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# OMNICHANNEL FITNESS: THE WAY TO WIN IN 2022

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# DIGITAL TO LIVE: THE NEW MEMBER FUNNEL



## Stepping up

**The democratic world has been shaken by the pounding of Ukraine by invading armies, but the united response from the community of democratic nations has been resolute**

**T**he global community of democratic nations has responded with revulsion to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the atrocities that are occurring.

At a time of such universal sorrow and anger, the day-to-day can seem frivolous and irrelevant – how can we find meaning in our work when babies undergoing cancer treatment are being pounded by missiles?

I believe we must do three things. Firstly, take action to give whatever resources and support we're able – whether that be financial, through a charity, such as those being flagged by UK Active at [www.hcmmag.com/giving](http://www.hcmmag.com/giving), or by offering temporary accommodation and practical support via schemes, such as that being organised by Airbnb. Go to [www.airbnb.org/help-ukraine](http://www.airbnb.org/help-ukraine) and you can sign up to host refugees in your home or business on a short-term basis.

People are also 'hacking' Airbnb's 300 locations in Ukraine to send money by booking accommodation they can't use.

The West buys US\$500m of oil and gas from Russia every day, so you can turn off the lights and turn down the heating at work and at home to reduce the flow of money funding the war, while also helping the environment.

As a business, you may have medical supplies, clothing or other useful items you can donate to people who have lost everything. Be creative and take action now.

The second thing is for the global fitness industry to stand up and be united in responding to what's going on, with statements of solidarity for the people of Ukraine – especially those who work in the fitness industry there.

We hope all the associations in the sector around the world will take action and make statements soon – ideally on a united basis.

Some may think this is tokenism, but when the whole world speaks out – each of us from our own vantage point – these cries of support merge to form a roar and this is what the people of Ukraine need to hear right now, as they face such frightening odds.

The final priority is for us to remember that Ukrainians are fighting for the right to live in a democracy and lead a free and empowered life and that we can help them by keeping our own economies strong,

PHOTO: AP/REUTERS/UKATSKY



A gym in Kyiv following shelling on 3 March 2022

**“We must take action to give whatever resources and support we're able, while fighting to keep our own economies strong”**

creative and dynamic and our own democracies stable and free from corruption, so we're in the very best shape to support those who need it.

The situation of Ukraine must also drive us to raise our own game to ensure we rebuild dynamically from the pandemic with an even greater appreciation of our own freedom and the opportunities it brings.

Our industries represent positivity, health and self-determination and in addition to supporting refugees now, we will have much to offer the people of Ukraine in the months and years ahead, whatever comes to pass.

**Liz Terry, editor**  
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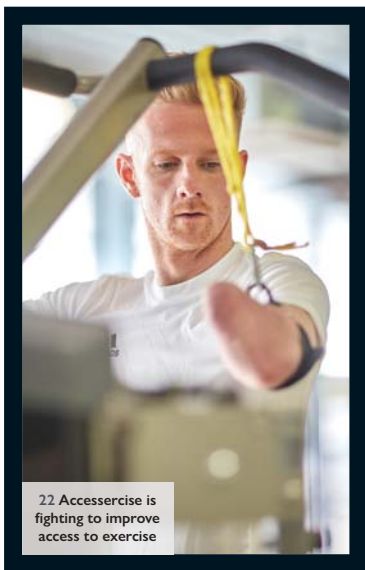
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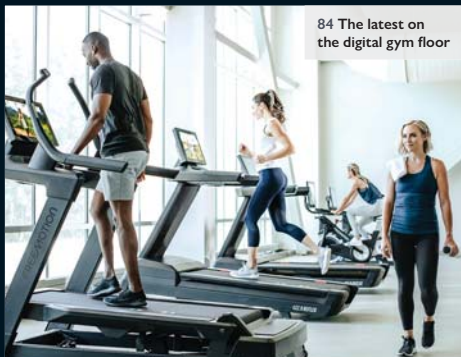


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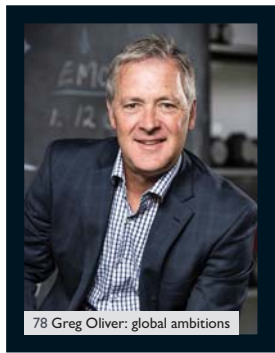
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PHOTO: FITNESS & LIFESTYLE GROUP



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# Write to reply

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*For some populations, exercise is a health need – just like antibiotics or surgery – not a lifestyle choice*

## Defending exercise prescription

**Justin Rogers and Adam Hewitt, Ten Health and Fitness**

We read the interview with Dr Natasha Jones and Suzi Gardener (*HCM* issue 1, 2022) where they discuss their recent report *The Benefits Outweigh the Risk*, which outlines the benefits vs risks of physical activity – particularly for clients with medical conditions.

It was a valuable reminder of some of the key gaps – whether understanding, competence or awareness – that exist within the fitness and medical sectors.

These gaps leave millions of people with long-term conditions and co-morbidities without the support they need to make meaningful changes to their health and quality of life through exercise.

The interview in *HCM* shines a light on some longstanding concerns, one of the most significant of which is that the fitness industry is primarily designed to get fit people fitter and is not structured to support those whose medical conditions would benefit from physical activity in their lives.

The vast inconsistency in qualifications and expertise across the fitness sector is a major contributing factor when it comes to this issue, although this was beyond the scope of the interview.

Another challenge is the need for more clinicians and fitness professionals to adopt a rounded view of the individual. Too many in both sectors still struggle to see beyond their own specialisms – medics know the importance of exercise for patients with clinical issues, but lack the knowledge to prescribe it effectively or the time to address patient concerns or objections, while within much of the fitness and rehab industry, the lack of expertise and silo structure limits its ability to create an integrated end-to-end journey for clients.

### Taking issue with comments

There are a couple of points in this interview with which we take issue, however. Firstly, in asking the question “Is change coming?” Jones



Justin Rogers



Adam Hewitt

Many people with medical conditions aren't aware exercise can help them



PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK/BEAROTOS

and Gardener imply nothing is being done to address these challenges.

That's not the case – change has already 'come'. Not at scale admittedly, but there are providers across the UK who are addressing the needs of clients for whom physical activity is less a lifestyle choice and more a key element in the management of a life-changing medical condition.

Already we and providers like us – exercise physiologists specifically trained to support special populations – have built strong and collaborative relationships within the medical sector to deliver just the kind of inclusive, rounded and supportive patient care the report has identified as lacking.

#### Defending exercise prescription

Secondly, when Dr Jones says, "I'm not a fan of exercise prescription", it would be interesting to understand why and to better comprehend her definition of this important intervention.

Our take is that exercise prescription is exactly what's needed, as the evidence in support of clinical exercise is compelling. We, like others in our field, follow a clinically-proven and evidence-based approach, prescribing a specific programme for each client and guiding them through it.

Our clients see benefits, whether in outcomes, symptom reduction or improved quality

of life. It's hard to see a problem with this and so we're not sure how Dr Jones' view is helpful.

She goes on to say, "Medicalising exercise should only be necessary if the patient deems it so". However, many people with debilitating medical conditions aren't even aware exercise can help them, and even if they are, they have very little idea what this might look like.

For these populations, exercise is a 'health need' – just like antibiotics or surgery – not the opt-in lifestyle choice it is for most gym-goers.

Of course it's vitally important the plan is followed as prescribed, which means it requires the right support, and client buy-in. That's a given. ●

# HCM people



*Led by master fitness trainers, the Soneva Soul Movement Programme balances functional gym-based fitness with natural free movement techniques*

## Sonu Shivdasani

**CEO and Co-Founder, Soneva**

Shivdasani has developed the Soneva Soul concept to integrate movement and wellness



PHOTO: GUARDIAN OF THE CULTURE, SONEVA





*Soneva Soul is guided by the principle of 'lifestyle evolution'. Experts work with guests to help them reach their potential through rest, recovery, and regeneration, as well as detoxification, movement and optimisation*

**You've launched Soneva Soul. What was the inspiration behind the new brand?**

Soneva Soul is the culmination of everything we've learned since we launched our spa at Soneva Fushi in 1995 – the very first resort spa in the Maldives. Along Soneva's journey at the forefront of the wellness and hospitality sectors, we've gathered knowledge and wisdom from the latest in medical science and pioneering technology, along with ancient healing practices.

We're pioneering an approach that combines apparent opposites, to offer our guests a transformative and personalised wellbeing experience in inspiring surroundings that reconnects their mind, body and soul.

Much of the design work for Soneva Soul took place when my wife Eva and I were staying in Istanbul while I was undergoing chemotherapy for stage 4 cancer.

Soneva Soul is at Soneva Jani on the Island of Medhufaru in the Maldives. I chose an area on the island's east coast for the development, high above the mangroves, because it's such an incredible setting.

I believe 60 per cent of healing and wellness comes from one's mind. During our stay in Istanbul, I was reading Dr Kelly Turner's book, *Radical Remission* – it features nine chapters that talk about a particular action one needs to take in order to achieve radical remission, and six of these focus on mental wellbeing. ▶

Sonu and Eva  
Shivdasani, the visionaries  
behind Soneva

Advanced medical diagnostics are available



*We combine traditional wellness practices with cutting edge diagnostics and pioneering treatments such as biomodulation, biophotonic therapy and ultraviolet blood irradiation therapy*

#### ► How is Soneva Soul different?

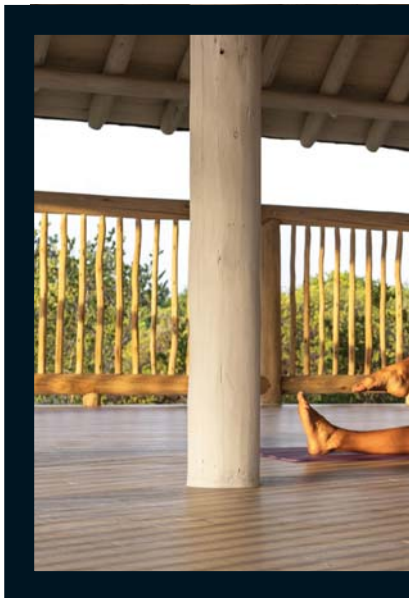
We offer each guest a personalised pathway to health, happiness, and fulfilment – which means no two Soneva Soul journeys will look the same.

Each person's journey can start at any point – whether an individual is looking to kick-start a healthier lifestyle, heal following an illness or injury, improve their physical or mental performance, or simply relax and indulge.

Working in partnership with each guest, our wellness experts curate a tailored journey that supports every aspect of their life. This includes rest, recovery, and regeneration, as well as movement and optimisation and detoxification, following principles such as balance, mindful living and self-care.

Led by master fitness trainers and bodywork experts, the Soneva Soul Movement Programme balances functional gym-based fitness with natural free movement techniques and experiential fitness, surrounded by nature – such as jungle gyms and deep-water aquatic fitness sessions.

Yoga, Pranayama Breathing and Meditation Programmes reinforce the link between mind, body and soul, with one-on-one and group sessions with resident yoga masters and visiting experts, while an expert-led sleep programme creates a personalised intervention for healthier long-term sleeping habits. ►



IV drips are one of the interventions on offer

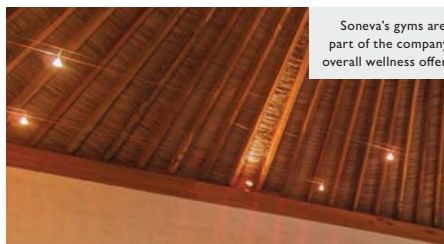


PHOTO: SONEVA

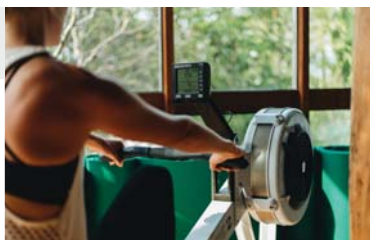


Gentle movement, balance, mindfulness and self-care are key wellness principles

PHOTO: SONEVA/SANJEEV KOTHAKOTA



Soneva's gyms are part of the company's overall wellness offering





*We offer cross-functional gyms, equipped with the latest fitness technology and our experiential fitness and movement programmes take place within nature, whether morning yoga on the beach or training at the jungle gym*

- Based on outcomes that target guests' specific needs, the treatment menu at each Soneva Soul unites traditional wellness philosophies, such as Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, herbalism and medicinal mushrooms, with innovative treatment methodologies, which can include heart rate variability testing, platelet-rich plasma (PRP therapy), nutrient IV therapy, cryotherapy and ozone therapy.

#### **What makes the concept unique?**

We offer a depth of wellness not typically found in a resort spa, as we include traditional wellness philosophies and practices, combining these with cutting edge diagnostic technologies and pioneering treatment methodologies such as stem cell injections, biomodulation – hyperbaric oxygen therapy – biophotonic therapy and ultraviolet blood irradiation therapy.

Soneva Soul is guided by the principle of 'lifestyle evolution', with experts across a spectrum of wellness disciplines working in partnership with guests to help them achieve their wellness goals and reach their full potential – this includes rest, recovery, and regeneration, as well as detoxification, movement, and optimisation, following principles such as balance, mindful living and self-care.


Each Soneva Soul wellness centre is built in perfect harmony with its breathtaking surroundings, elevating guests' wellness experience.



Rest, recovery and regeneration are a key focus at Soneva







A sandbank dinner,  
enjoying a spectacular  
Maldives sunset at sister  
property, Soneva Fushi

### **What practitioners deliver these high-end services?**

Over the coming months, each Soneva Soul will establish a permanent team that includes an Ayurvedic doctor, Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioner, integrative medicine doctor and highly trained therapists.

On the healing side, our experts also draw on their own knowledge and healing heritage to offer specialist treatments that are unique to them. These include rituals such as the Tok Sen massage by Piyada – an energising, traditional northern Thai massage that uses wooden mallets and pegs to hammer tension away. The rhythmic tapping of the tools uses vibration to work deeply into muscle and fascia beneath the surface while providing a hypnotic relaxation

effect. This massage stimulates the circulation, soft tissue and tendons, as well as acupressure points.

Throughout the year, our resident wellness team at Soneva Soul is also complemented by a calendar of visiting wellness specialists, chosen for their eminence across a full spectrum of wellness disciplines, fitness, healing and spirituality.

### **How will the concept develop?**

The next step is the evolution of wellness at Soneva. The concept has always been intrinsically linked with our Slow Life philosophy and has informed the way we design and operate our resorts since the very beginning.

We firmly believe in the healing and restorative power of nature for our bodies and minds. Our resorts offer our guests many opportunities to

reconnect with the natural world. Our island villas are surrounded by lush private gardens; our over-water villas have panoramic views across the ocean and portholes looking into the marine world below.

Our Rare experiences celebrate nature in all its glory – whether snorkelling with manta rays and dolphins or ziplining through our jungle at Flying Saucers, our latest dining experience up in the treetops. These are the kinds of activities our guests are unlikely to experience during their busy everyday lives.

We're privileged to have a high return rate among guests, so want to ensure every visit offers them something new and memorable. One way that we achieve this is through our Soneva Stars calendar, which welcomes acclaimed experts throughout the year: athletes, Michelin-starred chefs, astronomers, artists and authors; as well as Soneva Soul wellness residencies by health and wellbeing specialists across a full spectrum of wellness practices, healing modalities, spirituality and fitness.

The design of our resorts encourages our guests to move and explore – each of our villas come with complimentary bicycles and tricycles, and our paths and boardwalks are rarely straight, their curves and bends invite guests to be mindful of every moment.

We offer cross-functional gyms, equipped with the latest fitness technology and our experiential



Flying Saucers is the resort's zipwire treetop fine dining experience







*In the longer term, we'll  
work with like-minded  
partners to launch  
one-of-a-kind wellness  
destinations across the world*

Soneva Soul at Soneva  
Jani in the Maldives

PHOTO: SONEVA FUSHI

fitness and movement programmes take place within nature, whether morning yoga sessions on the beach or training at the jungle gym.

Our culinary offering across our dining destinations reflects the famous quote by Hippocrates: 'Let thy food be thy medicine, and thy medicine thy food'. Our skilled chefs craft dishes that are deliciously healthy and nutritious for our guests, while also being sustainable and organic.

#### **What's next for Soneva Soul?**

Wellness remains a strong focus for the next stage of our Soneva journey.

We've recently opened the Soneva Soul resort wellness centre at Soneva Fushi, and are introducing the concept to Soneva Kiri in Thailand.

In the longer term, we'll work with like-minded partners to launch one-of-a-kind wellness destinations across the world.

In addition to the Soneva Soul wellness centres across our resorts, we'll also be hosting a series of Soneva Soul wellness events and workshops in Autumn 2022 across destinations in Europe and India, to showcase our wellness offerings and introduce our management to our key customers in these markets. ●

The Shrivadasanis will  
host wellness events  
in Europe in 2022

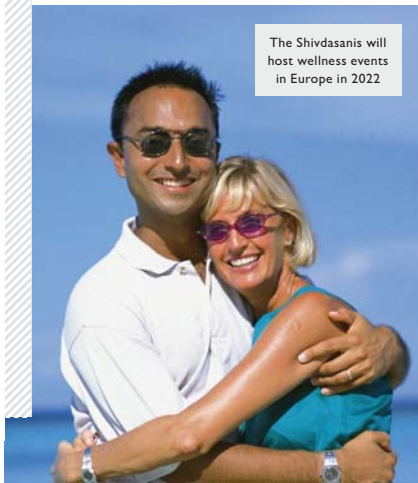


PHOTO: SONEVA AND EVA SHIVDASANIS



*I really hope  
Accessercise changes  
the lives of millions*

**Ali Jawad**

**Paralympic powerlifter  
and founder, Accessercise**

#### **What is Accessercise?**

Accessercise is one of the first fitness apps specifically designed for the disabled community. It has a unique exercise library that can be tailored to a person's specific needs. Users can build workouts, schedule to their calendar and filter, based on a range of options including difficulty, location and equipment.

There's a social hub where we interact with our community, both individually and within groups, as well as an 'explore' section that has the UK's fitness facilities mapped out.

