

BONUS
ISSUE

HCM

HOT

2024

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ISSUE 321

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¹Civic Science, ²Mindbody Classpass Lookback Report (2022)

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Introducing HCM HOT

Welcome to *HCM HOT*, a fresh, new annual souvenir edition which celebrates the best of the sector, as well as sharing valuable insights from industry thought leaders

The magazines and news feeds we produced during the three critical years of the pandemic stand as a record of this incredibly volatile time and the amazing response of the sector to the challenges we faced.

At the end of each of these years – 2020, 2021 and 2022, we created a special edition of *HCM* to capture the essence of what had occurred. You can see them permanently archived at www.HCMmag.com/pandemic.

The months that have passed since that time have still been challenging for the sector; but for a different set of reasons and when we came to design our annual special edition, we felt it was time to move on, to make something new for you and to put the pandemic well behind us.

The result is *HCM HOT*, a new annual that celebrates the energy and passion of the sector by pulling together a rich mix of insights and analysis.

We reveal which of our news stories were most read over the last 12 months and which our editors think represent seminal moments for the sector.

Also in this souvenir edition, we've rounded up the insights and surprise revelations of our Life Lessons series, in which sector thought-leaders from Humphrey Cobbold to Phillip Mills and from Martin Seibold to Dave Wright tell us how they've tackled the toughest times in their careers. We think it's some of the most enlightening and useful reporting we've done.

Completing the mix are abstracts of *HCM*'s interview roster, to give you fast access to insights from our lineup.

In the last 12 months, the *HCM* team has written, edited, photo researched and designed an extraordinary 300 pages of interviews with industry thought leaders and CEOs, as part of our deep commitment to doing original reporting on the sector.

For this special edition, our editors have used ChatGPT to generate executive summaries of these profiles and these now sit alongside hard links to all the original content – online, on PDF and on Digital Turning Pages.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/COMA/123

The sector is changing lives across the world

It's heartening to see this sector attracting such passionate, visionary leaders who bring so much joy to the world

It's a rich mix, as we range around the world and into all the industry verticals in search of insight, talking to people including Anthony Geisler, Dan Summerson, Rafa Nadal, Anna Milani and Joey Gonzalez. We hope you enjoy the read.

It's heartening to see this sector, which genuinely did not exist just 40 short years ago, attracting the energies of such passionate, motivated, inventive and visionary leaders who are so dedicated to creative solution-finding in an industry that changes lives and brings so much positivity in times when we need it the most.

Liz Terry, editor
lizterry@leisuremedia.com

HCM HOT 2024

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This new annual souvenir edition reveals our most read and critical stories, says Liz Terry

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Our editors have selected the stories that defined the market, month by month over the last year

p40 / Life Lessons

From getting sacked to risking it all, industry leaders share their learnings from tough times

p70 / HCM People

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40 Life Lessons



70 HCM People



12 Most read stories

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/OLYDIO



26 Editors' picks

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/OLYDIO

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Quote of the year



F45 has had a tumultuous time over the last three years

F45 was a 'slow motion train wreck', says new CEO, Tom Dowd, as the company reveals US\$372.3 million losses

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http://lei.sr/p3g8d_H

PHOTO: F45 TRAINING

Most read / UK



A letter from 200 signatories was sent to Rishi Sunak asking for help with energy bills

UK activity sector rises up to battle for energy support

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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/TS

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Nike Studio will take over and rebrand existing health clubs

Nike gets into the health club market with launch of group exercise studios

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PHOTO: NIKI

Most read / **Fit Tech**

Users press down on a force sensor to record a reading

Fitbit is developing a tiny blood pressure monitor for its smart watch

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Most read / Deal

The Spanish clubs
will be absorbed in to
the Basic-Fit estate

Rene Moos snaps up RSG's Spanish clubs – adds them to the Basic-Fit portfolio

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PHOTO: BASIC-FIT

Most read / Consumer insight

Mental health now main motivation for exercise

54 per cent said their
main motivation for
keeping active was to
help their mental health

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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AMWIZ

Most read / **Wellness**

Jeff Zwiefel, president
of Life Time (left),
with Dr Jim LaValle

Life Time gets into the medical wellness market with new Miora brand



PHOTO: TOLUNTIER ZWIEFEL

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Most read / **Grand ambition**

The Mindfulness
City will have legal
independence and
executive autonomy

King of Bhutan unveils 'Mindfulness City' masterplan for Southern Bhutan



PHOTO: BRICK VISION, ARCHITECT, INC.

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Most read / **Celeb**

Chris Hemsworth
was the founder
of Centr

The Centr app is launching into the fitness equipment market

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Fitness First has been
restructured following a
two-day court hearing

Courts use cross cram down powers to push through Fitness First UK restructure

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PHOTO: FITNESS FIRST

Most read / **Policy**

Kim Leadbeater calls for transformation in UK wellbeing policy

"We can offer a fresh and positive vision for Britain"

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MSK health hub partners are UK Active, Good Boost, Orthopaedic Research UK, Escape Pain and Arthritis Action

Musculoskeletal health hub pilot expanded to 100 sites

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The change means local authorities pay no VAT on in-house leisure services income

Legal ruling scraps VAT on gym memberships for councils in the UK

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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/BRISNAD

Most read / **Hotel**

Kerzner's new 'fitness hotel', Siro One Zabeel, opens for reservations

Siro is set to open its doors in February 2024 at the One Za'abeel development

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PHOTO: KERZNER INTERNATIONAL/SIRO HOTELS

