here at Safe Space, one of our most recent projects was for UFC GYM, which opened its inaugural UK sites in Nottingham and Woking late last year.

UFC GYM is the first major brand extension of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, offering health clubs with unrivalled training facilities, equipment and fitness classes for members across its 150 UFC GYM clubs worldwide.

UFC GYM in Nottingham and CLASS UFC GYM in Woking are two different gym concepts with varying requirements to accommodate members. Safe Space was tasked with delivering a creative and innovative solution that maximised the available space at both sites, to ensure there was enough availability of lockers during peak times.

UFC GYM also wanted all lockers to have an auto-open feature which was activated 30 minutes after the gym closes, to prevent members from storing things overnight.



"UFC GYM wanted lockers to auto-open 30 minutes after closing to prevent members storing things overnight"

Gregg Rumble, Safe Space

Branding considerations

Both gyms operate under different brands, so this was also a consideration when determining the specs.

As these were the first UK sites developed by the brand, this gave us the opportunity to deliver a bespoke solution for each gym, in

keeping with the global brand, that complemented the available space and added to the member experience.

We received great feedback from UFC GYM on our reliability and the service provided, and we're looking forward to continuing our partnership with them as they expand further in the UK.

Gregg Rumble, our sales director, said: "The best piece of advice we can give is to always plan ahead – but be able to flex your plans, too."

"As with any site renovation or build project, there's always an element of the unknown and sometimes not everything goes according to plan. With the requirement to factor installs around other suppliers – and sometimes against tight timescales – it's important to have a plan in place but to be able to change so that the project can still be completed with as little disruption as possible." ●



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PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness



HaloPocket device delivers salt therapy in treatment rooms, explains **Steve Spiro**



The HaloPocket delivers dry salt therapy benefits

There's growing consumer interest in halo (salt) therapy since COVID-19, as people look to improve their respiratory health and boost their immune systems.

Indeed, some health clubs may already have dedicated salt rooms or halotherapy booths. But now HaloTherapy Solutions has revealed HaloPocket, a 19cm tall personal halogenerator, to deliver dry salt therapy benefits at the press of a single button, in just five minutes.



Use it as an opening or closing ritual for a facial or massage

Steve Spiro

"My goal is to have HaloPocket used as either an opening and closing ritual for either a facial

or massage that supports respiratory health or to give any treatment an extra boost, just as spas upsell a mask or special technique," says HaloTherapy Solutions' founder and CEO Steve Spiro. "Plus, it's an excellent product to sell in a spa, health club or gym's retail store and also online, via their website – especially in the 'new normal' world of COVID-19."

The HaloPocket retails at US\$1,299 (€1,136, £1,029).

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

HALOTHERAPY SOLUTIONS

Digital platform helps gyms and clubs return to business says **Gwilym Austin**

A new digital platform has been launched to help gyms, pools and leisure facilities re-open safely. Developed by digital specialist APEX1, Fit4Access has been designed to help facilities better safeguard against the risk of Covid-19 infection.

Facilities joining Fit4Access are asked to generate a Code of Conduct statement for their centre. This has been made easy with a range of templates

for operators to choose from.

Operators will also get a media toolkit with a press release, radio and press adverts, videos, social media blogs and content for their website and member communications.

Members of the partaking facilities will then, in turn, be asked to complete the ukactive Health Commitment Statement and to declare they're free of any COVID-19 symptoms, to get their Fit4Access pass.

"Members get an easy-to-access, easy-to-digest and well-presented set of guidelines specific to their facility," said APEX1 marketing director Gwilym Austin. "It's

Members get a well-presented set of guidelines

Gwilym Austin



Fit4Access helps gyms safeguard against COVID-19

reassuring for all members to know that everybody at their facility has done the same.

"Fit4Access also enables leisure facilities to keep members up-to-date about all their safety procedures, sets

out what to expect when they return and ensures that people are reading the guidelines by issuing access passes."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

APEX1



Over the last 35 years, innovation has been a key priority for Technogym

Nerio Alessandri



“Skillbench is the complete functional workstation” explains **Nerio Alessandri**

Skillbench is Technogym's new all-in-one solution for functional training. It allows users to perform more than 200 fundamental exercises with its accessories and to build challenging workout sessions, based on different fitness levels and goals.