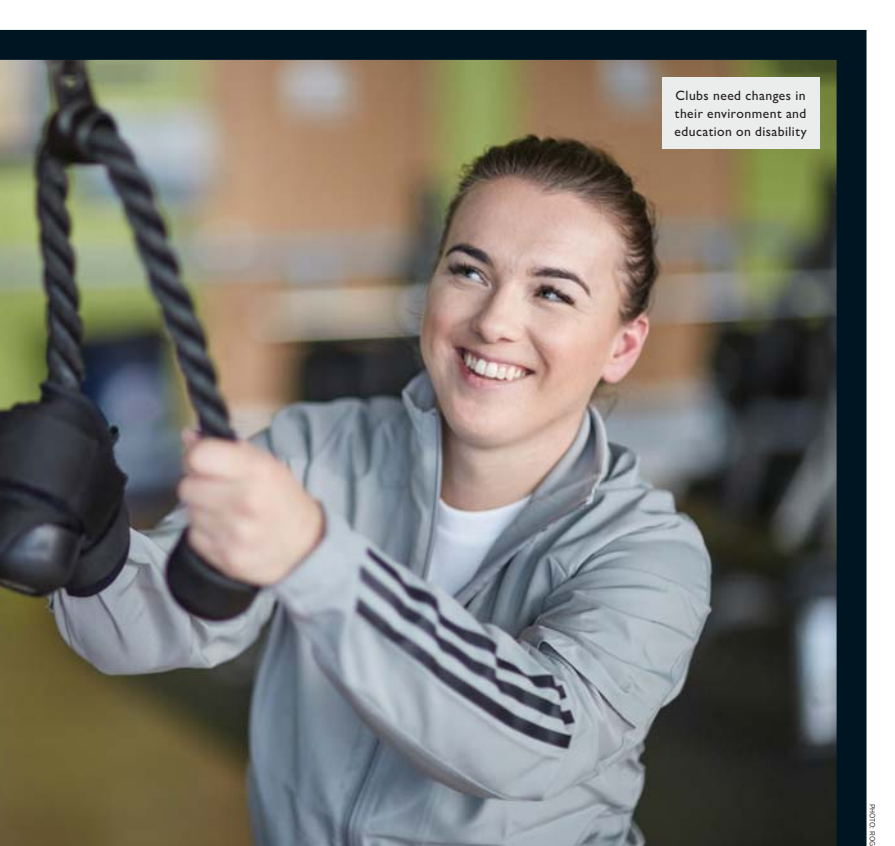
Those that are rated high enough by our users through our rating system are marked as verified gyms, allowing users to easily identify which facilities are accessible to the disabled community. We'll soon be adding nutrition information, blogs, podcasts and much more.

#### **How did you come up with the idea?**

My co-founder, former international sailor Sam Brearey, and I were discussing the pandemic and the impact on the disabled community, as well as the athletes heading off to Japan for the Olympic Games. Within those discussions we identified there was nothing even close to Accessercise in the market, and it was something that could benefit so many people across the world. As with my sporting career, I don't do things by halves, so we decided to go all in.

#### **How did you take it from idea to reality?**

Sam and I have been good friends for years, and both dive in head first, so that's what we did with Accessercise. We started with the firm foundation that everything was to be specifically for people with impairments, so everything we did we came back to that and asked 'could this be more accessible?'



Clubs need changes in their environment and education on disability

We then put together an amazing focus group of driven individuals who shared our vision to change the world. They have been incredible with suggestions, reviewing different versions and shaping Accessercise. There have been ups and downs as with everything new, and we're sure there will be highs and lows as we move forward, but what matters most is that we help people and change the world for the better.

#### ***How did you first get into powerlifting?***

A friend took me to a local gym, which reminded me of something out of a Rocky film. There I started lifting some weights and I got spotted by someone from British Weightlifting who encouraged me

to try out and join the team. The rest is history! Having someone believe in me and the ability to access a fitness facility, changed my life. I really hope Accessercise changes the lives of millions.

#### ***What can health clubs do to become more accessible?***

I think it's a mixture of physical changes and educational developments. Just because a person with an impairment can get into a building doesn't make it accessible. The equipment needs to be usable for a range of impairments and the staff need to have the knowledge and training to help and support without patronising or making assumptions. ►



PHOTO: ROGER BOOL

Trainers will learn how to support disabled members

- ▶ The trainers need the knowledge – which is now contained within Accessercise – to support people while exercising and working out. Small changes and investments can make customers for life.

If clubs want to discuss access to Accessercise for members and/or facility changes then they should get in touch; let's work together to help everyone.

### What are your goals?

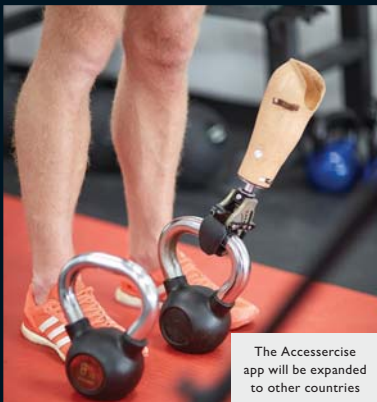
We'll continually look to develop the app and will be adding more improvements and features, and expanding across other countries to ensure we can bring support to as many people as possible.

We'll soon be adding achievements, blogs, podcasts, nutrition information, a shop and several new impairments.

### What impact are you aiming to have?

Our primary aim and hope is that Accessercise will help break down the barriers to exercise for the disabled community, whether that's people wanting to work out at home, or who need some more advice on exercises suitable for them.

We also want to be a driving force in the education sector through research projects and expanding



The Accessercise app will be expanded to other countries

PHOTO: ROGER BOOL



*Just because a person with a disability can get into a building, that doesn't make it accessible*

knowledge of healthy living for people with impairments, as well as helping to highlight accessibility issues within the industry and at government level.

We want to support the drive for real change in what accessibility means and looks like for the disabled community.

### How can health club operators get involved?

We want to work with health clubs and support them in delivering change. Let's work together to make facilities more accessible, so everyone can benefit from verified status on Accessercise, which will help drive customers. The more we can spread the word, the more people we can help. ●

Ali Jawad interview courtesy of *Fit Tech* – the sister magazine of HCM – and managing editor, Steph Eaves

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## GWS unveils 2022 global wellness trends report

The Global Wellness Summit (GWS) has launched its annual trends report revealing the top 10 trends for health and wellness.

The Future of Wellness 2022

predicts that there are 10 major shifts for the sector.:

The GWS' 10 Wellness Trends for 2022

- Dirt-y Wellness: The Health of the World's Soil Becomes More Important.
- Toxic Muscularity Comes Clean.
- From Wellness Tech to Technological Wellness.
- Senior Living Disrupted.
- Wellness Travel: Seekers, Welcome.
- Innovative Tech Closing the Gender Gap in Medical Research.
- Urban Bathhouses & Wellness Playgrounds.
- Next-Gen Naturalism: The Return of Self-Reliance.
- Health & Wellness Coaching Gets Certified.
- Wellness Welcomes the Metaverse.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

The report charts the top 10 wellness trends and shifts for 2022

The evidence-based forecast is based on the insights of global executives of wellness companies, economists, doctors, investors, academics and technologists that gather each year at the GWS.

The report contains individual chapters dedicated to each of the top trends.

The authors – which include leading industry journalists, analysts and wellness experts and professionals – highlight each trend and include examples of the innovators and companies that are pioneering each concept.

More: [http://lei.sr/u4d5v\\_H](http://lei.sr/u4d5v_H)

## F45 loses lawsuit against Body Fit Training



JEFF COOPER

Body Fit Training has won a law suit brought by F45 in Australia

Body Fit Training (BFT), the Australian fitness franchise, has successfully defended a court action brought by F45 in the Australian Federal Court.

The lawsuit is part of an ongoing global dispute over business strategies and the use of technology.

It began in late 2019, when F45 filed a lawsuit in the Australian Federal Court against BFT over an alleged patent infringement, aiming to protect the way it manages its franchises through a central computer system.

F45 asserted that BFT had infringed its intellectual property rights in relation to the proprietary software it uses to manage its locations, however, Justice Nicholas ruled that F45 had no proprietary rights and that two F45 patents were invalid.



PHOTO: BFT

**The court determined that both F45's innovation patents are invalid**  
Cameron Falloon

Joint CEOs of BFT, Cameron Falloon and Richard Burnet, said: "The Federal Court has determined that both of F45's innovation patents are invalid and that – even if those patents had been valid – BFT did not infringe them in any event."

More: [http://lei.sr/a7u2N\\_H](http://lei.sr/a7u2N_H)



## Gympass signs partnership deal with Les Mills

Gympass has signed a partnership deal with Les Mills to make the fitness platform's 1,500 on-demand workouts and virtual training sessions available to Gympass corporate clients.

Clive Ormerod, Les Mills CEO, said: "This is an ideal time for this partnership, as employees and employers have now had time to respond and react to the flexible working initiatives prompted by the pandemic and this new hybrid workforce requires a new, dynamic fitness offering."

"The Les Mills digital offering enables employees to create a fitness regime that suits them."

The deal comes eight months after Gympass secured a US\$220m funding round, valuing it at US\$2.2bn.



PHOTO: LES MILLS

***It's an ideal for a partnership, as employers have had time to react to flexible working***

*Clive Ormerod*

Following the investment, Gympass acquired three businesses – online PT service Trainiac, fitness platform Andjoy and Benefit Seven, a fitness subscription provider in Romania.

Gympass now has more than 50,000 fitness partners globally.

More: [http://lei.sr/Z5G5P\\_H](http://lei.sr/Z5G5P_H)



PHOTO: LES MILLS

Les Mills will now feature on Gympass

## Myzone pushes further into workplace wellness

Myzone has announced a partnership with workforce wellness platform Wellonomics.

The partnership will see Myzone becoming available as a bespoke company-wide solution for Wellonomics clients by integrating into the Wellonomics app.

The app will deploy Myzone functionality to engage and encourage physical activity for individuals and teams of employees.

Wellonomics offers businesses a "proactive approach to enhancing



PHOTO: ANDREW T. POPE

The partnership is part of Myzone's push into the corporate wellness market

happiness and wellbeing" within workplaces and employees have access to confidential assessment, insight and support across six areas – sleep, health, stress, social, financial and work.

According to Glen Thurgood, Wellonomics CEO, the integration of Myzone into the platform will increase employee engagement, provide fun

opportunities for healthy competition and help track physical activity data.

"Wellbeing is complex," Thurgood said. "This partnership is about bringing together two companies that accurately measure and provide positive wellbeing change through enhanced employee engagement."

More: [http://lei.sr/U6k8G\\_H](http://lei.sr/U6k8G_H)



PHOTO: LINDSEY/KEVIN THURGOOD

***This partnership is about bringing together two companies that provide wellbeing change***

*Glen Thurgood*

## UK government must build fitter, stronger nation

The UK government must offer greater clarity on how it plans to support the health and fitness industry when it comes to re-engaging people with exercise – especially in city and town centres – according to UK Active CEO, Huw Edwards.

“The government cannot ignore the impact health inequalities have had on the level of hospitalisations and fatalities throughout the pandemic – a point made clearly by Sir Patrick Vallance during the

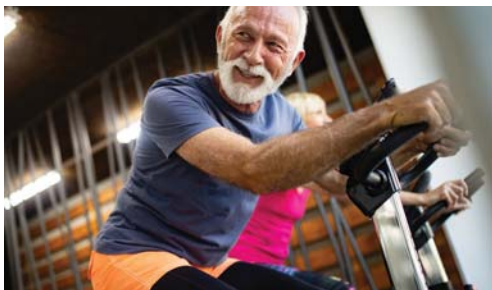


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / NIKOLAI GORODIN

Edwards said levelling up the health of the nation should be at “front and centre”



**The government needs to provide greater detail on how it plans to restore our nation's health**

Huw Edwards

announcement of the government's new Living with COVID-19 strategy on 21 February,” said Edwards.

“Levelling up the physical and mental health of the nation should be front and centre of the Living with COVID-19 strategy, but it isn't.

“It's important the government provides greater detail about

how it plans to approach restoring our nation's health.

“The Government must make clear what precise interventions it will undertake to encourage footfall back into city centres, which is vital for city-based fitness and leisure facilities.”

More: [http://lei.sr/k2a6F\\_H](http://lei.sr/k2a6F_H)

## Rob Barker invests in TRIB3, leaves Peloton



**Barker will relocate to Portugal, where he's investing in boutique chain TRIB3**

Rob Barker has stepped down from his roles at Precor and Peloton, saying he will remain in the fitness industry as an investor, taking a 'significant stake' in boutique fitness studio franchise TRIB3, which is backed by the Fisher Family. He and his family will move to Lisbon, Portugal in May.

He spent the past 27 years at commercial equipment manufacturer Precor, living in the US and rising to the rank of president, where he oversaw the sale of Precor to Peloton in late 2020.

Barker told HCM: “What first appealed to me was the strength of the TRIB3 team and the positioning of the brand. As I learned more about the TRIB3 model I became so excited I wanted to invest.

There are a lot of studios out there,” he continued, “but as most markets come out of COVID, I feel TRIB3 is best placed to win. I am looking forward to supporting the TRIB3 team as an investor and I am confident the growth trajectory will accelerate.”

“I'm moving from being a full-time executive at one company to being a fitness industry entrepreneur and advisor,” said Barker.

“I'll continue to focus where my passion and heart lies: the fitness industry and those companies that are ‘helping people live the lives they desire’.

“I fell in love with the fitness industry quickly and that love is as strong today as ever.”

More: [http://lei.sr/p6K4w\\_H](http://lei.sr/p6K4w_H)

## StretchLab opens 150th studio and plots growth

StretchLab has opened its 150th studio, just six years since its launch.

The franchised boutique fitness brand, which specialises in delivering assisted stretching, opened 52 sites in 2021 – an average of one each week – despite the pressures placed on the fitness industry by the pandemic.

Owned by Xponential Fitness, StretchLab has also reached another landmark with the signing of its 500th franchise agreement. The newly signed agreements will expand StretchLab's reach to cities all across the US, with new locations entering its portfolio, including Washington DC, Charleston, Colorado Springs and Miami.

A deal was also signed to develop a studio in Vancouver, which will mark StretchLab's second Canadian studio.



PHOTO: LINDA/LOU DEFRAncISCO

**Assisted stretching is becoming a mainstream part of the boutique wellness space**

Lou DeFrancisco

Lou DeFrancisco, president of StretchLab, said: "Assisted stretching is becoming a mainstream part of the boutique wellness space, as evidenced by our many openings in 2021 and hundreds of studios in development."

More: [http://lei.sr/6A9p2\\_H](http://lei.sr/6A9p2_H)



PHOTO: STRETCHLAB

The brand opened 52 sites in 2021

## Digme founder dismisses 'collapse' rumours

Coimhe Bamber, co-founder of Digme Fitness, has described a *Daily Telegraph* article which claimed the chain was on the verge of collapse as "misleading".

Speaking exclusively to *HCM*, Bamber said the boutique operator was undertaking a restructuring process that would see it scale down the brand's portfolio and to focus on a hybrid model.

As part of the plan, the chain will continue to operate four of its six studios.



PHOTO: DIGME FITNESS

The chain will continue to operate four studios, including its site in Covent Garden



PHOTO: ELLEN/ARINA

**We've decided to undertake a restructuring process in which we will reduce the studio footprint**

Coimhe Bamber

Digme, alongside many other city-centre boutique fitness operators, has been hit hard by the pandemic – and more recently the government's "Plan B" announcement in December 2021, which included guidance for people to work from home again due to Omicron.

"We've decided to undertake a restructuring process in which we

will reduce the studio footprint from six to four studios in London," Bamber told *HCM*.

"A commercial decision has been taken to reduce the size of our central London footprint to align with the reduction in foot traffic in central London."

More: [http://lei.sr/Z4X8H\\_H](http://lei.sr/Z4X8H_H)

## Consumer demand for health clubs returning

**D**emand for health clubs and gyms in the UK was 'back to normal' by the end of January 2022, according to proprietary search data from Huzzle.

The insight shows that customer demand volumes for gyms nearly doubled between December 2021 and January 2022, going up by 96.7 per cent.

The volume of customer searches in January 2022 was back up to 95 per cent of the absolute volumes seen in January 2020 – the historic peak of the fitness market in the UK.

The impact of Plan B measures (the reimposition of homeworking in the UK during January) are also having an impact and Huzzle says that while its insight numbers signify a return to "normal" levels of demand for gyms, this demand remains soft, with the usual January uplift being deferred.

"While high demand is great for the sector, the demand varies in quantity and quality," Huzzle said.



The volume of searches in January 2022 was 95 per cent of those in January 2020

"We group customer search terms into 'high' and 'low' intent cohorts. For example, a high-intent search term might relate to specific gym exercises or venues, indicating a customer who is more likely to be 'transactional'.

"A low-intent search term would be more generic, such as 'gym' or 'gyms near me' which indicates a

customer who is in a consideration phase, without this necessarily progressing to a transaction.

"Our data shows that while the low-intent search terms did increase dramatically, the high-intent search terms lagged behind."

More: [http://lei.sr/B5M2d\\_H](http://lei.sr/B5M2d_H)

## Bannatyne Group grows wellness portfolio



The appointment-only spa is also selling health club memberships

**T**he Bannatyne Group has opened the doors to its first airport spa at Teesside International Airport, in Northern England.

Following a £100,000 investment, the travel spa launched in the airport's departure lounge and is open to all passengers travelling from the newly refurbished airport.

Airport workers are also offered a corporate rate and can benefit from off-peak periods during gaps in the flight schedule.

Bannatyne is waiting to see how successful the spa is before considering any further sites.

"We'll continue to monitor customers' demands to ascertain if we need to roll out extra treatments that aren't offered," said Karen Wilkinson, operations director at Bannatyne



PHOTO: BANNATYNE

**We'll monitor customers' demands to ascertain if we need to roll out extra treatments**

Karen Wilkinson

The company is cross-marketing its other spas and health club memberships to airport customers through both fixed and digital options within the airport terminal. Staff will also recommend venues and offerings within the Bannatyne portfolio.

More: [http://lei.sr/m2C7V\\_H](http://lei.sr/m2C7V_H)

## Second site for Anthony Joshua-backed BXR

**B**outique boxing gym brand BXR London has opened its second full-service club in London.

BXR City opened on 22 February 2022 on the 25th floor of the tallest tower in the UK and Europe – 22 Bishopsgate.

Marketed as “the highest gym in the City of London”, the club follows the opening of the first flagship BXR in Marylebone, London in 2017.

BXR plans to open a third club in London later this year, located at the iconic Battersea Power Station.

The brand is also rolling out its pay-to-train Sweat by BXR studio concept, with one located at the Marylebone club, another site at Canary Wharf and one in Qatar, at the Burj Doha. Further sites are planned for Greece and Dubai.



**We continue to look for more standalone Sweat by BXR sites**

Alex Nicholl

BXR was founded in 2017 and counts former world heavyweight champion, Anthony Joshua, as one of its backers.

Alex Nicholl, MD of Sweat by BXR, said: “We continue to look for more standalone Sweat by BXR sites.”

More: [http://lei.sr/Y5t7Q\\_H](http://lei.sr/Y5t7Q_H)



BXR is growing both its brands

## Stay strong, live long – all strength training helps

**S**pending just 30-60 minutes a week on muscle strengthening exercises can significantly reduce the risk of dying prematurely from all causes.

A new global analysis of 16 studies conducted over three decades suggests that lifting weights, doing push-ups or “heavy gardening” each week could help reduce the risk of dying prematurely by as much as a fifth.

The study, published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, was conducted by a team of researchers in Japan. It found that 30 to 60 minutes of strength training every week is linked to a 10 to 20 per cent lower risk of premature death from all causes, and from heart disease and cancer.

The analysis used studies with participant numbers varying from 4,000 to 480,000, with participants’ age ranging from 18 to 97.

According to the study authors, the effect of strength training



30 minutes of weekly strength training was linked to lower risk of premature death

was particularly effective if combined with aerobic exercise.