Most read / Research

The study found a link between physical activity in 15-18 year old girls and their attentional control

Physically active teenage girls do better academically



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Better Health Rewards app users can earn tickets and vouchers for meeting healthy goals

Sir Keith Mills' rewards scheme for exercise and healthy eating launches pilot



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increasing
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could save Europe
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by retailers

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Fitness adds
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One palm
recognition
for club
access
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PHOTO: AMAZON ONE



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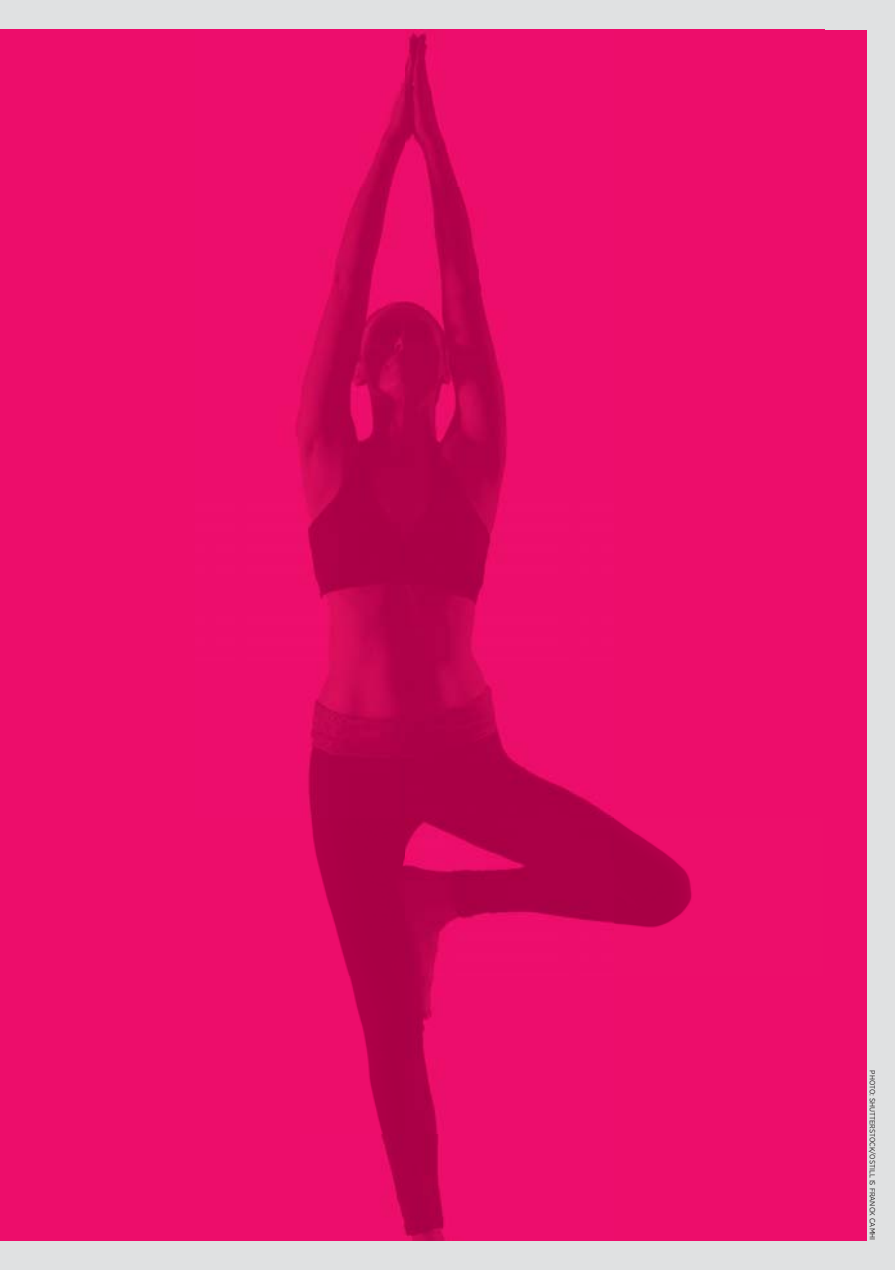
EDITORS' PICKS

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JANUARY 2023

PHOTO: FITNESS LOFT



Life Fit Group refinanced and snapped up Fitness Loft

- German fitness operator Life Fit Group bought Fitness Loft to extend its reach into the FSBP market segment (Full-Service-Best-Price)
- The FSBP segment had reached 99 per cent of pre-COVID numbers in Germany vs 90 per cent for other segments
- The purchase was funded by a €12m equity raise and €15m bond top-up

MORE: http://lei.sr/6t8u7_H

FEBRUARY 2023

PHOTO: ADIDAS



Les Mills and Adidas joined forces

- Les Mills joined forces with Adidas to provide its omnifitness platform to 300 million adiClub members
- The move is part of a strategy to deepen engagement with Gen Z for the benefit of health club operators
- The partnership also covers Les Mills Live events
- Les Mills launched its omnifitness platform during the pandemic in 2021

MORE: http://lei.sr/P2j9d_H

MARCH 2023

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/FIZES



World Active Forum launched to represent industry as 'essential'

- The World Active Forum (WAF) will advocate for the physical activity sector worldwide
- The global forum was created by a group of global representative bodies and stakeholders
- Barrie Elvish, CEO of AUSActive and WAF co-founder, was elected as first chair
- The first meeting on 16 August was attended by Dr Fiona Bull, head of the WHO's Physical Activity Unit