Hexagonal dumbbells allow for endless weight training exercises, isolating single muscle groups or combining muscles for full-body blasts. Power bands facilitate mobility through stretching and provide incremental resistance for strength exercises with

three different resistance levels and weighted knuckles escalate core improvement with engaging exercises.

Skillbench is designed to enable a large range of exercises in one workout station, thanks to its reduced footprint and enclosed tools.

The shape is designed to offer comfort and variety in the smallest space. With its beautiful design and small footprint, Skillbench turns the smallest area into a functional training gym.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

TECHNOGYM

Stronger Together allows clubs to offer broader experience, says **Hugo Braam**

Virtuagym, has launched Stronger Together. Billed as the world's first all-in-one turnkey digital membership solution, the programme is designed to take care of community building, online challenges and creating workout and nutrition plans. It also offers audio coaching and live streaming sessions.

“We noticed many of our customers are struggling to get a good digital offering in place, which they can charge their members for during the current crisis,” says CEO Hugo Braam. “And that's not just single location businesses, but chains as well. It just costs a lot of time and resources to do this well. “Our customers only need to press a button to go live with a rich digital



This won't just be relevant during the pandemic, but also moving forward

Hugo Braam

membership experience, where we do all the heavy lifting. We believe that won't just be relevant during the coronavirus pandemic, but will allow clubs to offer their members a broader experience as part of their membership moving forward.”

The offering provides club, gym, and studio



Stronger Together is a complete digital offering

owners with a complete online fitness and wellness programme to offer their clients so they can work out with their gym or studio both at home and in the facility. The programme offers thousands of hours of content, including digital 3D workouts, video classes, audio coaching, nutrition and fitness tracking, an

online community updated with content on a daily basis, as well as challenges to stay fit. Virtuagym has also added a library of meditation sessions, making it a complete and holistic member wellness experience.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

VIRTUAGYM

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Stay active, stay young

Older men who play football regularly have cells ‘younger’ than those of their inactive peers, according to new research from sports scientists in Denmark and Germany

Older men who’ve played football regularly throughout their lives can have cells up to 11 years younger than their physically inactive peers, according to a new academic study.

Researchers set out to show how the cellular anti-ageing effects of regular endurance training may differ depending on the type of exercise being undertaken.

The figure comes from a study undertaken by a group of Danish and German sports scientists, which suggests that regular physical activity can keep biological ageing at bay.

For the study, which is published in the latest issue of US journal *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases*, the researchers investigated the length of the telomeres, which indicates biological age: the shorter the telomere, the ‘older’ the cell and the greater the biological age of the person being tested.

They also looked at the activity of telomerase, a protein which protects the end of chromosomes from DNA

“ The regular exercise that football represents induces cellular anti-senescence mechanisms implying positive long-term cardiovascular health

damage, contributing to the protective effect regular exercise has on the body.

The study, which was based on 140 men, showed that those aged 65 to 80 years – who had played football regularly – had longer telomeres than their inactive counterparts.

Longer telomeres

The elderly footballers had 2.5 per cent higher granulocyte telomere length and 1.3 per cent higher lymphocyte telomere length when compared to inactive men of the same age.

The footballers also had 37 per cent lower mRNA expression of the pro-senescence factor p16 (a cellular senescence and tumour suppressor gene), when compared to those in the study who were inactive, as well as higher telomerase activity.

Great outcome

“The older football players were in excellent physical shape, which was manifested in the younger biological age in the cells,” said Peter Krstrup, professor at the Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics at University of Southern Denmark, which led the study.

“This is the first cross-sectional, controlled trial showing the effects of lifelong football participation on telomere shortening and senescence markers in circulating cells.

“It suggests that the regular exercise football represents induces cellular anti-senescence mechanisms, giving positive long-term cardiovascular health effects and protection against cell ageing.”

Find out more about this research at: www.HCMmag.com/football

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