“Engaging in muscle-strengthening activities was associated with a lower risk of all-cause mortality and major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), cancers, diabetes and lung cancer in particular,” the research team wrote in the paper.

“However, the influence of a higher volume of muscle-strengthening activities on all-cause mortality, CVD and total cancer is unclear.

“In addition, the combination of muscle-strengthening and aerobic activities may provide a greater benefit for reducing all-cause mortality.”

More: [http://lei.sr/7Z5a8\\_H](http://lei.sr/7Z5a8_H)

## Exercise slows the development of Parkinson's

**P**eople with early-stage Parkinson's should do regular exercise to slow down the progression of the disease.

The finding comes from a six-year study that followed 237 people who were developing Parkinson's.

Participants had their exercise levels measured and their verbal and memory skills were assessed using common cognitive tests.

People who got at least four hours of moderate-to-vigorous exercise a week had a slower decline in balancing

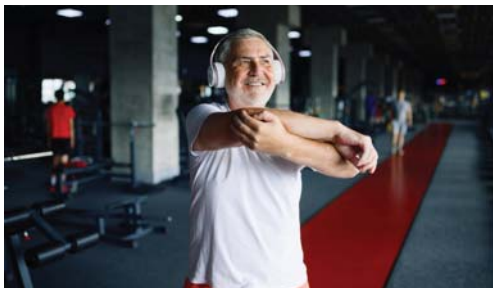


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANANDI SONG

The study suggests it's never too late to start an exercise programme



PHOTO: RESEARCHMATE

**To slow down the disease, it's more important to keep exercising than be active in the first place**

Kazuto Tsukita

and walking five years later, compared to those who were physically inactive.

Crucially, people's physical activity level at the start of the study was not associated with the progression of their Parkinson's later on.

Study author Kazuto Tsukita, of Kyoto University in Japan, said: "Our results are exciting because

they suggest it's never too late for those with Parkinson's to start an exercise programme.

"To slow down the disease, it was more important to keep exercising than it was to be active at the beginning of the disease."

More: [http://lei.sr/u9c5h\\_H](http://lei.sr/u9c5h_H)

## Episodic memory improves in active people



PHOTO: LIDENNA

Exercising three times a week could help with episodic memory

**A**ll adults can prevent declines in episodic memory with regular exercise.

Researchers led by psychologists at the University of Pittsburgh investigated more than 1,279 studies, eventually narrowing them down to just 36 that met specific criteria which were then analysed.

The search was limited to particular groups and age brackets, as well as a specific kind of rigorous experimental setup.

They focused specifically on episodic memory, which deals with events that happened to a person in the past and is supported by a part of the brain that's known to benefit from exercise.

The results suggested that exercising around three times a week for at least four months reaps benefits.



PHOTO: LIDENNA

**We found that intervening earlier is better."**

Sarah Aghajyan

Lead author Sarah Aghajyan from the University of Pittsburgh said: "We found there were greater improvements in memory among those age 55 to 68 years, compared to those who are 69 to 85 years old — so intervening earlier is better.

More: [http://lei.sr/C7r2c\\_H](http://lei.sr/C7r2c_H)



# Join W3Fit in 2022

## Where Business Meets Wellness



Premier hosted buyer event connecting owners and operators from Europe's top health, fitness, and leisure clubs and hotels with executives from global supplier companies innovating the fitness industry through pre-scheduled one-on-one meetings, education, and networking.



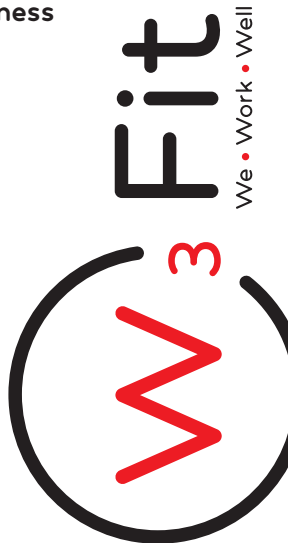
We are looking forward to meeting with suppliers face to face again so the news of We Work Well launching W3Fit for our industry is fantastic. We look forward to being part of the inaugural event.

Kevin Yates, CEO, TRIB3

It is great to hear about the launch of W3Fit, where industry leaders can meet, network and form everlasting friendships. We look forward to joining what surely will be a must attend event in our calendar.



Dave Wright, Creator & CEO, MYZONE



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David Zarb-Jenkins

Co-founder W3Fit EMEA  
david@weworkwellevents.com



# LEE MATTHEWS

**New products, new motivations and a new vision.**

**The MD of Fitness First UK speaks to Kate Cracknell about reinventing the business as a standalone enterprise**

**You've been at Fitness First since 2006, so have been on quite a journey...**

I feel incredibly fortunate. Honestly, I feel like I've worked in lots of different businesses, albeit under the same name, and it's been brilliant.

I joined as general manager, then moved to be regional manager, in a club company that at the time was the largest in the world.

The point came when the company began to shrink in size and we went through a CVA in the UK, but the strategic decisions that had to be made – the new ownership, the major global rebrand – I'd never been part of anything like that before and it was an interesting experience.

After the merger with DW Sports in 2016, I was one of two directors who were asked to stay

on at the combined DW Fitness First Group and this brought with it my first real experience of retail. We had 121 gyms, 90 retail stores and an e-commerce business across three different brands: DW Sports, DW Fitness and Fitness First.

I did actually leave the business in 2018 – joining what was then WeightWatchers as it transitioned to become WW – a digital wellness business. But then Scott Best approached me with a new role at DW Fitness First and I re-joined the company in November 2019.

Three or four months later [DW Sports Fitness went into administration, with the assets being acquired by Mike Ashley's Everlasting chain, while Fitness First continued to trade as a standalone business].

The lockdown had hit the company hard and the retail side of DW Sports Fitness had been hit





## There's real energy and excitement in the Fitness First business

The four Fitness First pillars are classes, PT, unique equipment and workouts

hard. It also struggled with some of its historic rental agreements. This was ultimately what led to DW Sports Fitness going into administration.

### **How did Fitness First emerge intact when DW went into administration?**

Although the public-facing brand was always DW Fitness First, the two businesses were run as entirely separate entities. We did have some centralised

support functions and head office departments, so unfortunately these people were impacted when DW Sports Fitness went into administration in August 2020. But the Fitness First business itself – the 43 clubs and the people we employed – were unaffected.

Of course it was still tough, but looking on the positive side of things now, as a smaller business we can be nimble, and more tailored. Clearly it's difficult at the moment from a cashflow perspective, because ▶

- we're not back to where we were pre-COVID: we have to be very sensible about what we're spending. But we can certainly move forward. There's real energy and excitement in the business.

#### **How has Fitness First been faring since the start of the pandemic?**

Even though our clubs are mostly in London and the South East, it's a 'tale of two estates' when it comes to our recovery and growth.

We split our estate into three categories: 21 residential clubs, where the majority of members live in the area; 18 city clubs, where a very high proportion of members work near the club; and six city & residential clubs – Baker Street and Camden, for example – where there's a crossover of residential and corporate in the same area.

Our residential and our city and residential clubs are recovering well. They've been growing every single month since we opened in April last year – even now, during Omicron – and are getting back to a strong position. We aren't back at pre-COVID membership in any of these clubs yet, but a lot of them are getting close and they're all profitable again.

Unfortunately, in the other part of our estate – our city clubs – it's been hard going all the way through. A lot of our city members are still on freeze. It means they haven't cancelled of course, which is great, but we're not getting any revenue from them at the moment and we obviously don't know when they'll come back.

#### **Have there been any positives from the city?**

There are pockets that have done well: a handful of city clubs where, for example, a local business has brought the whole office back. In those locations, we've seen decent returns and joiner numbers.

Last November was also really interesting for us. We saw a spike in September and October, which was fantastic and then November was a record month. It was our best ever November in the history of Fitness First, both in terms of returners and new joiners. Even in the city, we joined more new members in November than we did in September and October, which never happens. We thought this was it – that it was all happening again – then along came Omicron.

We do believe the city will come back, though. We just don't know exactly when. Clearly there's going to be some hybrid working, so we need to understand what that means for us – how we fit into workers' lives if they're only in the office two or three days a week. But we do genuinely believe our city clubs will be profitable again; some already are, by the way, although a number are not.

#### **Have member motivations and behaviours changed?**

Some people still don't feel ready to go to the gym, and Omicron certainly didn't help. However, in our residential and our city and residential clubs, our January 2022 sales figures are only 1 per cent behind where we were in January 2020. It seems caution among



January 2022 sales figures are only 1% behind January 2020

“

We're trying to address every possible pain point, putting the member first and the commercial impact second

TRAX

COVID has potentially created a bigger market for exercise





## November 2021 was a record month – our best ever November in the history of Fitness First, both in terms of returners and new joiners

- some is being offset by other people thinking more about health and fitness after the last couple of years.

People are joining who haven't been a member before, and that gives us cause for optimism. None of us knows when we'll see the end of COVID, but it does feel as though there might be a bigger market now than there was before and that's really interesting.

We're seeing an increase in visit frequency among our active members, too. Pre-COVID, we had some members who hadn't been into the club for weeks, even months in some cases. We don't really have that any more. A high percentage of our active members are using the club every single week.

Since we re-opened, we're also averaging 10 per cent higher yield from our new joiners compared to pre-COVID, all from membership dues.

### **You increased yield? Didn't you lower your prices?**

There was a bit of misunderstanding in the media over what we did with our pricing last year: all the headlines about us reducing our prices by 30 per cent and introducing a new, flexible monthly membership.

In fact, we always had a one-month membership, which could either be an upfront cash payment for a month – designed with people such as business travellers in mind – or else a recurring monthly membership with no contract. In our tier 1 clubs, our highest tier, both options previously cost £139 a month.

Since Q4 last year, the two options are now priced differently: the 'one month and done' option is still at £139, but the rolling monthly membership now only costs £109 a month. We recognise that people aren't in a position to make long-term decisions over gym membership, as they still don't know what their working patterns are going to be post-COVID, so we wanted to address that pain point and offer more flexibility.

This was also the reason for us introducing a six-month contract in April 2021 – priced at £99 a month – to sit alongside our 12-month option.

### **So, how have you increased yield?**

Since April 2021, for new members only, we've looked at opportunities to increase prices tactically where

### **KICKSTART SUCCESSES**

"Last year, we signed up for the Kickstart initiative, the government's scheme to try and bring young adults into certain industries," says Matthews.

"There was no cost to us – for a six-month contract, the government refunded 25 hours' pay per trainee per week – but we did have to show what we could do in terms of qualifications and skills. There were very strict criteria.

"The qualification we offered was Level 2 instructor, and we partnered with two training providers to deliver it. We had no idea if people would stick with it, but of the 46 young adults who came onboard as fitness experience trainees, 42 completed their Level 2 qualification by the end of the six months.

"Even better, all 42 have stayed on with us, some part-time and some full-time. We're incredibly proud of that."

we felt this was appropriate. For example, over the last couple of years of investment in our facilities, products and services, some clubs have moved up a tier. This has allowed us to increase prices for new joiners. We've also reviewed historical membership types that, for example, offered an unnecessary discount. Again, this has just been for new joiners – there have been no price rises for existing members.

But the biggest driver has been the change in our joining proposition, which has significantly enhanced the member experience. Fitness First always used to be

very acquisition-focused, with employed membership consultants in every club. Those consultants have now gone. You can still join in-club, of course, but over 75 per cent of our members now join remotely. So there's nobody tucked away in an office any more: you go into one of our clubs now and every single employee is member-facing. They're also all fitness qualified, and there to provide a service to the member.

So, we've made some bold moves, but we're not seeing a drop-off in conversion. People are seeing the value in what we do, which comes down to the priorities of our new core customer:

#### **Who is your new core customer?**

We've reassessed who we are as a brand, our values and purpose, what differentiates us and who our



A high percentage of active members use their Fitness First club every week



## We've reassessed who we are as a brand, our values and purpose, what differentiates us and who our core customer is

core customer is. Our business is very different now from when it was part of DW Fitness First, so we've reworked our entire strategy and involved the whole team in the process. The business has been reinvented.

We aim to be fully inclusive, obviously, but our core target audience is the fitness enthusiast who's already active and interested in a wellness lifestyle. Lifestyle comes first for this group, price second. These aren't people we need to coax into fitness: they just need to find the right product, service and brand.

For these individuals, if you get it right, they'll come to you regularly, stay with you and refer their friends. To ensure we do get it right, we're embedding a new member-centric ethos across our business.

### Tell us about this new ethos

We have a new vision: to be the gym that puts members at the heart of everything we do, creating fitness-rich experiences wherever they train.

That vision breaks down into three parts, the first of which is putting members at the heart of everything we do – and I mean absolutely everything. Processes, systems, how people join, cancel or change their package, how we interact with members.

We're trying to find and address every single possible pain point of our members, always putting them first and the commercial impact second; and in most cases, the latter comes naturally if you get the former right anyway.

'Creating rich fitness experiences' is where we can genuinely stand out and be different in our physical product, provided we define the areas that can be unique to Fitness First across our four product pillars: classes, personal training, unique equipment and workouts.

With classes, for example, we'll create the right combination for each club. There may be some Les Mills in some clubs, but we also have amazing freelance instructors with loyal followings delivering their speciality, and we have our own signature classes: TraX, for example, our gym floor HIIT workout, launched last year and rolled out across our estate in September.

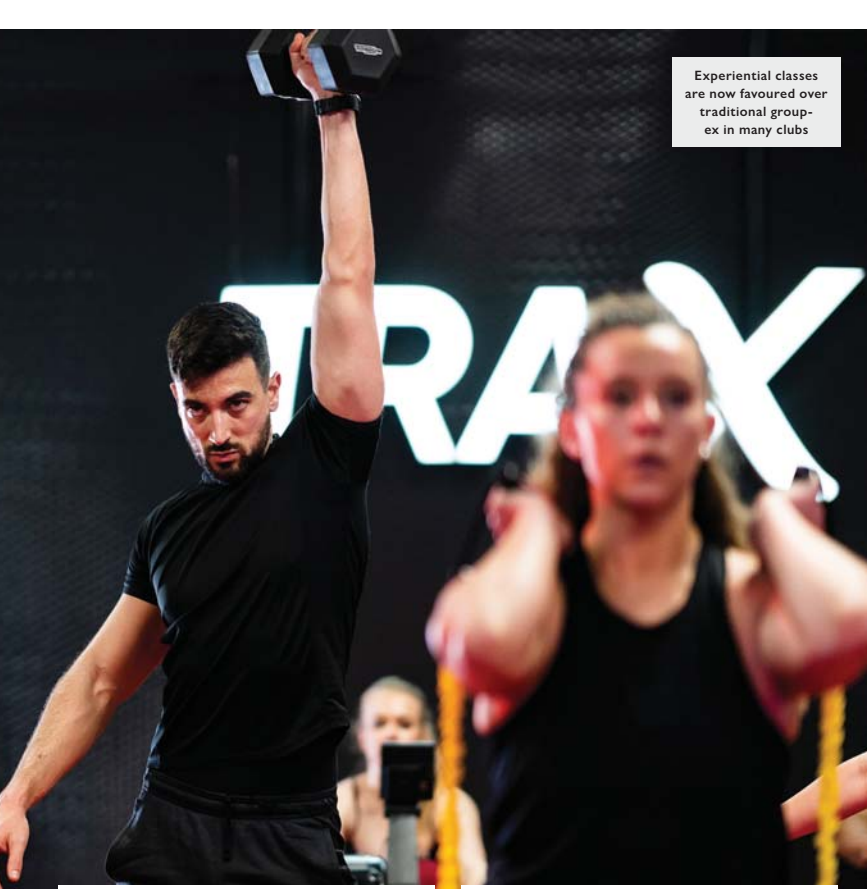
Finally, 'wherever they train' is recognising that things have changed, and that in a hybrid world we have to support members training outside of the gym as well as in it. So we launched a new FFX-branded app in May 2021, which is our 'everything' tool for members. It includes access to the club, class and PT booking, instruction on how to use equipment in the gym, challenges, tips, news, member comms and so on. It also includes on-demand content: all video-based for now, but we're looking at developing some audio content too.

### Any other trends shaping the way you do things?

Aside from digital, the two key trends for me – and these are both in-club trends – relate to free weights and classes. Everybody's using free weights these days, to the point that free weight areas almost can't get big enough. Our solution has been to blur the boundaries on our gym floor: between the open spaces of our Freestyle functional training zones, for example, and our free weights areas.

Squat racks, dead lift platforms and Olympic lifting platforms are as popular as ever, but they take up a lot of space. In some clubs, we've therefore moved them into Freestyle – where they logically fit very well – and made space for more dumbbells and benches in free weights.

We could probably cut down slightly on traditional cardio equipment if we needed to,



Experiential classes  
are now favoured over  
traditional group-  
ex in many clubs

because it's being used for shorter bursts of HIIT. Not so many people are doing 20 minutes or half an hour on a treadmill any more.

And then the second trend is the surging demand we're seeing for experiential classes. Traditional group exercise still has its place in some clubs, but in others it hasn't really any more. People are looking for boutique-style experiences in-club, whether that's Trax, Rox – our running plus boxing concept – or holistic classes such as yoga and pilates.

#### **What are your growth plans?**

It's hard for me to definitively answer this, because the owners of the business – still the Whelan family –

will determine our growth plans. We already opened two fantastic new clubs in 2021, in Bangor and Milton Keynes, bringing our total estate to 45 locations.

Both were former DW sites that came back as an opportunity, so we acquired, rebranded and re-opened them as Fitness First. We also spent £900k transforming our Wigan club, which again had originally been DW-branded but owned independently by the Whelan family, so it wasn't taken into administration.

It could change in the future, but certainly for the next few years I expect growth to be focused on organic openings where there's a real opportunity, specifically in areas of London where we can open tier 1 clubs that showcase all our new products. ●



# Transformation with TECHNOGYM

**BH Live has overhauled its Pyramids Leisure Centre in Portsmouth with support from Technogym, creating the area's most cutting edge venue**

**B**H Live has grown rapidly since 2010, operating leisure sites, sports and entertainment venues across Dorset, Hampshire and London. The operator won the wider Portsmouth contract in 2017, and partnered with Technogym in 2021 to breathe new life into the city's Pyramids Centre. Head of leisure, Rob Cunningham, describes the transformation.

"As a social enterprise, we focus on creating engaging experiences that improve local people's lives," he says. "Pyramids had been part of the Portsmouth landscape since the 1980s, but had fallen behind

The cycle studio is the 'jewel in the crown', with boutique-style classes using Technogym Group Cycle

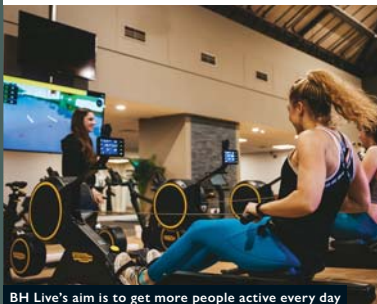
the times. With investment from Portsmouth City Council, we've created a really modern leisure centre offer with an incredible gym space and studios."