MORE: http://lei.sr/z7D9P_H

APRIL 2023

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RODLEMMAGE.COM - YURI A



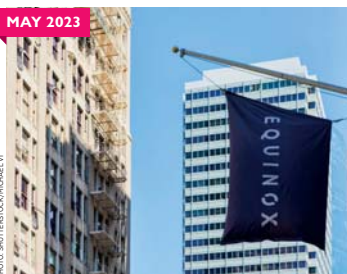
European health club market sees 'strong recovery' said Deloitte

- The European fitness market experienced a "strong recovery" after two difficult, pandemic-affected years
- The number of gym memberships in Europe increased by around 7 million during 2022
- The 12.3 per cent jump was accompanied by a 66 per cent increase in revenues
- The figures came from the annual *European Health & Fitness Market Report 2023* edition

MORE: http://lei.sr/R8J9e_H

MAY 2023

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MICHAEL VI



Equinox told HCM it planned to fight \$11.25m race discrimination ruling

- Equinox was ordered to pay out US\$11.25m to a former employee
- Röbynn Europe, a black female fitness trainer, claimed she was discriminated against
- In response, Equinox said Europe was sacked due to being repeatedly late for work
- Equinox lost the court case – but “vehemently disagrees” with the decision and will appeal

MORE: http://lei.sr/m4G3P_H

JUNE 2023

PHOTO: SEB



Anytime Fitness owner, Self Esteem Brands, launched SUMHIIT brand

- Self Esteem Brands launched its SUMHIIT Fitness brand at the Fit Summit in Singapore
- The brand – known as Basecamp Fitness in the US – joined SEB's Anytime Fitness and The Bar Method in the company's portfolio of franchises
- SEB stated its intention to grow to 10,000 locations globally by 2030
- The business opens around 300 locations every year

MORE: http://lei.sr/e7H6P_H

JULY 2023

PHOTO: XPONENTIAL FITNESS



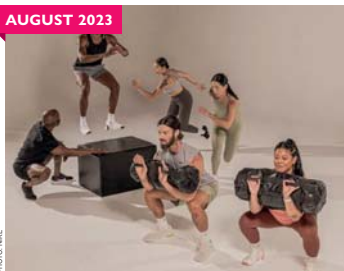
Xponential fought back from damning Fuzzy Panda report

- Fuzzy Panda Research published a damning report on Xponential Fitness
- The company immediately responded, rebutting the claims made
- Share prices fell 37 per cent, but started to recover within a few days
- The company said its profits will more than double in 2024

MORE: http://lei.sr/2Y8y3_H

AUGUST 2023

PHOTO: NIKE



Nike entered the health club market with the launch of Nike Studios

- Nike launched a chain of Nike Studios offering group exercise classes
- The move was in partnership with FitLab, with the first studio opening in a FitLab-owned location in West Hollywood
- Locations will typically involve reskinning existing businesses to speed up the rollout of the brand
- Fees ranged from US\$99-US\$200/month

MORE: http://lei.sr/q8a5h_H

SEPTEMBER 2023



PHOTO: ORANGETHEORY

Orangetheory tapped into strength training boom with Strength 50 class

- Orangetheory Fitness announced it was tapping into the strength training trend with a new class
- Strength 50 is divided into Total Body, Upper Body and Lower Body segments
- For the launch, Orangetheory teamed up with self-love influencer and body-positive advocate, Danae Mercer Ricci, to champion a "Long May We Gain" pledge

MORE: http://lei.sr/5D5d4_H

OCTOBER 2023



PHOTO: LIFE TIME

Life Time launched luxury living at new Connecticut property

- Health club operator, Life Time, opened its first property in the state of Connecticut
- Life Time Stamford Downtown combines a full-service health club with luxury residences and a rooftop 'beach club'
- The 52,000 square foot athletic country club will offer memberships to the general public
- Residents will have access to the facilities

MORE: http://lei.sr/2m3h9_H

NOVEMBER 2023



PHOTO: ARMAH SPORTS

Armah Sports revealed plans for IPO – the second for CEO, Fahad Alhagbani

- Saudi-based Armah Sports was gearing up to do an IPO before the end of the year.
- It was the second IPO in five years for CEO, Fahad Alhagbani and his family, following the float of their previous business, Fitness Time, in 2018
- Doing two IPOs in five years is a fitness industry first
- Armah Sports is growing two brands, Optimo and Be_Fit

MORE: http://lei.sr/D4H9v_H

DECEMBER 2023



PHOTO: LINDORA/BUSINESS WIRE

Xponential snapped up 11th brand – moved into metabolic health

- Xponential Fitness bought metabolic health brand, Lindora
- Services include weight loss medications, hormone replacement therapy and IV hydration
- The deal moves the company into the lucrative weight management and wellness industry
- Xponential said Lindora will be franchised nationally and globally when deal is sealed in 2024

MORE: http://lei.sr/d5S5h_H

JANUARY 2023

PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP



John Treharne took back the helm at The Gym Group

- Richard Darwin stepped down from his role as CEO of The Gym Group in January
- Darwin spent past seven years leading the low-cost gym chain as CFO and CEO
- The Gym Group founder, John Treharne, stepped in to lead the business
- Darwin's departure came as the business hit a record number of gyms

MORE: http://lei.sr/b9B9B_H

FEBRUARY 2023

PHOTO: ROBERT ANSCOME/SHUTTERSTOCK



Rewards scheme for exercise and healthy eating launched as pilot

- A pilot scheme to trial the health benefits of using the Better Health: Rewards app, launched in the UK
- The initiative is being backed by £3m of government funding and was developed by Sir Keith Mills, who pioneered reward programmes Air Miles and Nectar
- Users receive a free fitness wearable to track exercise which is rewarded with gym passes, supermarket vouchers and gift cards

MORE: http://lei.sr/X9j3N_H

MARCH 2023

PHOTO: EBB PROFESSIONAL/SHUTTERSTOCK



UK government pledged a 'vital lifeline' of £63m for pools

- Sport England announced it would manage a £63m fund from the government to support at-risk leisure centres and pools in light of the energy crisis
- Jeremy Hunt, chancellor of the exchequer, called the funding a 'vital lifeline' that will 'keep them afloat'
- 350 facilities had shut or restricted services
- A coalition of 200 bodies and industry leaders signed a letter demanding support

MORE: http://lei.sr/P4T8w_H

APRIL 2023

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK AFRICA STUDIO



First symposium on children's mental health was launched

- The Inaugural Children's Mental Health Symposium was announced for Dublin, Ireland, spearheaded by the Global Wellness Institute's Global Wellness for Children Initiative
- The two-day event feature speakers including "First 1,000 Days" advocate Sergio Pecorelli, MD, PhD, as well as author Deborah McNeils, creator of Neuro-Nurturing and Brain Insights

MORE: http://lei.sr/j8U6v_H

MAY 2023



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/BERNARD

Legal ruling scrapped VAT on gym memberships for councils in the UK

- Councils were told they were no longer obliged to charge VAT on leisure, including gym membership, creating a 20 per cent margin
- Local authorities could see hundreds of thousands of pounds of extra revenues
- They are still eligible to reclaim VAT on qualifying expenditure – the change means local authorities pay no VAT on their income

MORE: http://lei.sr/p6e5k_H

JUNE 2023



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/LINAMARINA

UK fitness sector hit record value according to new report

- The UK fitness industry's market value reached an all-time high
- An 11.5 per cent increase in value was achieved despite a small drop in the total number of gyms between 2022 and 2023
- The figures came from the annual *State of UK Fitness Industry* report
- The research was published by Leisure DB

MORE: http://lei.sr/q7X8t_H

JULY 2023



PHOTO: FITNESS FIRST

Fitness First UK restructuring – courts pushed through plan

- The UK courts used their 'cross cram down powers' to push through a restructuring for Fitness First in spite of a challenge from five landlords
- The company successfully made the case that it would have to liquidate without the ruling
- In April, Fitness First was valued at between £4.5m and £7m, but had liabilities of £18.7m, mainly CLBILS loans, as well as cashflow problems

MORE: http://lei.sr/P4T8w_H

AUGUST 2023



PHOTO: DAVID LLOYD CLUBS

David Lloyd Leisure fined £2.5m over death of three-year-old

- David Lloyd Leisure was fined more than £2.5m after pleading guilty to charges relating to the *Health and Safety at Work Act*
- The case was brought following the death of a three-year-old boy – Rocco Wright – at the David Lloyd Leisure Club on Tongue Lane, Moortown, Leeds
- At the time of the incident there was only one lifeguard, aged 17, on duty

MORE: http://lei.sr/N5c2e_H

SEPTEMBER 2023



PHOTO: PUREGYM

PureGym £805m refinancing 'one of the largest deals of its kind'

- PureGym raised £805 million in one day to refinance the business
- CEO, Humphrey Cobbold said the deal was one of the largest of its kind in the sector's history
- The company set out on a programme of 'significant expansion' in the UK, Switzerland, the Middle East and 'other attractive markets'
- Interest payments increased from £51m to £80m

MORE: http://lei.sr/r6k6V_H 

OCTOBER 2023



PHOTO: THIRD SPACE

Third Space agreed £88.5m structured finance deal

- Third Space agreed a £88.5 million loan facility with OakNorth and Searchlight
- It was the first time the company had used debt to finance growth
- CEO Colin Waggett told HCM the market is ripe with opportunity, with landlords targeting Third Space with possible locations
- The company typically has wait lists at many clubs

MORE: http://lei.sr/C2q5a_H 

NOVEMBER 2023



PHOTO: EVERLAST GYM

Everlast Gyms preparing for global expansion with flagship 'showroom'

- Everlast Gyms, part of Frasers Group, launched a flagship property in Gateshead UK
- The club functions as a full-blown gym, while also acting as a 'showroom of concepts' for global joint venture partners
- Everlast plans to expand internationally via joint ventures, using a range of joint venture, licence and partnership models

MORE: http://lei.sr/M8v3V_H 

DECEMBER 2023



PHOTO: EVERYONE ACTIVE

Everyone Active launched Everyone Wellness, giving members access to GPs

- Management contracting operation, Everyone Active, launched a GP consultation service called Everyone Wellness in partnership with HealthHero
- Appointments are available with qualified doctors who have the power to advise and dispense, via phone or online
- More than 2,000 people signed up to the new package on the launch weekend

MORE: http://lei.sr/D4q9v_H 

JANUARY 2023



Netflix launched into fitness with Nike Training Club

- Nike joined forces with Netflix to provide Nike Training Club content on the streaming channel
- Five programmes were released on 30 December 2022 and the rest streamed during 2023
- Overall Netflix and Nike offered 90 workouts for all fitness levels across HIIT, yoga and strength
- Nike Training Club was accessible to Netflix's 223m subscribers worldwide in ten languages