## Cutting-edge venue

The former Pyramids Centre featured a fun pool, a small gym, and a 1,200 capacity auditorium and events space. Together with investment from the Council, BH Live has transformed the pool area into a play and bounce facility and converted the events facilities into a cutting-edge health and fitness space.

Pyramid's new 10-zone fitness space within the gym illustrates BH Live's social promise of providing facilities that get more people more active every day. Rob and his team partnered with Technogym to design and kit out a space that meets the needs of all demographics under one roof.

"This is our first partnership with Technogym, and we're so impressed with the way the team embraced our vision," says Cunningham. "Technogym is a true partner, helping us define the 10 zones and class studios. As well as incredible equipment, we got the benefit of the company's insights and experience."



BH Live's aim is to get more people active every day





**We're so impressed  
with the way the  
Technogym team  
embraced our vision  
during this first  
partnership**



### The fitness space

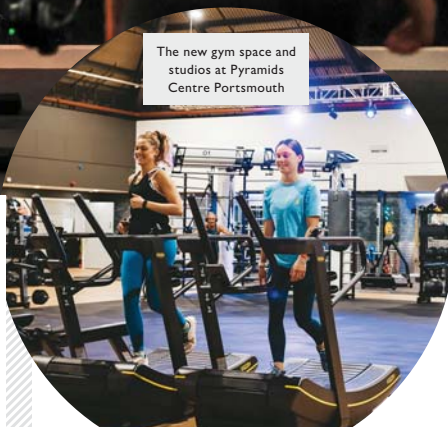
In the cardio zone, with its Technogym Excite Live equipment, users have the power to personalise their workout with Technogym Routines and Sessions and the option to get app integration, entertainment, and outdoor training scenarios.

Technogym Sessions provides an online trainer to deliver workouts based on members' goals. The virtual trainer guides them through one-on-one sessions with encouragement and suggestions for intensity, while Technogym Routines offers step-by-step guidance on how to perfect a variety of movements and exercises where the intensity is automatically set by the equipment.

The performance zone features Technogym Skillbike and Skillrow, which customers can use in their own time or enjoy as part of dedicated classes on the gym floor. The format is also proving popular with BH Live Active's Personal Trainers, who relish the opportunity to use the latest technology.

Then there's a resistance area, fully kitted out with Technogym Pure Strength machines and free weights, and a functional zone and stretch areas, making a comprehensive and high-end offering.

The new gym space and studios at Pyramids Centre Portsmouth



### Cutting edge studio classes

Pyramid's three studios were designed in collaboration with Technogym to give the site an undeniable USP.

For the Impact Studio, the team converted the former Glasshouse into a 40-person group exercise space with views of the Solent.

The HIIT studio features Technogym Bench and Skillmill, a pairing that allows trainers to programme varied classes combining strength and conditioning. The addition of this studio enables BH Live to offer a bolt-on to its standard health and fitness membership.

**Technogym is a true partner – as well as incredible equipment, we got the benefit of the company's insights and experience**

**The Pyramids now has ten zones of fitness**

The jewel in the crown is the bespoke cycle studio, which offers customers boutique-style indoor cycling via Technogym Group Cycle. Customers can enjoy FreeBeat or Peak classes, while the studio is also used to run virtual classes to optimise the use of the space. Feature lighting and a huge projector displaying customer data help BH Live promote its group cycle classes as an exciting new offer.

Group Cycle presents three experiences all within a single setting. Members can embrace the music-first experience of the FreeBeat Class, the data-driven performance ride of the Peak Class or the flexibility of Group Cycle Virtual with world-class instructors – all within a single environment.

### Creating USPs with equipment and technology

"Our members love the connectivity and flexibility of the Excite Live cardio equipment, and feedback for the Skillrow and Skillbike gym floor classes is excellent," says Cunningham, "but it's the HIIT studio and group cycling that has proven our biggest success. The cutting edge products mean we can put together innovative offers that appeal to many more people."

### Enhancing the member journey with Mywellness

When BH Live partnered with Technogym, the team discovered how Technogym Mywellness could enhance its existing membership app. With the BH Live Active app linking with Mywellness, the entire customer journey is seamlessly embedded and customers benefit from an improved level of data, connectivity, and support.

Integrating Mywellness into the existing app means the BH Live team can educate members on the features and benefits of the Technogym machines, and streamline their marketing messages through the app.

When BH Live took over the Pyramids site, the team wanted to create a modern, appealing venue that welcomed every possible type of user, from GP referral to amateur sportspeople. "With Technogym's help we've created something we're all very proud of," says Cunningham. "Not only have we brought this centre right up to date, but we've also created accessible and exciting offers that promote better health and wellbeing."

**More: [www.technogym.com](http://www.technogym.com)**

**The HIIT studio features Technogym Bench**





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**TECHNOGYM®**



Operators should audit how inclusive their facilities are

PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK / FRANK STOK FOOTAGE

## Everyone's talking about Disability

Research shows people with disabilities and long term conditions are much less active, yet there's a desire among these populations to be more active. What are the barriers and how can operators remove them? Kath Hudson reports

According to a 2014 report, adults with disabilities were much more likely to be limited in participating in leisure activities (27.9 per cent) compared to non-disabled (2.8 per cent). However, according to the Activity Alliance, 70 per cent want to be more active but face physical, logistical and psychological barriers.

According to NHS England figures, 43 per cent of the UK population has a long-term health condition, making them more likely to be inactive. As the fitness sector aspires to work more closely with the healthcare sector, to relieve the strain on the NHS and bring the benefits of physical activity to a wider audience, it's important that operators audit how inclusive

their facilities are, both in terms of accessibility and culture.

This is not a niche population: around 15 per cent of the global population lives with some form of disability. It's a sobering thought that any of us could have a life-changing injury in the blink of an eye.

This is an important issue, so where to start?

## Tanni Grey-Thompson

### UK Active

**T**he physical activity sector has an essential role in narrowing the disparities and inequalities faced by disabled people today, many of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. UK Active's vision is to develop a sector that is freely accessed and utilised by all, enabling everyone to be active and participate in whatever capacity they wish.

We must recognise this moment as an unmissable opportunity to do more for disabled people, as part of our shared ambition for growth.

There are those people who simply enjoy their visits to their local leisure centre or gym, but there are also those who rely on our sector's services to learn crucial life skills, to socialise with those around them, to increase their connections with their community, and to improve their physical and mental health. Consider those who are learning to swim, who need to practice functional fitness, or who are using exercise as part of rehabilitation or to ease the effects of an impairment – physical activity is an indispensable part of their lives.

Everyone Can is an ongoing agenda from UK Active, supported by Sport England, to set a collaborative tone for inclusivity and accessibility across the sector. As the sector's trade body, we're uniquely placed to deliver on this, drawing on our partnerships to raise awareness; to grow our relationship with the disability sector for true collaboration, and to convene operators and suppliers to share learnings and evidence.

As part of these ambitions, we've undertaken a sector-wide



PHOTO: TANNI GREY-THOMPSON



We must recognise  
this moment as  
an unmissable  
opportunity to do more  
for disabled people



PHOTO: TANNI GREY-THOMPSON

consultation to examine the physical activity landscape for disabled people, with a focus on our sector's services. We began 2022 with a series of roundtables bringing our members together with organisations from the disability sector to progress this conversation.

Over the coming year we will deliver insights specific to fitness and leisure, including the needs and motivations of disabled people and the recommended solutions for the sector to implement. Our findings to date show that the

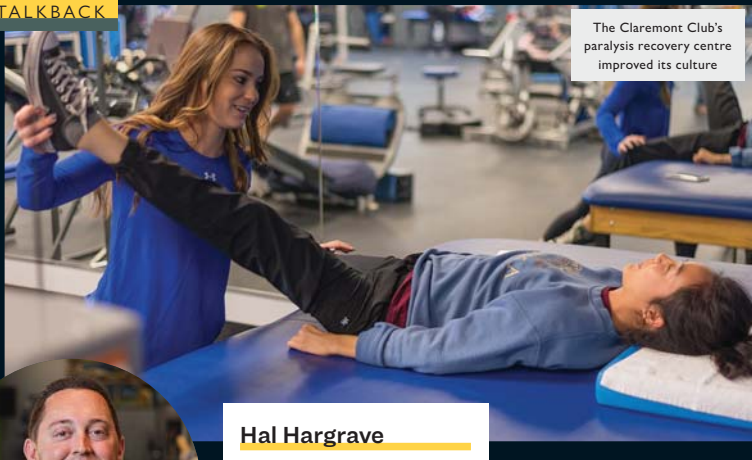
sector must enhance levels of customer service and engage better with disabled people, such as providing more information to consumers and communicating that facilities are open to all.

The importance of gathering and reporting usage levels and behaviours among disabled people is another strong theme.

Our sector wants to continue improving the standards for disabled people in every community, and this collaborative approach will be fundamental for success.



The Claremont Club's paralysis recovery centre improved its culture



## Hal Hargrave

### The Perfect Step

It has never been more important to acknowledge diversity and inclusion. A lot of operators talk about how their facility is diverse and inclusive, but often they've stopped far short of making their club welcoming to all populations. An inclusive club is more than just following ADA protocols, by doing things such as having push buttons on doors, wide doorways and accessible bathrooms. Creating a place that is welcoming to all has to involve programming, layout, staff training, key initiatives, values and the culture of your club. In short, everything has to be evaluated.

Constructing your gym so there's appropriate space in between the equipment for people with mobility challenges to transfer in and out of their wheelchairs is a great start. As is getting adapted equipment in to fill up unused spaces and training staff so they're able to adequately assist those who are in need from a wide range of disabilities, from physical to mental.

The culture you create is important too. If diversity and inclusion are important to your club, you need to put this into the mindset of

your members, so they can buy into this narrative as well. When the Claremont Club in California changed its culture by launching a paralysis recovery centre called The Perfect Step, non-disabled members embraced the change, proving that investing in inclusivity doesn't have to be bad for the bottom line.

In the year after The Perfect Step was launched, member attrition across the entire membership decreased by 8 per cent and staff churn went from 12.5 per cent to 8 per cent. The club estimated it recouped US\$500,000 in membership payments and US\$500,000 of secondary spend and other revenue in the following year.

A survey of members said they enjoyed the unique sense of cultural values the club had created and liked to raise their families in that environment. Staff said their work felt more meaningful.

The pandemic has taught us all that there needs to be serious consideration given to bridge the gap between medical and fitness and that population health needs to be prioritised.



When the Claremont Club in California changed its culture by launching a paralysis recovery centre, non-disabled members embraced the change

Malik says gym staff lack confidence to deal with disability

## Kamran Mallick

### Disability Rights UK

**D**isabled people want to be active, take part in society and work out in gyms, but face many barriers: mainly economic, physical – and people's attitudes. One of the biggest barriers is the income gap between disabled and non-disabled people. That said, the purple pound is worth approximately £249bn in the UK alone, and the fitness industry should be fighting for a share.

The second major barrier is the lack of access. Only 67 of Britain's almost 7,500 gyms are accredited by the Activity Alliance's Inclusive Fitness Initiative: less than 1 per cent of all gyms. Many have accessible entrances, but have not given any thought to how disabled people will use the equipment. Many wheelchair users need gym equipment that allows them to stay in their wheelchairs. Some blind people need voice-activated equipment. People with learning disabilities may need extra time with a coach so they can learn how to use the kit.



The purple pound is worth approximately £249bn in the UK alone, and the fitness industry should be fighting for a share

Negative attitudes are also a big barrier. Gyms can be intimidating, but they become really offputting if you add negative attitudes towards disability. We hear from our community that negative attitudes towards their impairment or being treated like a burden or afterthought can dishearten even the most confident person.

Many gym staff lack confidence in how to support a disabled person to use a particular machine or adapt physical activity. However, there is training available, which should become a core skill for at least some of the staff working on any shift.

In the end, the industry must stop treating disabled people as an afterthought. Engage with this population, ensure your workforce is as diverse as the community you serve and always design inclusively. Do this and you have the potential to take a slice of the purple pound and show disabled people you mean business.

Wheelchair users need easier access to gym equipment



HEAD FROM BRAVE STOCK PHOTO

Newly-disabled Casey Newton faces too many barriers at her local gym



PHOTO: CG YOGA AND NUTRITION

## Casey Newton

### CG Yoga and Nutrition

As a newly-disabled person, following a mountain bike accident, the gym environment is even more anxiety-inducing than it was previously. There are barriers for me at my mainstream gym, mainly around space and equipment.

As I'm unable to transfer onto the usual gym seats, the equipment I'm able to use from my wheelchair is very limited. It would be helpful if seats on gym equipment were removable, or even fold up, so wheelchair users could use the machines from their chair. Some adapted gym equipment would be even better.

At my gym, the only piece of equipment I can use is a handbike with a removable seat. As I can't remove the seat by myself, I can't use it independently. The same with the pulley machine – I can use it, but not on my own if the pulleys are left high.

Gym staff who are happy to assist me would make me feel more confident about going to the gym, as at the moment I don't feel I can go alone. It would be great if there were inductions and programmes for people with

disabilities, to demonstrate alternative ways to use the equipment.

Layout is another tricky issue. Wider spaces would help, as there is very limited space to manoeuvre my wheelchair between equipment. My gym has limited mat space and if

this is already taken, I'm not able to access the weights. It would be great to have dedicated floor space for wheelchairs, with easy access to the weight rack. I really enjoy the gym and with just a few changes it could become an accessible space for all.



PHOTO: CG YOGA AND NUTRITION

I really enjoy the gym and with just a few changes it could become an accessible space for all

66

Research found 69 per cent of people living with long-term health conditions would like to be more active

## Michelle Roberts

### We are Undefeatable

**T**here are a number of reasons why people with disabilities or long term conditions may not feel comfortable in a gym environment.

Foremost are condition or symptom-specific barriers, such as fear of increasing pain or fatigue or making a condition worse.

Self-consciousness is also a significant barrier, compounded by the industry's messaging and imagery,

which is often still geared towards communicating sport and exercise using people dressed in sportswear, who look fit. This turns off people who don't perceive themselves as 'sporty' or relate to this ideal.

Barriers may also include difficulty in navigating around a facility or

knowing how to use the equipment. Others say they worry about people's reactions, for example, staff not understanding their conditions, symptoms or difficulties, or a lack of confidence in finding the right activities for them.

Operators need to be aware that one size does not fit all. A person-centred approach is essential. While exercise professionals may assume they need to be an expert in many conditions and impairments to be able to support this audience, it can simply be about asking the right questions and listening to the person, so that they can become more informed and have a better understanding of the person's wishes and needs.

There is a clear aspiration among people with health conditions to do more physical activity. Research conducted by DJS Research as part of the We Are Undefeatable campaign found 69 per cent of people living with long term health conditions would like to be more active. ●



Roberts says self-consciousness can be a major barrier

PHOTO: WE ARE UNDEFEATABLE

A person-centred focus is needed to approach disability



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANUSCHKA

Disabled people are experts – consult with them or employ them



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JAN ALBAH

## Making it happen

Our experts give tips on how to create an inclusive strategy

- For most people, even those with long term conditions, physical activity is safe. The World Health Organization indicates in its *2020 Physical Activity Guidelines* that routine pre-screening of people with medical conditions is generally unnecessary ([www.hcmmag.com/WHOPAG](http://www.hcmmag.com/WHOPAG)).
- Understand the audience better: The Activity Alliance ([www.activityalliance.org.uk](http://www.activityalliance.org.uk)) and We are Undefeatable ([www.weareundefeatable.co.uk](http://www.weareundefeatable.co.uk)) offer valuable resources.
- Disabled people are the experts – consult with them and even employ them.
- Identify local organisations and groups to work with, such as the local branch of the Disabled People's Organisation, which are sometimes known as a Centre for Independent Living ([www.hcmmag.com/DPO](http://www.hcmmag.com/DPO)).
- Improve communications and connections and enhance inclusivity of messages, using language such as 'movement' and 'activity' rather than 'exercise' or 'fitness'.
- Upskill your workforce, ensuring staff understand the audience. Resources such as UK Coaching's guide can be useful ([www.ukcoaching.org](http://www.ukcoaching.org)).
- Improve accessibility, ensuring that wheelchair access is enabled wherever possible. The Dementia Friendly Sport and Physical Activity Guide from the Alzheimer's Society ([www.HCMMag.com/DFSPAG](http://www.HCMMag.com/DFSPAG)) takes a very broad view of accessibility, so is a great place for operators to start.
- Focus on supporting people to overcome barriers and understand what matters to them, and how being more active can really help them. For example, the possibility of increased mobility, independence, and better quality of life.



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*Prehab4Cancer puts health clubs and leisure centres on the frontline of cancer care and the preventative health agenda*



Andy King

# THE POWER OF PREHAB

**A pioneering prehab programme is helping thousands of cancer sufferers achieve better health and surgical outcomes, as HCM reports**

**A** pioneering exercise, nutrition and wellbeing programme supporting cancer patients in preparation for treatment and surgeries is expanding into east and mid-Cheshire following a successful two-year rollout across Greater Manchester.

Prehab4Cancer (P4C) is one of the first prehabilitation and recovery programmes for cancer patients in the UK and is reporting significant results in terms of improving surgical outcomes, with all the benefits this brings to both patients and the bottom line.

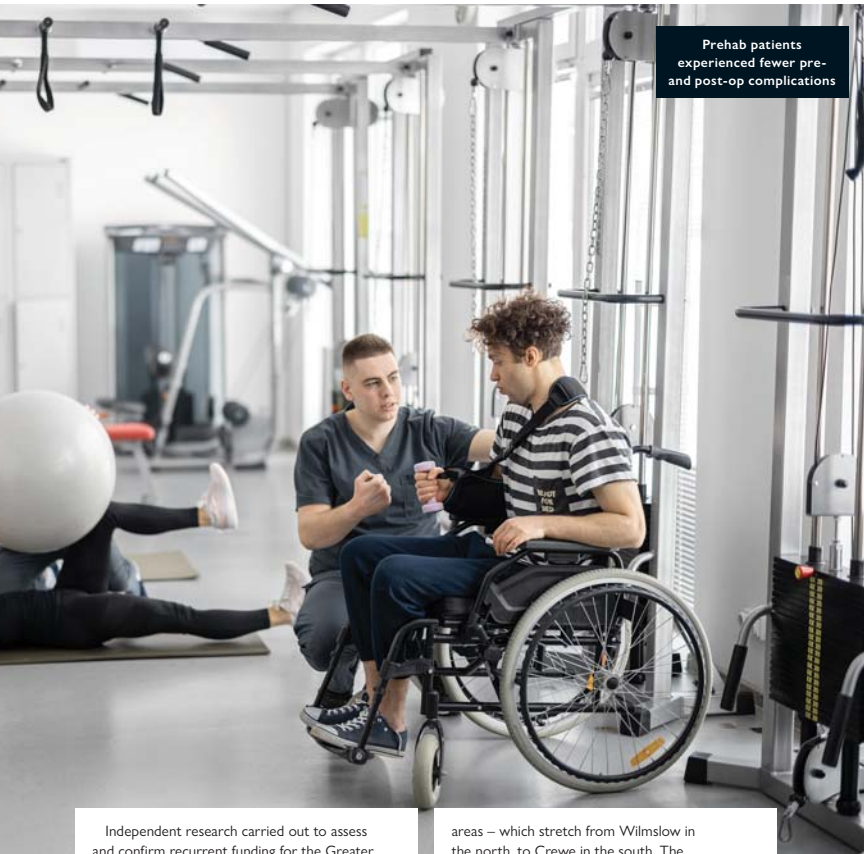
An analysis of outcomes has found that prehab patients who've gone through the programme spend an average of 36 hours less time in hospital and 10 hours less in critical care, releasing 550 ward-beds-days and 146 critical care-beds-days.