MORE: http://lei.sr/5Y2S3_H

FEBRUARY 2023



Fitbit is developing a tiny blood pressure monitor for its smart watch

- Fitbit registered a patent application in the US for an in-watch blood pressure sensor
- The patent documentation was created by Shelten Yuen, Fitbit's VP of research
- It combines a force sensor (pressed by a user's finger) and PPG sensor that work together to calculate a blood pressure reading
- Users took part in blood pressure tracking study

MORE: http://lei.sr/w7T5M_H

MARCH 2023



Washable VR headset, described as world's is smallest ideal for fitness

- Bigscreen opened pre-sales for its Beyond VR headset – company described it as the 'world's smallest' and 'six times lighter' than competitors
- It weighs 127g and the inner cushion is made following a personal 3D face scan to improve clarity and stop light leakage
- Founder and CEO Darshan Shankar said bulky, heavy competitor VR headsets inspired him to create it

MORE: http://lei.sr/G9w8r_H

APRIL 2023



iMetaWear launched haptics shirt for VR and the metaverse

- The ITRI (Industrial Technology Research Institute) in Taiwan developed a haptics shirt for immersive VR and metaverse fitness experiences
- Called iMetaWear and each shirt comes with ten haptic points and four sets of electrodes
- According to ITRI, the electrodes are screen printed into somatosensory garments, so do not need adhesive electrodes

MORE: http://lei.sr/Z9y4m_H

MAY 2023

PHOTO: WHOOP



Whoop added Strength Trainer function with 200 workouts

- Whoop has launched a new Strength Trainer feature and 200 pre-recorded workouts
- It allows members to measure strength training exercises and assess the impact of muscular load
- Whoop says the launch makes it the first device to measure how strength training impacts the body
- Muscular load is now also factored into the Whoop Strain score

MORE: http://lei.sr/C4R3R_H

JUNE 2023

PHOTO: APPLE



Apple targets health and fitness – ramps up cycling functionality

- Apple announced a raft of upgrades
- At the heart of the announcements, the Health app delivers enhanced fitness functionality
- Cycling had an upgrade with Bluetooth option and power meter
- Other products support group exercise, mental health and eyesight, while 'world's first spatial operating system' drives new immersive headset

MORE: http://lei.sr/a9a3U_H

JULY 2023

PHOTO: ZWIFT



Zwift launched Zwift Play: the first game controller for cycling workouts

- Online fitness platform, Zwift, launched the first game controller designed specifically for its virtual cycling workouts
- The Zwift Play controller allow riders to take full control of their experience
- It also remove the need to use touch-screen or external keyboards
- It can be attached to handlebars with silicon straps

MORE: http://lei.sr/W7Y2w_H

AUGUST 2023

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND



Gympass raised US\$85m, hit US\$2.4bn value

- Gympass completed a Series F funding round worth US\$85m
- The deal valued the company at US\$2.4bn, up from US\$2.2bn in 2021
- The round was led by EQT Growth, while General Atlantic and Moore Strategic Ventures increased their interest in the business
- Gympass had recorded 300m check-ins by July 2023.

MORE: http://lei.sr/S9u5s_H

SEPTEMBER 2023

PHOTO: PELOTON

Lululemon dumped Mirror and signed up with Peloton for digital

- Peloton signed a deal to become the exclusive digital fitness content provider for Lululemon
- The five-year strategic partnership will see Peloton's content being made available on Lululemon Studio. Lululemon will 'sunset' its Mirror product line of home workout equipment
- As part of the deal, Peloton instructors became Lululemon ambassadors

MORE: http://lei.sr/S4f3Q_H

OCTOBER 2023

PHOTO: CLIMBER

Interactive Strength, owner of Forme, acquired CLIMBR to target medical

- Interactive Strength revealed plans to acquire vertical climber brand CLIMBR for an undisclosed sum
- Interactive Strength is the maker of fitness screen Forme and also provides virtual personal training
- The deal is part of the company's plan to target the commercial fitness market with a connected solution
- Interactive Strength is Nasdaq-listed

MORE: http://lei.sr/H8n4T_H

NOVEMBER 2023

PHOTO: HUAWEI

Huawei set up a Health Lab to research wearables and health and fitness

- Huawei launched a new Health Lab to research how it can provide better health and fitness support for users via its wearables
- The Chinese tech giant chose Helsinki, Finland, as the location of the facility
- The 1,000sq m Health Lab houses research facilities and is set up to test performance in more than 20 different sports

MORE: http://lei.sr/a6q2W_H

DECEMBER 2023

PHOTO: LES MILLS

Les Mills releases XR Dance for Meta Quest 3

- Les Mills launched extended reality dance workout, Les Mills XR Dance for the Meta Quest 3 headset
- The app was created in collaboration with specialist gaming companies Monstercat and Odders
- 25 dance routines are on offer with three levels, ranging from pop to techno
- Les Mills XR Dance is led by a cast of professional dancers as holograms

MORE: http://lei.sr/x3w2b_H

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HCM HOT 2024

LIFE LESSONS

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If I could say something to my younger self it would be not to fret too much and to face challenges head on

Steve Bradley

Director, Fitness4Less and Topnotch Gyms



joined the industry in 1991 and although there were always everyday issues to deal with, generally the sector was on an upwards trajectory and times were good.

Then the 2008 financial crash hit and all of a sudden, as a young operations director, I realised I wasn't going to hit my targets or get my bonus and also that my job wasn't even guaranteed. What's more, I was managing a team of people who were worried about losing their jobs and many of our members were in a similar position.

As a director I had to put my own fears to one side, motivate myself, reassure and motivate my team and get them to do the same for our members. This same mindset has got us through the tough trading conditions of the last few years. And the experience of the financial crash made me develop mental resilience and learn to be more agile and decisive in business.

Back in 2008, I told our sales staff to look for the people who were trading down from the top end clubs to the mid-market and emphasise our value-for-money proposition. We're doing the same now and resurrecting our mid-market brand, Topnotch Gyms, to take advantage of the

trading conditions. More recently, we've ripped out all the hot tubs in our clubs: people didn't want them after COVID and they're costly to run.

If a club is under performing I'm better, and faster, at making the difficult decision to close it, or move it in another direction.

If I could say something to my younger self it would be not to fret too much. Face the challenges head on and include as many people in the solution as possible – not just board members but ask the opinion of managers, even if it's not about their club. Ask staff for feedback – the young ones have a different perspective and usually grew up in the area, which helps to embed the club in the community. The tough times have also made me appreciate the value of our workforce, who have consistently stepped up to do stuff outside of their comfort zone for the greater good.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Bradley

Originally published: HCM 1 2023





TOUGH TIMES 2023



“

I shouldn't have been as angry for so long and I shouldn't have blamed people around me as much as I did

Humphrey Cobbold

CEO, PureGym



PHOTO: PURE GYM / JAMES MCCALEY

One afternoon I was unceremoniously fired from Wiggle, the private equity-owned company I'd devoted my life to for the best part of five years. I walked in that day as a CEO and walked out a nobody.

There were differences of opinion between myself and the private equity owners, but I didn't think they were terminal, so when they delivered the coup de grâce I was shocked. In hindsight it wasn't completely out of the blue, but it felt like it at the time and was very upsetting.

There was a real risk it would derail my career. Important people around London knew I'd been ejected from my role and when a community like the private equity industry knows that, everybody questions why.

Handling the aftermath of these situations is really important and I decided to be completely open. I didn't go around shouting about it, but I didn't hide the fact I had been taken out of a role I thoroughly enjoyed and that I'd put my life and soul into. I hope being open about the experience has made me look, and actually be, more human. CEOs are often criticised for being aloof, so to be considered more human is probably no bad thing.

For three to five months, I was a pretty angry man. If I could give my younger self some advice, I would say take it on the chin and move on – life's too short to spend it angry with the world.

Although there's a natural period of anger when something like that happens, I shouldn't have been as angry for so long and I should not have blamed people around me as much as I did.

The experience taught me humility. When you've been pretty successful in life and get knocked like that, you feel brought down to size. On reflection, that's no bad thing for anyone. I also learned about the emotions people go through when they are relieved of their responsibilities, or go through a major change, so I hope it has helped to inform me when I've been on the other side of the table. I hope I now behave in a humane and reasonable way in such situations. They're never easy but empathy based on lived experience probably helps.

The cloud had a silver lining. It made me reflect on what I really wanted to do and I'm incredibly grateful because I found Pure Gym during that time and ended up building a more successful business. I now believe bad things can happen which can lead to good things.

Despite the pain, I learned some important life lessons which I wouldn't be without. Always do the best with the circumstances you find yourself in.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Cobbold

Originally published: HCM 1 2023



PHOTO: RICHARD DAWSON



*It was an
uncomfortable
experience, but I
wouldn't change it*

**Dave
Courteen**

**CEO of Mosaic Spa
and Health Clubs**



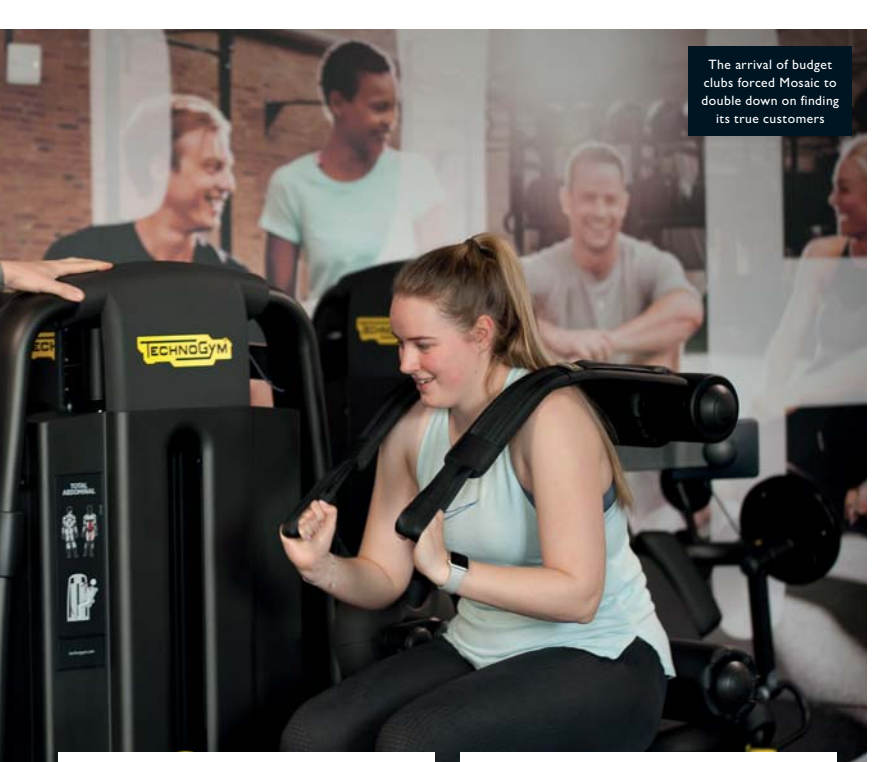
After 24 years of managing hotel health clubs under contract, Mosaic bought its first standalone owned and operated club, in Shrewsbury UK in 2011, backed by venture capitalists.