Research into the programme has shown – for example – that bed-days 'released' by the shorter stays of 1,000 colorectal prehab patients enabled 179 additional patients to access surgery in a timely way, while bed-days 'released' by prehab patients actually covered the entire annual cost involved in setting up and delivering the P4C programme.

Patients also experienced fewer post-operative complications and enjoyed a better recovery when assessed against four efficacy benchmarks: the commonly-used six-minute walk test to measure aerobic capacity and endurance; the World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS); the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) and the descriptive system for health-related quality of life, known as EQ5D.



Prehab patients  
experienced fewer pre-  
and post-op complications



Independent research carried out to assess and confirm recurrent funding for the Greater Manchester scheme also found that P4C hospital patients enjoyed a better recovery.

### About Prehab4Cancer

The initiative is the result of a partnership between GM Cancer Alliance and GM Active. Through the programme, cancer patients engage in exercise and get nutrition and wellbeing assessments and interventions before, during and after their treatment.

Since its inception in 2019, P4C has supported 2,500 patients in Greater Manchester and is now aiming to provide for approximately 400 patients living in east and mid-Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

areas – which stretch from Wilmslow in the north, to Crewe in the south. The programme is offered to patients with lung, colorectal (bowel) and oesophago-gastric (often referred to as upper GI) cancers.

Kirsty Rowlinson-Groves, P4C programme manager, told HCM: “Patients are referred to us from the clinical teams at hospitals where they’re being treated. We assign them an exercise specialist, who then undertakes a baseline assessment that defines the scope of the prehabilitation process.

“That’s all about optimising the patient’s cardiovascular fitness and working on their muscular strength,” says Rowlinson-Groves. “We do a lot of strength training to build and optimise muscle, as we know good





*Time after surgery or treatment is a 'teachable moment' when people realise their health is more important and are drawn to healthier options and healthier lifestyles*

muscular strength will support function and independence following surgery and treatment. We inspire them to push themselves physically to get in the best condition, so their health and wellbeing is optimised for treatment.

"After prehab they're reassessed, and that allows us and them to see what improvements have been gained. They then go for surgery and we aim to invite them back for a post-op assessment around four to six weeks after this."

#### **Co-designed and recurrently funded**

P4C is a co-designed transformation programme which has been developed as the result of a partnership between GM Active and GM Cancer. What began as a test project in 2019 has now secured recurrent funding to safeguard its future, following an independent evaluation report.

GM Active is a collective of 12 leisure and community organisations across Greater Manchester all sharing the same vision – to get more people physically active so they can live healthy, happy and longer lives. It's a not-for-profit community interest company managing the majority of publicly-owned leisure and physical activity services on behalf of the 10 local authorities in Greater Manchester.

Andy King, chair of GM Active, says: "This programme is designed to empower patients to take an active role in their cancer care. It prepares patients for treatment and surgery, and aims to provide positive outcomes for patients during recovery and beyond.

"Prehab4Cancer demonstrates just what can be achieved with structured and imaginative co-design and collaborative working between



Instructor Jack Worsley delivers Prehab4Cancer sessions at a GM Active gym



Patients who need to exercise at home are sent resistance bands in the post

## Assessing impact

### Prehab4Cancer reports its first set of headline results

- \* On average, prehab patients spent 36 hours less in hospital
- \* On average, prehab patients spent 10 hours less in critical care while in hospital
- \* These shorter hospital stays 'released' 550 ward-beds-days and 146 critical care-beds-days, resulting in increased capacity and patient flow
- \* The bed-days 'released' by the shorter stays of 1,000 colorectal prehab patients enabled 179 additional patients to access surgery in a timely way
- \* The bed-days 'released' per prehab patient covered the costs involved in setting up and delivering P4C for a year
- \* Patients experienced fewer post-operative complications and enjoyed a better recovery when assessed against four efficacy benchmarks:
  - The commonly used six-minute walk test to measure aerobic capacity and endurance
  - The World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS)
  - The International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)
  - The descriptive system for health-related quality of life, known as EQ5D

*This sample represents results from colorectal patients*





More than 2,500 patients have been referred to the scheme so far

► clinical and physical activity providers. We hope this approach can be applied to other health conditions and services, so physical activity can be embedded throughout every relevant care pathway of the NHS.

"It puts our gyms and leisure facilities on the frontline of cancer care and the preventative health agenda, and speaks directly to our stated aim of getting more people physically active so they can live healthy, happy and longer lives."

The new Cheshire programme is a pilot scheme running until October 2022 and being funded through the Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance. GM Active has set up a delivery partnership with Everybody Sport and Leisure and Brio Leisure Trusts to allow the P4C team to deliver the scheme through their sites.

#### Face-to-face or remote, patients choose

A 10-strong P4C team consisting mainly of exercise and fitness specialists guide patients through their programmes and patients accepting a referral to P4C can choose how to participate in their exercise prescription.

Face-to-face sessions are delivered in leisure centres run by GM Active members in Greater Manchester, and centres managed by Everybody Sport and Leisure and Brio Leisure who are providing facilities in Cheshire.

The programme also has a remote model where patients can choose to exercise at home. A tailored home exercise programme is posted out to them, along with resistance bands for strength training, with sessions supported by their assigned exercise specialist, either over the phone or via a video call.

The remote programme also offers online exercise classes, YouTube channels and 12 live exercise classes per week that patients can join, along with other patients at home. All options are supported by exercise specialists and are available to Greater Manchester and Cheshire patients.

Since January 2021 alone, 1,130 patients have been referred to P4C in Greater Manchester, with an acceptance rate of 82 per cent. With the pilot scheme in its infancy in Cheshire, 20 patients are currently taking part.

#### From prehab, to rehab to healthier life

Patients are contacted to make arrangements to start their rehab about a month after having surgery or ending treatment. If they agree, they're assessed and then embark on a three-month rehab period, designed to build them up physically.

Once that period is over, patients are discharged into community programmes, often at the leisure centres where they did their prehab. They're also directed to community and volunteer organisations, such as allotment societies or walking groups, who can help to keep them fit and active. Rowlinson-Groves says: "This time after surgery or treatment is sometimes called a 'teachable moment'. If people have come through cancer treatment or cancer surgery, their health is more important to them afterwards, so healthier options and healthier lifestyles are what they're drawn to.

"In our 12-weeks of rehab, our team's role is to educate and build behaviour change and increase the patient's confidence in making healthier, more active choices – giving them the confidence to access the services that will help them." ●

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Rick Stollmeyer spoke on building a wellness business post-COVID

PHOTO: MINDBODY

# Back to business

**Fitness software outfit Mindbody recently welcomed close to 1,000 attendees #IRL to its annual Bold Conference in sunny San Diego, California, as Lisa Starr reports**

**F**or many participants, it was their first trip on a plane or to a conference since before the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, but everyone quickly remembered how wonderful it was to be in the company of like-minded colleagues.

The conference theme – Unstoppable – was ever-present, as masks were worn, temperatures were taken, and the spacious ballroom and meeting spaces allowed everyone to spread out for the thought-provoking and inspiring presentations and educational sessions.

Co-founder and executive chair Rick Stollmeyer kicked off the conference in a session entitled 'The business of wellness in a post-COVID world'; Stollmeyer shared his individual thoughts and excerpts from his book *Building a Wellness Business that Lasts* and then was joined by experts in a panel discussion to discuss the opportunities that will define the fitness and wellness sector in the next decade.

Stollmeyer said we all need to harness our entrepreneurial spirit and skills to trade out of the current challenges and to thrive. He identified five key behaviours and characteristics that can get us there – authentic enthusiasm, grit, adaptability,

agile thinking and effective decision making. To be agile, we need to be constantly zooming in and zooming out when it comes to looking at our operations and businesses, so that we can keep track of the big picture and also the detail, he said. Too much of one or the other and we fail.

Effective decision-making requires that we listen to our heart, our head and our gut and balance all three before moving forward.

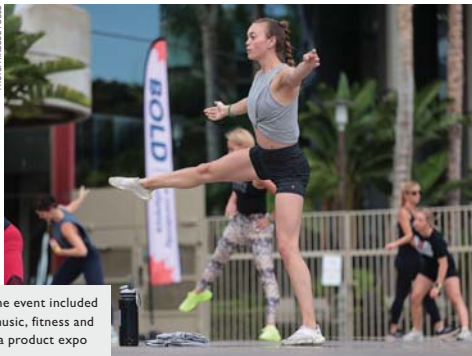
You can watch the panel discussion at [www.HCMmag.com/panel](http://www.HCMmag.com/panel).

Additional mainstage presenters included Thomas Drew who addressed 'Social Media: Mastering the game without sacrificing your mental health' ([www.HCMmag.com/drew](http://www.HCMmag.com/drew)); Mindbody CTO Sunil Rajasekar sharing his vision for the future and Q&A sessions with celebrities Dan Levy, creator of tv series, *Schitt's Creek* and actor and activist, Jameela Jamil.

Focused breakout sessions by industry experts were available for fitness and yoga studio owners and managers on topics such as 'Perfecting and growing your virtual studio experience', 'Maximising revenue with AI messaging', 'Rethinking retreats' and 'The future of fitness studios'.



PHOTO: MINDBODY BOLD



The event included music, fitness and a product expo

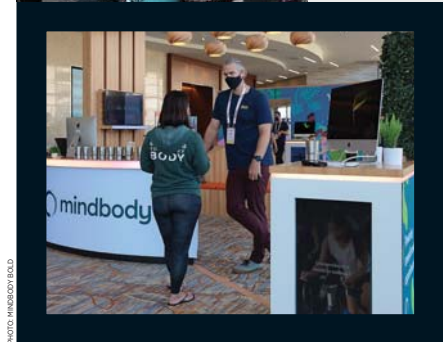


PHOTO: MINDBODY BOLD



PHOTO: MINDBODY BOLD

Students of the HBMPAA marching band

## Live performances

Musician, beatbox champion and vocal percussionist Butterscotch ([www.butterscotchmusic.com](http://www.butterscotchmusic.com)) wowed the audience with an all-live vocal and mixing performance, using her powerful voice to defy gender and musical social constructs, and Tyra Hawthorne shared her passion and story behind founding the Heartbeat Music and Performing Arts Academy (HBMPAA) ([www.hbmpaa.org](http://www.hbmpaa.org)), which aims to bridge the gap in traditional education by introducing at-risk and underprivileged youth to the benefits of music and dance education.

The students of HBMPAA have been featured in nationally televised parades, television commercials, and network shows, and they closed the segment with a rousing marching band performance, winding their way through the ballroom and bringing the entire audience to a standing ovation.

The event also provided an expo pavilion hosted by Mindbody staff and interest groups as well as partner companies, many of whom make software that enables studio and club owners to get the most out

of their software. Firms included ClassPass – acquired by Mindbody in 2021 – FitGrid and iKizmet, as well as Mindbody Partner Award winners Apiant.

LoopSpark, Studioease and REACH.ai were also present throughout the conference to answer questions and showcase their products.

At a Bold conference, you never forget what industry you're in – one of the most fun features is the way fitness is woven throughout. Most attendees wear athleisure all day, the better to take part in the numerous fitness-related activities. Morning, mid-day and afternoon workout classes feature barre, meditation, yoga and strength sessions, along with cutting-edge classes such as BollyX, Empower30, Jazz Funk, SWERK, and Soul Shakin' Yoga. The entire delegation enjoyed the Bold Bash at Petco Park, a local major league baseball stadium, for music, food, drinks and dancing with the skyline of San Diego as the backdrop. Many attendees were already registering for the next event, which will be in Los Angeles in September 2022.

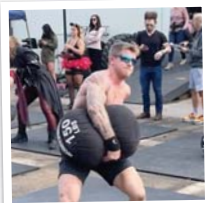
Lisa Starr is a contributing editor at Spa Business magazine





Aldridge lost his arm in a sports accident

PHOTO: ANDREW BOLD



PHOTOS: ANDREW BOLD

Aldridge is also a keen Crossfit competitor and coach

*Logan Aldridge lost an arm at the age of 13, but refused to let that determine his path, going on to become a Crossfit competitor, coach, and co-founder of the Adaptive Training Academy*

## Unstoppable at Bold

A special section of the Bold conference was devoted to stories of resilience

When it comes to inspiring business owners, it would be difficult to improve upon the powerful 'Unstoppable' segment of the Bold conference, featuring amazing stories of six entrepreneurs who demonstrated tremendous grit, resilience and creativity in growing their businesses.

**Logan Aldridge** lost his arm at the age of 13 in a wakeboarding rope accident, but refused to let that determine his path, going on to become a Crossfit competitor, coach, and co-founder of the Adaptive Training Academy (ATA), where he serves as the director of training.

ATA supplies equipment and training to enable people with disabilities to undertake a wider range of exercises ([www.ata.fit](http://www.ata.fit)).

CEO and co-founder of Boxed ([www.boxed.com](http://www.boxed.com)), **Chieh Huang**, reminded the audience that anything is possible through his humorous journey of turning his company into a success after beginning in his garage, and now reaching annual revenue over US\$100m and a CEO rating of 98 out of 100.

**Alison Hadden** used the latest psychological research and drew from her own experience battling advanced triple-negative breast cancer to explore why humans avoid the topic of death – the motivation behind her No Time To Waste project ([www.notimetowasteproject.com](http://www.notimetowasteproject.com)).

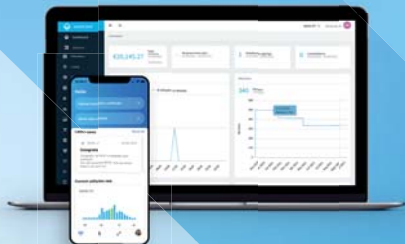
Through a combination of wit, intensity, and insight, Hadden challenged the audience to confront this universal inevitability in pursuit of a highly intentional life, focused on gratitude, human connection and joy.





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# Francine Davis

Pure Gym's global expansion plans have gone up a gear with the opening of its first three locations in the US, as Liz Terry finds out



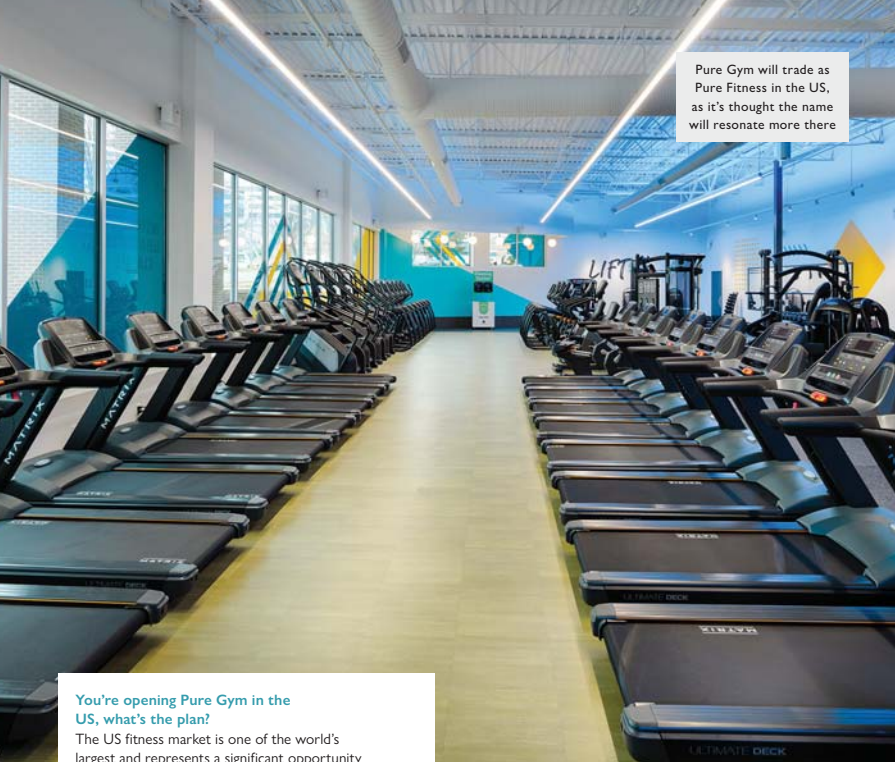
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*Pure Gym is actively seeking well-capitalised franchise partners who share our ambitions and values to work on opening in locations across the US*

PHOTO: PURE GYM / ANASTAS STEELE

PHOTO: FRANCINE DAVIS - PURE GYM

Pure Gym will trade as Pure Fitness in the US, as it's thought the name will resonate more there



#### You're opening Pure Gym in the US, what's the plan?

The US fitness market is one of the world's largest and represents a significant opportunity for our business. Our first priority is to open an initial portfolio of clubs and assess their locations. Pending their success, we have ambitious plans to develop many more sites across the US.

#### How many are you aiming for?

Three initially – all in the Washington DC Metropolitan area.

We considered the top 30 metro markets and our analysis highlighted the Washington DC region as one of the strongest in terms of economic strength, competitive landscape, good demographics and high propensity to take part in fitness. We may seek to expand organically and with franchise partners who share our ambitions and values.

#### How quickly will you roll out?

Our first priority is to see how these three perform, and then we'll make a decision about the next stage of rollout.



PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A STEELE

Pure Fitness' brand development has been based on the UK model

Brilliant  
STUFF

PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A STEELE

### ► You're trading as Pure Fitness in the US, why is this?

Our consumer research indicated that the word "fitness" rather than "gym" would be more resonant with members in the US, and so Pure Fitness is now a part of the Pure Gym group.

### What are the clubs like?

We're offering members a boutique fitness experience at a budget price. Each Pure Fitness gym will offer +150 pieces of top-of-the-line cardio and strength equipment, a Turf Training Freestyle area and 80-plus digital and instructor-led classes per week, starting from US\$9.99 per month.

Pure Fitness offers low-cost memberships without any contractual commitment. Members will have the freedom to freeze, leave and re-join whenever they want and will be able to do so in a matter of minutes through the Pure Fitness app.

A key component of the Pure Fitness offering is our tech. We're filling the gap in the market for high-quality, technology-enabled gyms with an app to help members choose the best time to visit the gym, provide contactless entry with a QR scanner and a library of 400-plus on-demand workouts.

In addition to instructor-led classes, Pure Fitness members will also have 24/7 access to classes in its digital studios. By offering both on-demand and scheduled digital classes, Pure Fitness members will benefit from virtual trainers at their convenience.