We bought it out of administration, so knew it needed investment, but soon realised far more was required than we'd budgeted for. A large chunk of our finances were used up on things like air conditioning and equipment servicing, which were important but didn't have an impact from the members' point of view. It also meant we weren't able to fully realise our vision of what we wanted to do with the club.

Initially, we were able to get the club running profitably, but then budget clubs arrived and three opened within a mile of our club. Despite us offering a pool and tennis courts, there wasn't enough of a differentiator between their facilities at £10 a month and ours at £60.

The tough competition had a massive impact on our performance and recovery, which led to our venture capitalist backers losing confidence in our business model and the sector. They wanted to exit.

The arrival of the budget clubs meant we had to spring into action quickly. Despite pressure to turn the facility into a trampoline park or an indoor waterpark, I still believed we were doing the right thing – we just hadn't been able to deliver the facility to match our vision.



The arrival of budget clubs forced Mosaic to double down on finding its true customers

So, we doubled down on our model, refreshed our research on local demographics and reconfirmed there was a gap for a club totally dedicated to the family market. We then set about finding another backer who could help us deliver our vision of creating a high quality facility with great service.

A local entrepreneur, who was also a member, came on board with investment. The venture capitalists were bought out and we invested a further £1m to finish off what we should have done the first time around, creating a high quality facility which made a big impact and offered great service.

We went strongly after the family market, putting prices up, but also offering free membership to children under 16 if a parent was a member. This strategy worked and the membership went up from 1,900 to 3,000 within 12 months of the reopening in 2017. We're now at 6,000 members and for the first time in my career we're running a waiting list.

The experience taught me to always research the marketplace, find your niche, be clear on

your vision and then deliver that vision the absolute best you can. If you've done all those things correctly, success should follow.

If I could go back and give myself some advice I would say to stick to the vision and keep believing in myself, even though there was pressure to either drop the prices or change the model completely, we weren't distracted, stayed with the plan and now have a club and a team of which I'm really proud.

It was an uncomfortable experience, but I wouldn't change it. I genuinely believe we all become better and stronger for the challenges we face. During the really tough times we tend to grow the most, learn more about ourselves, hone our skills and emerge with a fresh set of learning and greater resilience.

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Online: www.hcmmag.com/Courteen2

Originally published: HCM 4 2023





I was beset with self doubt and imposter syndrome, I felt paranoid, exposed and watched

Tara Dillon

CEO, CIMSPA

The biggest challenge of my career was taking over CIMSPA. Although I'm so glad I did, I've never felt so isolated as I did in those early days, when I spent many nights in hotel rooms with my head in my hands.

Since it was only a short secondment initially, I had felt there was no risk, but once I got involved I realised the enormity of the challenge and felt that if I didn't make it work I would be a public failure.

The financial situation was precarious and there was an overwhelming amount of work, which we weren't well enough resourced to do. Initially I was beset with self doubt and imposter syndrome, I felt paranoid, exposed and watched.

Securing finances

The first challenge was to secure the financial position. Funding was difficult, even though the industry had said it wanted a body to showcase the profession and standardise training.

When I first approached Sport England, I was told that I had no operational evidence, no money and no people and was asked why the sector wasn't funding it. I argued that the sector wasn't awash with money and that CIMSPA needed a partner to prove a point.

Eventually, with a plan, Sport England did give us some funding. I then went back to the sector to ask employers to match it, although they didn't quite match it, we had enough support to

get going. This was a pivotal moment; it showed willingness and collaboration from the sector.

Power of listening

I drew on my professional experience. Successful organisations listen, have a strong vision and recruit well, so I aimed to do just that. It helped that I had a healthy black book and felt solidarity from the industry. The change came when I realised I wasn't having to check cashflow every single day.

When I took over we had less than 1,000 members, but after two years we had five times as many and the support of five or six important partners.

During this time I learned it's really important to listen to your customers, as well as your instincts, and to hold your nerve through periods of change. CIMSPA had to match the ask of the sector, which meant we had to stay true to our mission and not pivot for an easy win. There were many temptations where changing course, or entering a partnership, would have been financially beneficial but it would have impacted our integrity.

The position of CEO is a big jump up from MD and I initially found it a lonely place, but when I learned to reach out to sector friends, I was well supported.

'Stop whinging'

When I was battling for the Sport England funding I recall I did whinge a bit – moaning about other

Dillon says there was an 'overwhelming amount' of work to do when she took over at CIMSPA



organisations which were funded – but a mentor told me to stop being a victim and work it out, which was the jolt I needed. I learned not to look for problems, but to focus on what's going well and build on that. Be clear on the goal and keep making small steps forward.

The tough times were definitely worth it. I'm proud of the empowering culture we've created at CIMSPA, which is built on the foundations of equality, respect and teamwork. I implemented the policy of treating people like grown-ups – for example offering unlimited leave, having a realistic expenses policy and an open-minded approach to flexible working – and then handed the baton over to the employees.

This approach won us the Best Company award in *The Times* Top 100 Not for Profit category and I was voted in the top five CEOs.