### How are they different from those you run elsewhere?

Our proposition remains the same across all our operations, delivering a boutique fitness experience on a budget. The spaces or 'zones' in our gyms are the same tried and tested zones we've developed over the past 10 years within the PureGym group, consisting of cardio, functional (called 'The Zone'), resistance, free weights, flex, cycle and studio. Gyms are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### How are you accommodating American culture?

We've found more similarities than differences, most notably members' demand for our flexible, low-cost offering and the fact our gyms are open 24/7.

As we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic, more people than ever are focused on their health and are looking for greater flexibility and value. This presents a huge opportunity for us to welcome both keen ►



“

*In the US, our Plus members will have access to HydroMassage, Yanga SportsWater and body composition scanning through Boditrax*



The first three Pure Fitness sites will open in Washington DC, where the market is strong

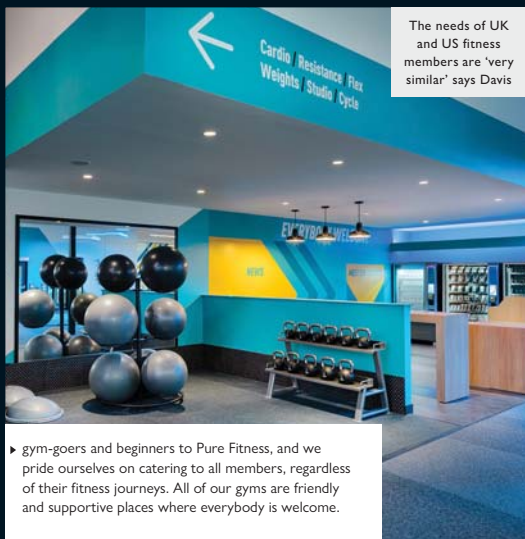
PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARISA STEELE

The Pure Gym app allows for contactless and secure entry



PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARISA STEELE





The needs of UK and US fitness members are 'very similar' says Davis

► gym-goers and beginners to Pure Fitness, and we pride ourselves on catering to all members, regardless of their fitness journeys. All of our gyms are friendly and supportive places where everybody is welcome.

#### Do consumers behave differently?

From our experience so far, the behaviour and expectations of the US consumer have been consistent with those of members in the UK. Our proposition is attractive to a diverse demographic who are looking for affordable, flexible fitness.

#### Have you made the US offering more or less upmarket?

It's much the same across the group, Pure Fitness offers members quality fitness facilities at affordable prices. Our memberships include classes in boutique-style studios and follow the model which has proven so successful in the UK and Europe.

In the US, our Plus members will also have access to HydroMassage for relaxation and muscle recovery, Yanga Sports Water for hydration and body composition scanning through Boditrax.

#### What tech are you using?

We believe we have an industry-leading technology proposition across the PureGym Group. Our US gyms are accessible through the Pure Fitness app, which allows for contactless and secure entry through

our entry pods. The app provides a range of other services, including membership management, access to fitness programmes and digital workouts. We've also partnered with Wexer, the global digital fitness provider, to create a programme of instructor-led group fitness classes for our US gyms. Each club has two Wexer Virtual players that deliver virtual fitness across HIIT, cardio, strength, yoga, cycling and more.

#### How is the US venture being managed?

We've recruited US staff who handle the day-to-day running of the gyms. There is more information about careers with us on our website at [www.purefitness.com/careers](http://www.purefitness.com/careers).

#### How many staff do you have per site?

We have a gym manager and an assistant gym manager. They're supported by a number of fitness coaches who assist with the daily running of the gyms. ►



Each club has two Wexer Virtual Players to deliver digital fitness offers for its members

PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A. STEELE



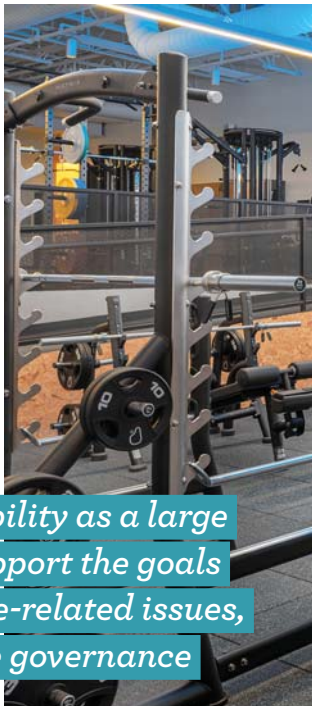
*We want to create communities at each of our gyms, where everyone feels comfortable and inspired*



Pure Gym aims to offer a boutique experience at a budget price, starting at \$9.99

PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A. STEELE

PHOTO: FRANCESCA DAVIS - PURE GYM



*We fully recognise our responsibility as a large and growing organisation to support the goals of society with respect to climate-related issues, societal progress and corporate governance*

► **Who did the brand development work?**

Our brand development has been based on our UK model, and was managed internally with the support of JLL and BRR, our third-party development partners.

**What equipment suppliers will you work with?**

We've partnered with many of the same suppliers we work with on a regular basis in the UK, such as Matrix, BLK Box and Power Systems for fitness equipment.

**Are you franchising?**

Yes, in parallel with planning organic expansion in the DMV region (Washington DC), we're actively seeking well-capitalised franchise partners who share our ambitions and values to work with us in opening Pure Fitness clubs in other locations across the US.

**How fast will you roll out internationally?**

We're really excited to have launched in the US and think there's the potential for us to open a significant number of gyms over the next few years. We've

recently launched in Saudi Arabia too, which is another market with fantastic potential for growth. The Pure Gym group now has a presence in five markets, and we hope to continue our expansion in the years ahead.

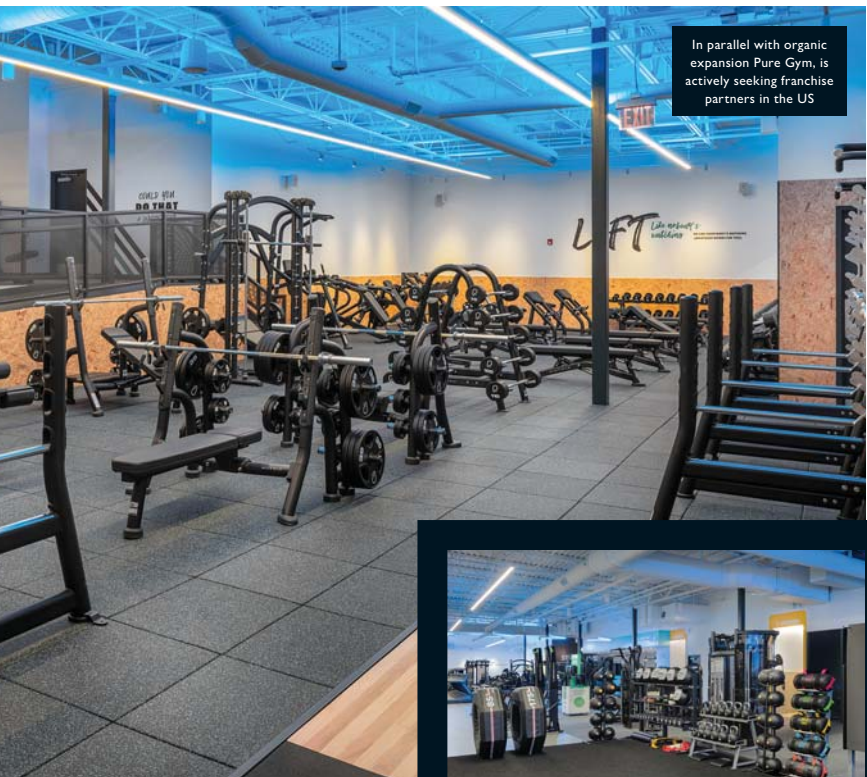
**If Pure Gym does an IPO at some point, how will this play out across the different geographies?**

I'm afraid I can't comment on that at this point in time.

**What's your position on equality and sustainability?**

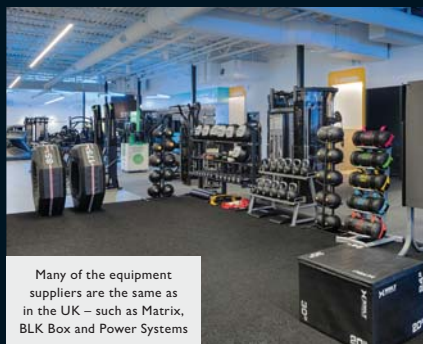
We fully recognise our responsibility as a large and growing organisation to support the goals of society with respect to climate-related issues, societal progress and good corporate governance.

We make a conscious effort across the Pure Gym Group to ensure our gyms are welcoming and inclusive spaces for people to work and workout. We want to create communities at each of our gyms where everyone feels comfortable and inspired, regardless of their fitness journey. ●



In parallel with organic expansion Pure Gym, is actively seeking franchise partners in the US

PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A STEELE



Many of the equipment suppliers are the same as in the UK – such as Matrix, BLK Box and Power Systems

PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A STEELE



PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A STEELE

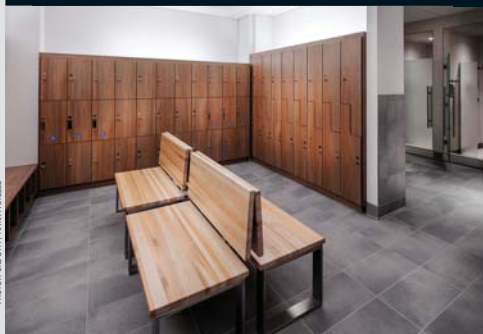


PHOTO: PURE GYM / MARK A STEELE





*The goal is to help every single person in every community have the opportunity to get active*

# Tackling inequality

**Sport England is offering all local authorities a free review of their customer-facing activity to enable them to raise their game when it comes to tackling inequality**

Every local authority in England is to qualify for a free review from Sport England as part of its Moving Communities initiative.

Moving Communities was set up to help local authority physical activity operators provide opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind and excluded from physical activity, such as those from lower socio-economic groups, culturally-diverse communities, disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

## About the review

The initiative – called the Quest Foundation Review, or QFR – will provide operators with scored and benchmarked KPIs and insights to reveal the way these customers perceive the



tone with which operators address them, with the aim of making services more welcoming and improving participation rates from these groups.

The QFR process has been developed to enable Quest to view the facility and its services from a customer's perspective, focusing on how people experience and interact with their local leisure services, by assessing their websites, checking on how they conduct phone calls and examining their social media feeds.

Researchers will capture assessor comments and feedback, based on how the facility and its online services were perceived during one specific call and one visit each to the website and social media feeds.

The review feedback will be delivered to operators as part of Quest, Sport England's





Every local authority  
in England will be  
offered a free review

*The Quest Foundation Review  
will provide benchmarks to  
help tackle inequalities and  
remove barriers to activity*



national quality scheme. Kevin Mills, director of capital investment at Sport England says: "QFR will assess a facility from each local authority every 12 months, to identify best practice and support continuous improvement for individual sites and the sector as a whole.

"The completed QFRs will support the commitment made by Sport England to help the sector in its recovery from the pandemic and to tackle inequalities as part of its 10-year *Uniting the Movement* strategy, by removing barriers to activity.

"The goal is to help every person in every community have the opportunity to get active."

### **Monitoring continuous improvement**

The QFR will be embedded in the Continuous Improvement 'pillar' of the

Moving Communities programme – which is managed for Sport England by consultancy, 4 Global. This tracks people's participation at public leisure facilities, and seeks to provide evidence of the physical activity sector's performance, sustainability and social value.

Sarah Maxwell, head of external accreditations at Right Directions, which manages Quest on behalf of Sport England, explains: "For the first time since its inception in 1996, Quest will offer a free service to every local authority across England.

"Launching in April and running for three years, QFR will identify how the sector is performing and use that data to create awareness of inequalities, while shaping training and education to help enhance and improve services." ●

More: [www.questaward.org](http://www.questaward.org)

## **In brief**

### **The Quest Foundation Review**

#### **Funded by**

- \* Sport England

#### **Duration**

- \* Three years

#### **Aims**

- \* Remove barriers to activity
- \* Improve participation rates

#### **Target**

- \* Lower socio-economic groups
- \* Culturally diverse communities
- \* People with disabilities
- \* People with long-term health conditions

#### **What's being assessed?**

- \* Operators' website
- \* Phone conversations with clients
- \* Social media feeds

#### **Output**

- \* KPIs
- \* Benchmarks

#### **Delivered by**

- \* Quest
- \* Right Directions
- \* 4 Global

# dialling up the énergie

**As énergie Fitness ramps up its global expansion plans, international managing director, Rod Hill, explains why he believes the multi-fitness concept is irresistible**



*We're walking the talk.*

*Three months after opening  
our first club in Spain  
we're close to 1,500 members*

Rod Hill, international managing director

There's not much industry veteran Rod Hill doesn't know about heading up popular fitness concepts, scaling them and seeing them successfully take hold on a global stage.

In the 90s, Hill led the Spanish roll out of Fitness First, which grew to 400 clubs in 17 countries over the following decade. There have been many successful ventures since, including start-ups, boutique brands and the coaching of elite athletes.

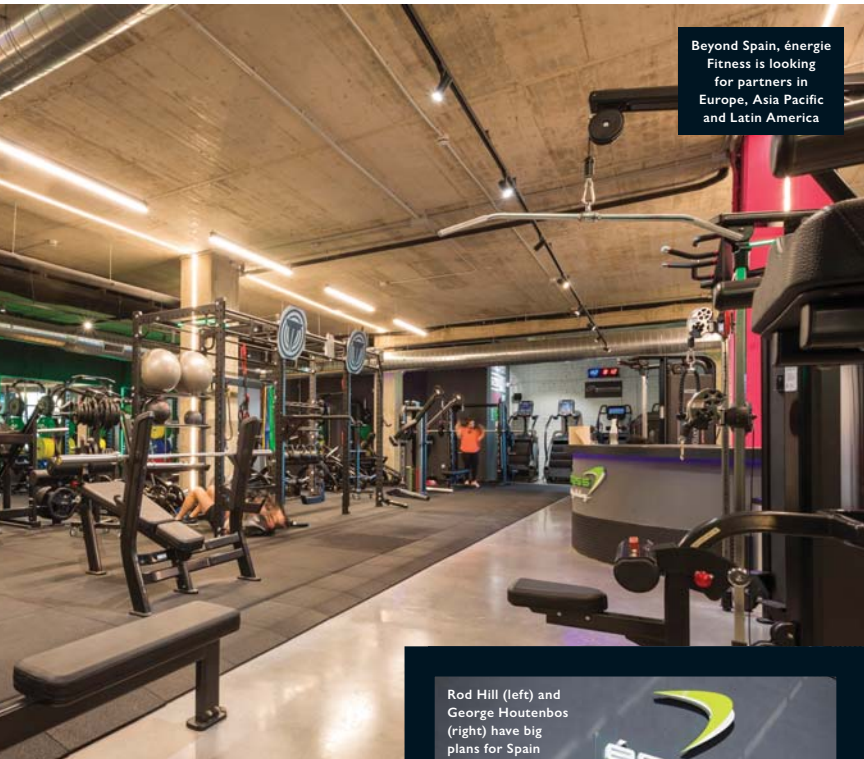
In recent years, Hill established Anytime Fitness in Spain, growing the chain to 30 clubs over three years and creating the largest franchised gym chain in Spain.

So when the news hit in 2020 that Hill had signed a deal with the Jan Spaticchia (who passed away in May 2021) of énergie Fitness fame to take on the énergie master franchise for Spain – as well becoming the company's international managing director, charged with selling master franchises in new territories around the world – an exciting and potentially very profitable industry partnership was born.

## Global ambitions

And the field, it seems, is wide open. Hill says: "Beyond finding our own local partners for Spain, the master franchise focus will be on Northern Europe

Beyond Spain, énergie Fitness is looking for partners in Europe, Asia Pacific and Latin America



and Asia Pacific, which we see as a very young and dynamic market. We also have strong links in the Latin American market through our Spanish contacts, so there will be some big opportunities there too."

The fact that Hill and his team managed to successfully open the first énergie Fitness in Spain during the tightest of COVID-19 restrictions (Club Sant Cugat opened in Barcelona in October 2021) should inspire confidence in new franchisees.

Hill says: "We're walking the talk. Three months after opening our Barcelona club, we're at close to 1,500 members, with the majority of those opting for our middle pricing option of €49 per month."

Hill says the great strength of the franchise opportunity is that the model is entirely flexible – both in terms of the size of the facility (typically anywhere from 600sq m to 1200sq m) and the number of offers that can be included within the club. énergie currently has three core branded

Rod Hill (left) and George Houtenbos (right) have big plans for Spain



- offers, with these three all being wrapped up in a three-tier pricing model with monthly payments.

### The membership options

Members can choose from the Classic membership, which is gym-only for €39, the Wow! level at €49.95 which includes all studio classes, and Epic at €99, which includes personal training.

"Spain is still huge for group classes, so it perhaps wasn't a surprise that more than 80 per cent of our new members opted for the Wow! level," says Hill. "However, there's also buyer psychology at play. If you offer people a choice of three levels, they will mostly go for the middle one."

This would seem to be an advantage in markets dominated by lower-cost models with only one price level. And the same might be said for the potential fitness mix inside. The branded offers in the énergie portfolio are currently HIIT and functional fitness studio Thé Yard, énergie Studio for group-ex, and Zenergie for the increasingly popular mind-body pursuits, such as meditation and yoga. Franchisees can pick one or all of them.



énergie's three-tier pricing system enables clubs to 'upsell' to regular members

### What do franchisees get?

With the wealth of experience Hill brings to the table, alongside a brand that has already operated successfully in the UK for almost two decades, new franchisees can expect strong levels of support.

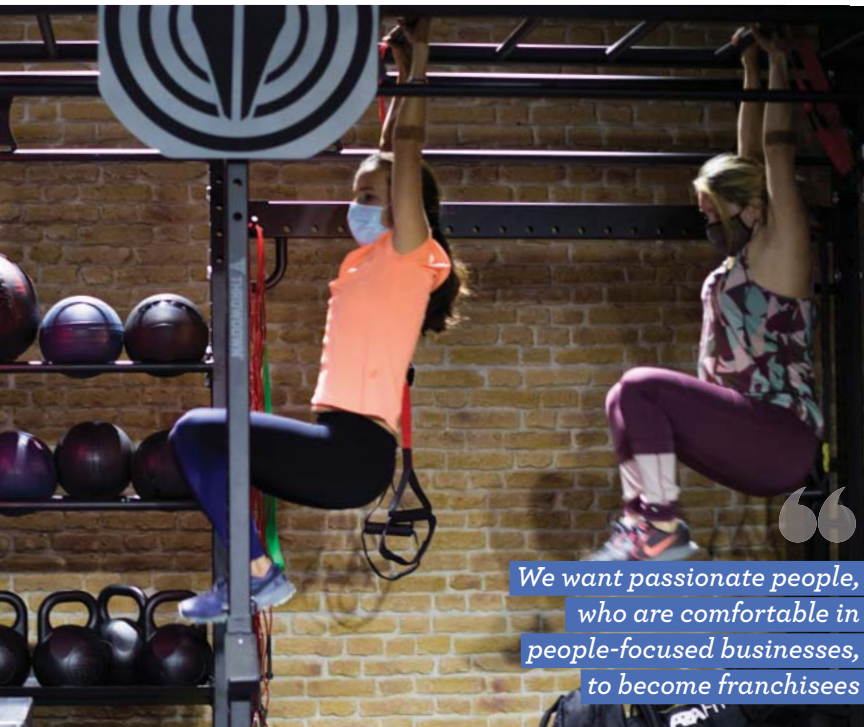
Initial training and business planning assistance take place at the company's HQs in the UK and Barcelona, and Hill says the overall approach is coaching-led, which gives scope for people to grow the kind of business they want to run.

A solid systems-base is also important. For master franchisees, complete operational systems will be integrated into the new territory, including the company's own CRM software system élan, website set-up, full marketing assets, the énergie fitness app and a digital fitness platform.

Exclusive equipment providers Core Fitness and Technogym help to plan health club layouts, training and finance packages, while an international buyers portal will help new master franchisees create a complete provider network for their region.

New master franchisees will be able to tap into a strong support system





*We want passionate people,  
who are comfortable in  
people-focused businesses,  
to become franchisees*

#### The perfect fit

So what is Hill looking for in would-be franchisees? "We want passionate people who are comfortable in people-focused businesses, whether that's fitness, hospitality or retail, or something else," he says.

"A franchise is a win-win situation when it's done right. When the passion of the local owner shines through, and they're regularly at the door of their club, welcoming members, taking an interest in their routine and asking about their families, those clubs very quickly become the heart of their community."

As the opening of the first **énergie** club in Spain shows, the bounceback is proving to be faster and stronger than expected – and with a whole new segment of the population waking up to the need to be healthier, franchise brands such as **énergie Fitness**, that can offer flexible and affordable pricing and an attractive mix of offers could well emerge as the front-runners as we move towards a post-pandemic world. ●  
More: [www.hcmmag.com/energiefranchiseit](http://www.hcmmag.com/energiefranchiseit)

#### **énergie Fitness master franchises**

##### What's available?

##### EUROPE

- |               |               |           |
|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| ■ France      | ■ Switzerland | ■ Norway  |
| ■ Netherlands | ■ Italy       | ■ Denmark |
| ■ Belgium     | ■ Poland      | ■ Finland |
| ■ Germany     | ■ Sweden      |           |

##### ASIA PACIFIC

- |             |               |            |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| ■ Singapore | ■ Indonesia   | ■ Thailand |
| ■ Australia | ■ Philippines | ■ Malaysia |

##### LATIN AMERICA

- |          |             |          |
|----------|-------------|----------|
| ■ Brazil | ■ Argentina | ■ Mexico |
| ■ Chile  | ■ Peru      |          |

Enquire: [Rod@energiefitnessiberia.com](mailto:Rod@energiefitnessiberia.com)



Oliver says the alliance was formed to support the existing work being done across the sector





*Our mission at the Global Health and Fitness Alliance is to have health clubs recognised across the globe as an essential service*

# Greg Oliver

**Greg Oliver, CEO of Fitness & Lifestyle Group, is chair of the Global Health & Fitness Alliance – a collaboration of industry leaders that have set out to achieve essential service status for the sector. He updates Kate Cracknell on progress**

## **When and why was the GHFA founded?**

The GHFA was founded in COVID-struck 2020, when gyms and wellness centres around the world were being forced into lockdown, often being the first to be closed and the last to re-open, in spite of our sector's unparalleled health credentials.

Successive lockdowns have treated the health and fitness sector as if it were part of the hospitality industry, whereas the clue to our true value lies right there in our name: health.

This was the catalyst that led to the creation of the GHFA. Sector leaders around the world recognised an opportunity to change the agenda by coming together with a singular focus, a global remit and the authority to move at pace. Facilitated by IHRSA, we forged our alliance to support all the existing work being done across the sector.

The GHFA is now collaborating to evidence our sector's value to society and public health. Our mission is to have health clubs recognised, across the globe, as an essential service – one that is committed to solving the crisis of physical inactivity.

We're conscious that external perceptions of our sector are not necessarily aligned with the reality that exists within our clubs; many of the policy decisions made during the pandemic stemmed from a lack of awareness, among national and

regional decision-makers and governments, of what our sector really does and the value it brings. It is this value we're setting out to evidence.

## **Tell us about the evidence you're gathering.**

We're currently focused on two complementary research initiatives.

The first is a major new report – *Economic impact and societal wellbeing: quantifying the contribution of the global health and fitness sector* – which we've commissioned from Deloitte. This report has been funded by donations from GHFA supporters and is due to be published in Q2 of this year.

Covering around 60 countries initially, which between them account for the majority of the global health and fitness club market, the report will analyse the social, health and economic contribution of our sector. It will deliver a comprehensive view of our direct and indirect value to society.

The second initiative is a peer-reviewed meta study, being overseen by the GHFA, where we're looking to quantify the impact and efficacy of the health and fitness club 'product'.

Building on existing studies of the benefits of being physically active generally, this project will evidence clubs' positive impact on health and wellbeing above and beyond the benefits of independent exercise. ▶



*Our ambition is to strengthen our sector's voice at the table of global organisations such as the World Health Organization, UNESCO and the OECD*

- ▶ We'll be looking to present these dual streams of research to the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as other UN and international entities. Our ambition is to strengthen our sector's voice at the table of these global organisations, demonstrating our value to their agendas, to – in turn – influence national governments.

We'll continue to grow and expand these two bodies of research over time, drawing more markets into our Deloitte report and growing our research base – including potentially commissioning our own studies.

We believe the converging components of this research – bringing together economic impact,

health and wellbeing contribution and efficacy – will strongly evidence the case for health clubs to be deemed essential to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of society around the world.

**Why is essential status so important?**

Every operator around the world – and in turn the suppliers that work with us and the federations and associations that support us – has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. Over the last two years, we've seen entire health club operations go out of business as a direct result of lockdown. Those who have survived still have a way to go to full recovery and if lockdowns return, more clubs will be lost.

Essential status would help clubs survive any future lockdowns



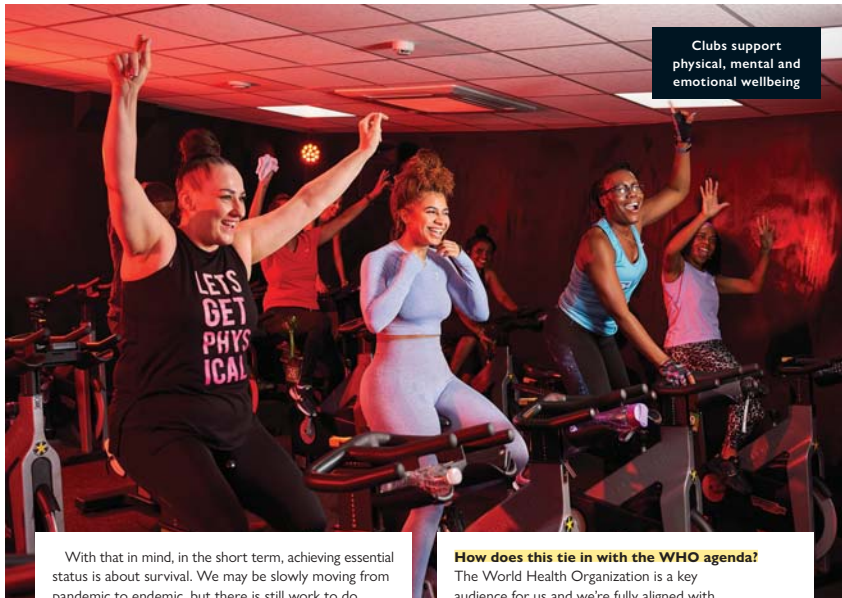


PHOTO: SPORT ENGLAND

With that in mind, in the short term, achieving essential status is about survival. We may be slowly moving from pandemic to endemic, but there is still work to do. We have to shift mindsets so we're seen as part of the solution. We have to secure recognition of our sector's vital contribution to physical, mental and emotional health, so clubs can stay open to support people's wellbeing even if other sectors go back into lockdown.

All the data shows that, if COVID guidelines are followed, our clubs are safe places to be. There's no reason for us to be closed down and so many reasons for us to stay open.

In the longer term, the health and fitness sector being classed as essential is really all about the evolution and growth that comes from being recognised as a powerful, value-adding sector for societies and individuals worldwide.

Confirming clubs' essential status will allow operators around the world to build their businesses on new, more expansive foundations, collaborate with governments, speak to a more receptive and diverse end-user and enjoy greater scope to grow, contribute to society and ultimately thrive.

New audiences, new products, new partnerships, new collaborations will all enable us to accelerate into new opportunities. Securing essential status will be a win-win-win for ourselves, governments and individuals.

In turn, we can realistically hope it will also mean things such as new funding, tax cuts, consumer benefits and initiatives that point people towards our expert guidance.

#### How does this tie in with the WHO agenda?

The World Health Organization is a key audience for us and we're fully aligned with its agenda: it wants to reduce global physical inactivity by 15 per cent by 2030 and we see a pivotal role for our sector in delivering this.

We were greatly encouraged by the WHO's recent designation of physical activity as a 'must have', because we believe everyone should have the opportunity to support their health by being physically active in whatever way, or ways, they choose.

In fact, we believe every opportunity to be physically active should be regarded as essential – because it is to those individuals, and in turn to society. Shutting off part of the physical activity ecosystem, even temporarily, limits choice and has a long-term impact on participation.

Our sector already serves 200 million-plus active members around the world and the powerful sum of our programming, expertise and environments, combined with our reach and impact, means there's no equivalent substitute for what we do. Through research and advocacy, the GHFA is working to raise awareness of this.

But of course, every one of us can and should go even further to ensure our essential status is left in no doubt.

Through ongoing efforts to promote and grow physical activity around the world, through continued and further democratisation of our offering, and through a renewed focus on shaping an even more inclusive future, our sector can play

- ▶ an integral role in achieving the World Health Organization's vision of a more active society. This is our vision too – it's what our sector has always been about. Both commercially and morally, doing everything we can to put 'essential' at the heart of all our businesses is the right thing to do.

#### **What is the structure of the GHFA?**

Established to represent the entire health and fitness sector, the GHFA is a broad alliance of leading health club operators, suppliers, national and international associations and allied organisations and is supported and facilitated by IHRSA.

The Advisory Council, of which I am chair, delivers strong global representation: Gigliola Aycardi is VP and co-founder of Bodytech in Latin America; Richard Beddie is CEO of Exercise New Zealand and board chief of staff for ICREPS; Andrea Bell is co-founder, director and chief people officer at Inspire Brands Asia; Anna Henwood is chief marketing officer for global powerhouse Les Mills International; Brian Morris is founder and CEO of the Aspria Group in Europe; Justin Musgrove is CEO of Kun Real Estate in the Middle East; Emmett Williams is partner at global brand Myzone; and Anastasia Yusina is president of Strata Fitness Holding and founder of Orange Fitness,



*The World Health Organization wants to reduce global physical inactivity by 15 per cent by 2030 and we see a pivotal role for our sector in delivering this*

Governments, clubs and individuals all benefit from essential status





PHOTO: CENTRE FOR AGEING BETTER

City Fitness and Fitspace Boutique Fitness, giving her a presence in both Europe and the Americas.

The Council is supported by senior level, multinational working groups of leaders who help drive forward critical initiatives such as our research projects. Underpinning all of this is our network of supporters around the world.

#### **What comes next?**

Our immediate focus is our research and getting this ready for the Q2 launch.

With COVID-19 restrictions still in place in many markets, key conference and meeting dates are still to be confirmed, but we'll be looking to present our findings as soon as we feasibly can, including to the WHO at a forthcoming Sports Sector dialogue meeting and, later this year, to the OECD at its Business at OECD Health Forum.

Meanwhile, our fundraising efforts within the sector are ongoing, to ensure we can continue our work and further our research; this is a marathon, not a sprint.

With that in mind, while I will remain a member of the GHFA Advisory Council – I'm passionate about

what we're doing and keen to stay involved – we will soon be appointing my successor as chair.

Over the past two years, we've done a huge amount of work behind the scenes getting the GHFA set up, building our network, raising significant sums to fund our research and getting ourselves onto the radar of the World Health Organization. We're about to move to the next phase, and it feels like the right time to hand over the reins.

#### **Is there still an opportunity for operators to get involved?**

We already have backing from all corners of the globe, but if you haven't yet signed up, there is still time: we continue to welcome new supporters.

All applications are reviewed on the basis of global representation, thought leadership and authority to move at pace. It's important to point out that while we're supported by IHRSA, you don't have to be an IHRSA member to join the GHFA. ●

**For further information, the new website goes live soon: [www.GHFAAlliance.org](http://www.GHFAAlliance.org)**



Freemotion says it has created a fully immersive 'fitness and wellness ecosystem'



# THE CONNECTED GYM FLOOR

Digitalisation is now at the heart of fitness and the gym floor can no longer remain disconnected. Suppliers tell Steph Eaves about innovations that are helping operators meet consumer expectations



## Tony Ali

### Freemotion Fitness

The digital revolution set in motion by COVID-19 turned many at-home fitness brands and digital platforms into household names. It also enabled the likes of Google, Apple and Amazon to become major fitness players.

While the shift to digital will be permanent, it's clear that brick-and-mortar clubs are also here to stay – with clubs reporting strong recoveries in membership numbers post-lockdown.

This all means that, in terms of club operations, the industry faces an omnichannel future – and having a connected gym floor will be at the heart of that.

Post-pandemic fitness consumers will be tech-savvy, digital natives who are literate in analysing exercise stats and health metrics. When it comes to assessing their progress, trainer feedback alone will no longer be enough. Consumers now expect data and measurements – preferably in real-time and in a format accessible on their personal devices. Crucially, consumers also demand an engaging exercise experience, wherever they work out.

For Freemotion, connected fitness means much more than just streaming videos. Exercisers are fully immersing in a fitness and wellness ecosystem – which is provided via the iFIT digital fitness platform.

At the club, Freemotion links iFIT's digital content to unique, interactive equipment. Members can also continue their fitness journey outside the club – at home on NordicTrack or ProForm equipment, or on the go via the iFIT app.

More: [www.freemotionfitness.com](http://www.freemotionfitness.com)



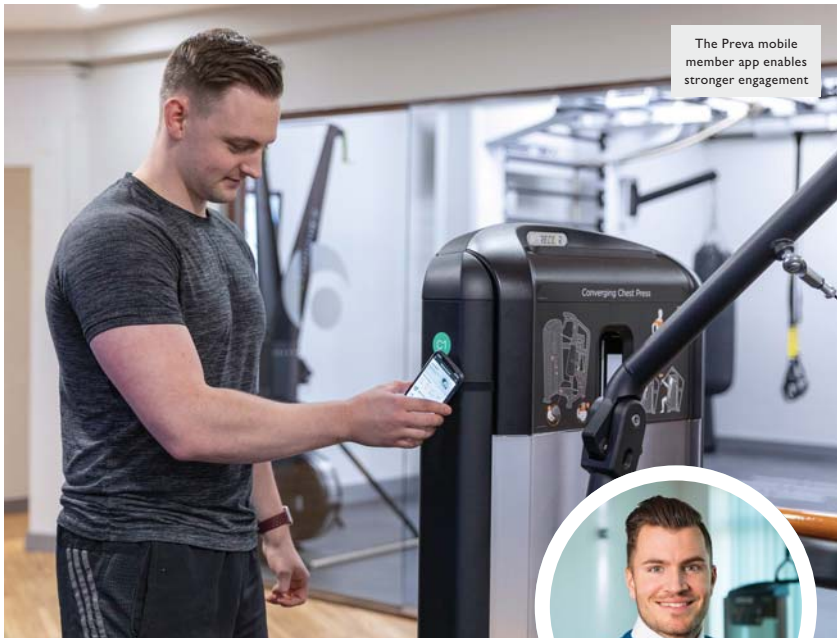
PHOTO: TONY ALI - FREEMOTION

*In terms of club operations, the industry faces an omnichannel future*



PHOTO: FREEMOTION

Connectivity in and out of the gym creates a club without walls



The Preva mobile member app enables stronger engagement

## Scott Trinder

### Precor

New habits have been made and new lifestyles adopted during the pandemic. The huge surge in online fitness provision means gym members now expect a flexible, integrated service with digital connectivity at its core.

A fully-connected gym floor is no longer just a nice-to-have, it's essential. Added to this, tracking functionality can no longer be limited to inside the four walls of a facility – wherever they are and whatever they do, members want it all to count, so operators need to offer a 360° solution.

Precor has fine-tuned its offer to ensure that Preva Mobile, alongside Advagym by Sony, offers

operators a fully multifunctional software solution. The Preva Mobile member app is a springboard to stronger engagement, connecting members with their facility wherever they engage with fitness and capturing workout data from a host of fitness apps.

Advagym by Sony complements this all-round connectivity – users can track every element of their workout from a free weights session to a group exercise class, just by tapping their phone on Advagym pucks.

If the pandemic taught us anything, it's that we're social beings who love to interact.

The Advagym Beacon feature supports facilities in welcoming members to the club and delivering important information – great if facilities have busy periods when that information can't be delivered in person. The Beacon



*I see  
connectivity  
as the future*

recognises members as they enter and sends a message – anything from a simple 'welcome back' to info about free slots in upcoming group exercise classes.

Using the right fitness software will ensure members always feel looked after and part of your community. I see connectivity as the future; it empowers exercise and makes a fitness facility central to every activity they do.

**More: [www.precor.com](http://www.precor.com)**

Apps make exercise more measurable for everyone

*There's a growing consumer demand for a highly personalised experience which is largely self-managed*

## Tanya Hall

Egym UK

'No man is an island', wrote English poet John Donne – and this observation has never been more true. Digitalisation provides limitless opportunities to connect products and services, creating entire digital ecosystems that deliver highly personalised experiences for the end user, whether it be the way they consume their entertainment, shop or manage their lifelong wellbeing journey. This is not the future, this is the now.

Over the last decade, we've been working with our network of global operators to develop a digital ecosystem that makes exercising smarter, more efficient and effective, and more measurable for everyone.

This year, we completed this mission with the launch of Fitness Hub, a gym floor centerpiece that enables touchless, self-serve onboarding and performance tracking. Fitness Hub seamlessly

Fitness Hub gives members feedback on performance

connects to Egym's in-club Smart Strength Series and Smart Flex equipment, automating programming and progression, equipment set-up and regular performance feedback. Training and performance data is collated and presented back to the member via Egym Digital, accessible anytime from anywhere via a connected device, creating an environment that extends

engagement beyond the walls of the physical training facility.

Through its connected gym floor training and wider digital ecosystem, Egym provides a solution to a growing consumer demand for a highly personalised experience which is largely self-managed and based on real time performance data that is accessible anytime, anywhere.

**More: [www.egym.com](http://www.egym.com)**

PHOTO: TANYA HALL - EGM

PHOTO: EGM / BENJAMIN OLSEN

*With Bluetooth and ANT+ connections, a large number of third party apps can connect with our equipment*



## Travis Vaughan

### Core Health & Fitness

Modern fitness consumers have become accustomed to measurement of work as a means to drive results. Those who wish to track their efforts over time have more options than ever to do so – watches, bands, heart rate monitors, etc. Whether it's trying to meet a daily steps goal or close rings, tracking has become integrated into everyday life for a growing number of fitness consumers, and health facilities are recognising the need to support them in this.

A connected fitness floor can offer opportunities that not only allow users to track their fitness activities, but also make the data being tracked

more robust. A heart rate monitor can track user effort throughout a workout, but, for example, if that data can be combined with actual measurement of work – watts on a bike, speed/incline on a treadmill – then the total activity measurement is more complete.

We have a variety of connected platform options that serve different consumer segments – our philosophy is to connect with partners who are experts in their space to provide the best solutions possible.

We offer tap-to-pair with Apple Watch and Samsung Galaxy Watch across our cardio products, which provides a simple, straightforward way to get accurate workout data directly into your device. For a higher touch experience, we are partnered with Sony Advagym to provide workout tracking capabilities across the entire gym floor.

Our equipment integrates with Egym to offer a robust, guided workout experience and detailed data tracking. And with Bluetooth and ANT+ connections on virtually all of our cardio products, there's a large and growing number of third party apps and services that can connect with our equipment to provide data tracking, as well as entertaining and motivating experiences."

More: [www.corehandf.com](http://www.corehandf.com)

Members can tap-to-pair with their Apple watch





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PHOTO: ADRIAN NASH - LIFE FITNESS



PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

*It's important that gyms are able to connect to these individual ecosystems*

## Adrian Nash

### Life Fitness

Consumer expectations have risen in recent times; we've all had to interact and engage with each other as well as businesses using digital elements through the pandemic,

which has led to our own personal ecosystem becoming uber-connected, and the gym is no different.

We're all striving to live healthier lives and with health and fitness data becoming so easily accessible, providing another layer to aid our own journeys and behaviour with wellness. It's important gyms are able to support this by having experiences

that not only provide engaging workouts, but are able to connect to these individual ecosystems.

Life Fitness has a unique approach to creating a connected gym experience. First, we seek to fully understand our partners, the operator, by defining the member and operational experience. We then utilise our connected fitness platform, smart equipment, open architecture, open APIs, people and philosophy to co-create unique meaningful experiences. This provides an element of freedom and ensures we can support our partners' digital decisions now and into the future.

The Life Fitness Connect app not only interacts with the gym floor equipment but provides engaging workouts through Life Fitness on Demand. It also supports workouts with audio coaching. Workouts can be paired with a heart rate monitor for further seamless tracking and recorded workout data is accessible in the app or can be shared with other apps such as Apple Health or Google Fit. **More: [www.lifefitness.com](http://www.lifefitness.com)**

The Life Fitness Connect app supports workouts with audio coaching

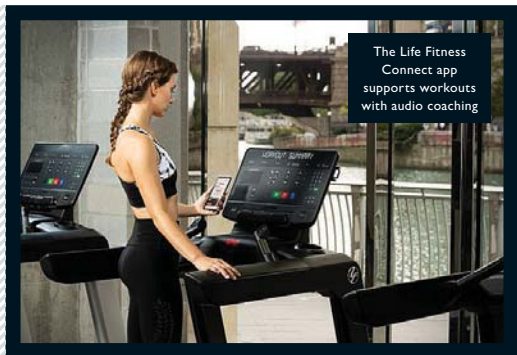
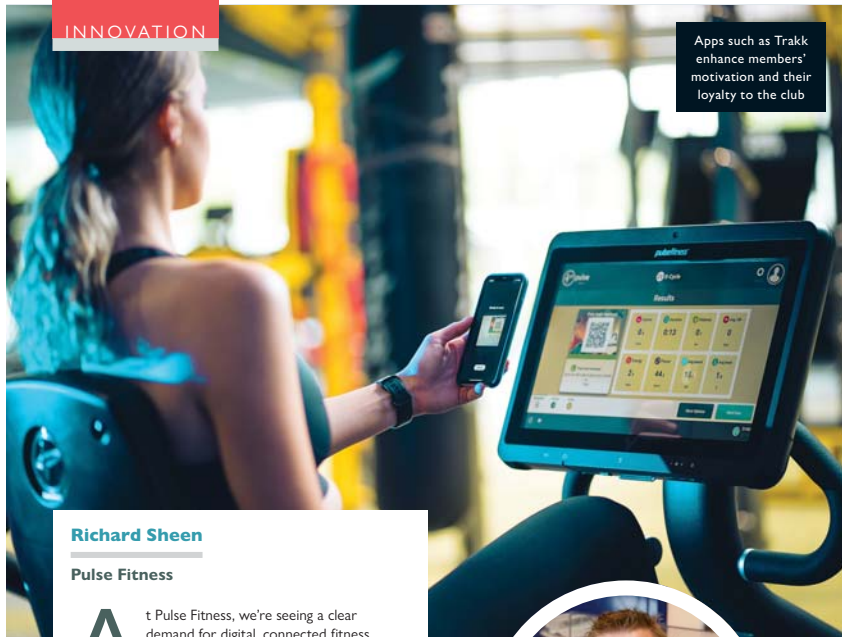


PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

Apps such as Trakk enhance members' motivation and their loyalty to the club



## Richard Sheen

### Pulse Fitness

At Pulse Fitness, we're seeing a clear demand for digital, connected fitness solutions come out of the pandemic and responded with our latest innovation, the Trakk app. The aim of Trakk was to allow users to stay connected to their gym by allowing them to tap into ready-made workout plans, develop personalised regimes and stay connected to their trainers whether in or outside the gym.

As well as logging exercise on the move, members can digitally log into gym equipment before use and track the output of each workout, helping them to keep on top of fitness goals.

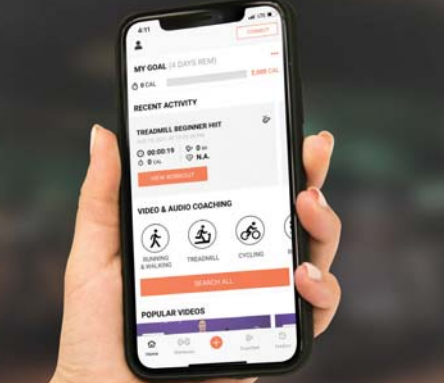
Apps such as Trakk are extremely important to both customers and operators; not only does it help customers maintain physical health but knowing they have a continuous form of connection contributes to positive mental wellbeing. Operators also benefit from increased member loyalty as trainers using Trakk can set personalised goals, track members' performance and send personal or automated messages, to help engage members with both their fitness programme and the equipment.

As we continue to respond to an ever-changing external environment, the industry must adapt, respond and innovate by developing a connected fitness solution to maintain member's loyalty and engagement.

More: [www.pulsefitness.com](http://www.pulsefitness.com)



*It's important the industry adapts, responds and innovates by developing a digital and connected fitness solution to maintain member engagement*



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*Life Fitness*



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lifefitness.co.uk



Biometric data takes the guess work out of coaching, and motivates members

## Dave Wright

### Myzone

We're living in the era of the digitalisation of marketing and communications. From advertising on the London Underground to shop windows, the digital display of data is the new way forward. On the gym floor, the ability to display biometric data takes the guesswork out of coaching and provides opportunities for a more engaged and rewarding fitness experience for users. Coaches can focus on form and motivation while letting the technology display customers' biometric data, to get a true insight into how they're performing during group sessions or one-to-one workouts.

The Myzone system displays each user's heart rate in tiles on a screen. The tiles are colour-coded into five effort zones, based on the client's individual heart rate, so both users and coaches can understand how hard they're working during activity. This allows coaches to personalise every training session, no matter how many people take part, to ensure an effective workout for all participants, helping them to achieve their goals.

Myzone's MZ-Instruct feature allows club owners to display instructional videos on the gym floor. Using preloaded videos or ones they've shot themselves, MZ-Instruct lets the instructor focus on motivating participants and coaching each exercise, instead of programming, while clients follow the onscreen video. With Myzone tracking each participant's heart rate, the MZ-Instruct helps to promote further class engagement and interaction.

More: [www.myzone.org](http://www.myzone.org)



PHOTO: DAVE WRIGHT - MYZONE

*On the gym floor, the ability to display biometric data provides new opportunities for a more engaged, rewarding and enjoyable fitness experience for users*





Digitalisation frees up trainers to take on a more mentoring role



*Digitalisation is infiltrating every aspect of our lives and we need to innovate in order to maintain relevance with members*



BETHAM / NOLAN / OLING

## Ernst De Neef

### Funxtion

The introduction of widespread digital capabilities creates exciting opportunities for gym owners to super-charge the member experience and elevate gym floor training to a whole new level. This enables our industry to refresh its offer and maintain relevance in a world that is increasingly driven by digital innovation.

For years, the sector has recognised the value in delivering a highly personal experience, but has struggled to find the means to deliver this at scale. Digitalisation provides a solution to this challenge and enables gym owners to customise every visit for every member.

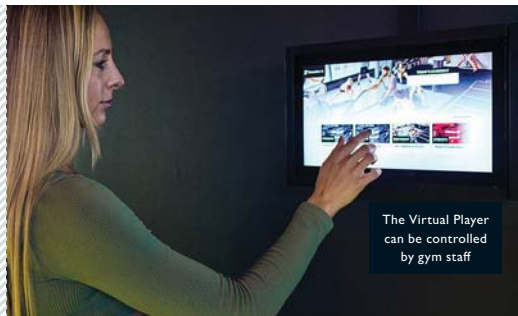
We've recently launched two new digital floor innovations that connect to members in-club and deliver an outstanding gym floor digital coaching experience.

Our Virtual Player provides class management software that can come

with a huge library of high-quality and beautifully choreographed fitness content to enable virtual classes to be delivered in-club. This empowers members to attend classes at their convenience, rather than having to fit their schedule around a set class timetable.

We've also developed our MultiScreen Solution. This connects to the Virtual Player and enables any number of screens to display different exercise demonstrations concurrently, creating a digital circuit. This provides personal instruction to each participant throughout the entire workout and frees up gym floor trainers to adopt a more mentoring and coaching role.

Digitalisation is infiltrating every aspect of our lives, and we need to continue to innovate in order to maintain relevance with members. We're only just starting to scratch the surface of what digitalisation makes possible, and I for one am extremely excited to be on this digital journey. **More: [www.funxtion.com](http://www.funxtion.com)**

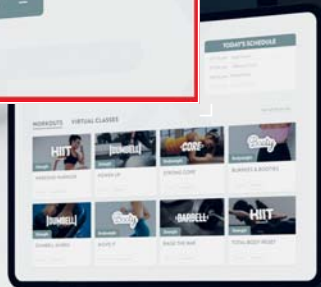
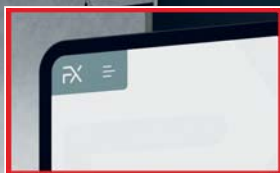


The Virtual Player can be controlled by gym staff

PHOTO: FUNXTION

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# Product innovation



Steph Eaves rounds up the latest launches in health and fitness

## Technogym Ride will attract new members from the cycling community, says Nerio Alessandri

Technogym has launched Technogym Ride, a bike featuring a 22-inch screen that provides users with an immersive indoor experience. Technogym Ride is the first bike to offer direct access to the most popular cycling apps,

including Zwift, Strava, ROUVY and TrainingPeaks; along with entertainment apps such as Netflix and Eurosport. A range of training programmes and experiences is designed to improve users' performance outdoors on the road.

The bike is designed to simulate an outdoor cycling experience and replicate real-world routes and inclines. The training sessions challenge users to reach the proper power zones on dozens of virtual routes, including some of the world's most legendary climbs.



● **Technogym Ride is connected to some of the most popular cycling apps**

Alternatively, users can choose the TNT (Technogym Neuromuscular Training) programmes, developed by the Technogym Research

Center to improve both metabolic and neuromuscular qualities, or can set a customised training plan based on their personal goals.

Technogym Ride is equipped with a real gearbox and gives a realistic cycling feeling with a fast reaction time of 0 to 1000 watts in half a second. The bike is also designed to be very quiet.

It offers clubs the chance to attract new members from the ever-growing cycling community [fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORD** Technogym

PHOTO: TECHNOGYM



*Technogym has a passion for cycling*

Nerio Alessandri

## Pavigym's Acoustic range neutralises impact of noise, explains Rafael Mas

Pavigym has released a new Acoustic flooring range designed exclusively for gyms. The range dampens vibrations, preventing

sound from travelling through floors and walls, reducing echoes, and reducing the effects of heavy impacts on the floor.

In the same way insulation fills the gap between outside and the inside walls, the Acoustic underlay flooring provides a layer of cushion and support between a sub-floor and the gym floor.

When looking for acoustic isolation for a gym, it is advisable to analyse which activities are performed in each area and what level of absorption is



● **The Acoustic range dampens vibrations**

needed. Not all spaces will need the same type of flooring and the same kind of acoustic solution.

Rafael Mas, Pavigym's product manager says: "Our Acoustic Solutions allow you to specifically neutralise

the impact of noise and vibrations, as we focus on the precise frequency range of the weight dropping and start to absorb even below the human hearing. [fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORD** Pavigym

PHOTO: PAVIGYM



*We focus on the precise frequency range of the weight dropping*

Rafael Mas

PHOTO: PAVIGYM

## WisePOS E will help Mindbody clients sell more classes, explains Phil Coxon

Mindbody has launched a new point-of-sale system in the UK. Its UK customers will now benefit from WisePOS E – a hand-held device that integrates payments with

business applications to help wellness, spa and fitness businesses sell more classes and appointments.

In a first of many enhancements said to be coming to Mindbody's technology platform, WisePOS E is the newest addition to its suite of omnichannel payments offerings powered by Stripe.

Mindbody enables studios to meet their customers where they are – both in person and online.

Mindbody's UK fitness customers will have access to: a complete payment solution, for a simplified checkout experience;

● **WisePOS E is a hand-held device that integrates payments with business applications**

streamlined operations which connect transactions with the studio owner's software from start to finish; flexible payment options for consumers to pay when, where and however they want using any credit/debit cards, Apple Pay, contactless payments; and the ability to take advantage of 'Card Present' rates

versus 'Card Not Present'.

Phil Coxon, VP and MD of Europe-UK at Mindbody said: "We're thrilled to be able to offer our customers the chance to boost sales, track their success and grow after what has been an incredibly difficult couple of years."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
Mindbody



PHOTO: MINDBODY

PHOTO: MINDBODY



**WisePOS E allows businesses on our platform to make contactless and digital transactions**

Phil Coxon

## The FXD Bench by Throwdown is perfect for group HIIT workouts, says David Parkinson

The FXD Bench by Throwdown is aimed at boutique style studios. The brand noticed a growing demand for members to do quick HIIT style workouts in a group setting. The FXD Bench can be paired with

cardio, HIIT, strength or indoor cycling equipment to offer motivating high intensity classes.

This multi-functional bench is designed to allow for efficient use with both live or virtual on-screen instructors,

with everything needed to work every muscle group in the body, including; kettlebells, dumbbells, and a slam ball. It has a compact, versatile and mobile design.

The integrated accessory storage creates a single workout station with a wide variety of exercise options. The compact, self-contained size helps to keep facilities clean and organised.

The FXD Bench features dual-articulation, which allows easy transition from horizontal to seated incline to full incline, and every position in between.

"The patent-pending, dual-articulating feature of the back pad ensures members will always be facing the instructor regardless of the exercise

**Members will always be facing the instructor, regardless of the exercise**  
David Parkinson

they are doing, whether it be push or pull related," says David Parkinson, director of Throwdown & HIIT for Core Health & Fitness.

"Another great feature is the drop-down caser wheel at the flick of a lever, which allows the bench to be moved easily."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
Core Health & Fitness

PHOTO: CORE HEALTH & FITNESS



PHOTO: CORE HEALTH & FITNESS

● **The FXD bench features dual-articulation and integrated storage**

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Prehab and rehab packages need to become a part of standard cancer care



## Exercise during chemotherapy shrinks tumours

Research shows that cancer patients who followed a course of exercise ahead of surgery saw their tumours shrink markedly, when compared to patients who followed the standard care pathway

**T**he study specifically examined the role of exercise prehabilitation in oesophageal cancer treatment.

Funded by the Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust in the UK, the study is the first evidence that structured exercise intervention enhances tumour regression during pre-surgical chemotherapy.

Patients on the trial also experienced a strengthening of the immune system and a partial reversal of chemo-related deconditioning and loss of muscle mass and function, leading to an improvement in quality of life during treatment.

The team behind the study – which is published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* – said it was an "extremely encouraging moment" to observe an improved response to chemotherapy treatment in cancer patients.

### The trial

The team compared two groups of oesophageal cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy prior to surgery. Twenty-one patients were assigned to a structured prehabilitation exercise intervention for 16 weeks, while a second group of 19 patients followed standard care without structured exercise.

The exercise intervention programme – or 'prehabilitation' – undertaken during chemotherapy was based on a 'moderate intensity' programme in line with World Health Organization (WHO) and UK Chief Medical Officer (UK-CMO) guidelines for physical activity. It included 150

*The argument for exercise now being a standard part of our treatment strategy for cancer becomes even stronger*

minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise (ie, walking) and two strength sessions per week.

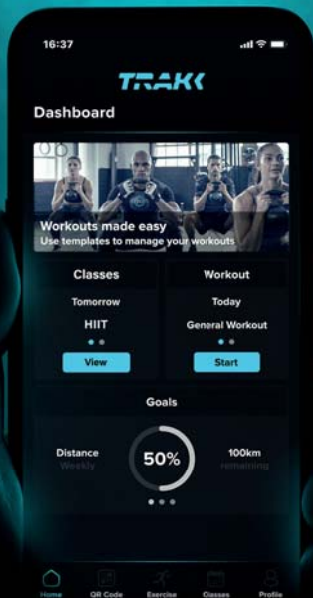
### The analysis

Biochemical and body composition analyses were performed at multiple times prior to starting, during and following chemotherapy, as well as prior to and following surgery, to measure radiological and pathological markers of disease regression.

The results showed that the 'exercise' group demonstrated higher rates of tumour regression and downstaging, as well as improved immune function, reduced inflammation, and a reduction in chemotherapy-related reductions in muscle mass and physical deconditioning.

Prehabilitation is increasingly seen as a key part of supporting cancer patients during treatment. Andrew Davies, consultant surgeon at Guy's and St Thomas, and lead author of the study, described the results as "exciting". He said: "This is the first time a relationship between exercise and chemotherapy response has been shown in a human trial and opens up the possibility of benefitting patients with other types of cancer and those in palliative as well as curative settings. ●

More: [www.hcmmag.com/prehab](http://www.hcmmag.com/prehab)



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