The organisation is making a difference, and we're constantly striving to be the best we can be for the sector. If anyone reading this has anything to say, I'm always listening.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Dillon

Originally published: HCM 6 2023



PHOTO: RASMUS INGERSLEV



*If you're in a position
to help someone,
do it: it might be
you asking the
favour tomorrow*

Rasmus Ingerslev

**Partner and chair,
Barry's Bootcamp Nordic
AB and Lenus eHealth**



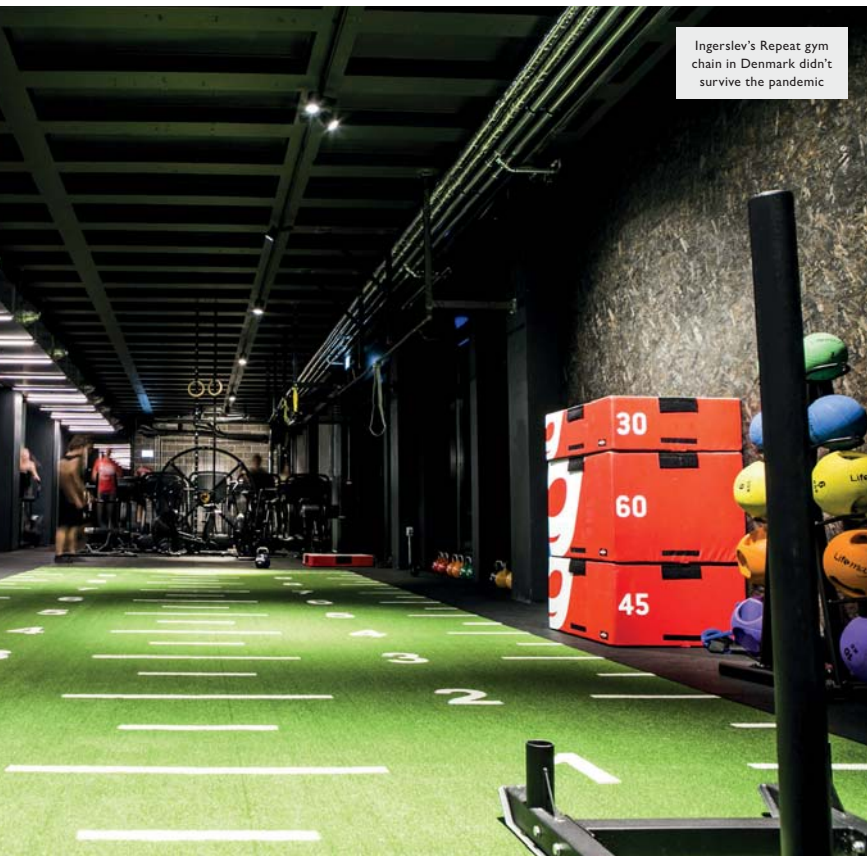
Having built a number of businesses over the last two decades, I've experienced my fair share of good and tough times. I lost 95 per cent of my fortune in the 2008 financial crash and had to start again from scratch.

My gym chain Repeat didn't survive the harsh trading conditions of the pandemic, which was mentally very challenging.

Much of the resilience needed and the lessons learned happened very early on, when we were establishing Fitness DK, in the early 2000s. We secured two sites in close proximity to each other, which were scheduled to launch one year apart, but because of a delay caused by the landlord, one overran and they ended up launching simultaneously, making it difficult to build the membership fast enough to minimise the initial loss on operation. As a result, we were bleeding financially and close to bankruptcy.

I looked at the cost structure to see where we could make savings. We had large costs for rent, equipment leasing and to the bank. With new budgets and forecasts, I went to the landlords, bank and suppliers and asked to freeze our payments for a few months and pay later once the clubs were established.

Ingerslev's Repeat gym chain in Denmark didn't survive the pandemic



They all said yes, and we turned the business around. It made me realise the importance of relationships. If you enter respectful negotiations and look for a win-win, you're more likely to get a favourable outcome.

Another learning was to secure yourself legally and to have respect for the things you don't know much about. Our problem had arisen because we didn't secure ourselves sufficiently with the contract. The landlord's delay ended up as our cost – we weren't the root cause of the problem, but we had to foot the bill. The experience came at a cost but I'm still grateful for it. Although it's important to be friends, make contracts as if you are enemies, because if you ever have to look at them you may well be!

Good times and hard times are cyclical and this too shall pass. But don't bury your head in the sand: work hard and do your best. When the good times come back, remember the lessons from the tough times.

Make sure you have money in the account, or access to debt before you need it. And, if you're in a position to help someone, do it – it might be you asking for the favour tomorrow.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Ingerslev

Originally published: HCM 1 2023





The most important thing you learn is that resilience is essential if you want to be around long enough to make a lasting difference

Phillip Mills

CEO, Les Mills



PHOTO: LES MILLS

As any club operator will attest, fitness is a very tough business. We've battled through recessions, debt mountains and countless failures – our global PT licensing business, several clothing firms and three separate nutrition companies have gone under. Struggle has been a very real and regular part of our journey and often it's been a battle just to keep the lights on.

The most difficult time was after our family gym business was publicly listed in 1984. It was taken over by a group of investment companies in 1987, a month before the global stock market crash. All the investors went broke and I bought our company back in pieces from different liquidators. I borrowed about NZ\$10m and although I bought cheaply, that was an awful lot of money in those days.

For the next six years, I had to figure out ways to keep paying the bills from week to week while I paid down the debt. I was so burnt out I became pretty depressed, put on 10kg and wasn't exercising. It took my partner Jackie to grab hold of me and say "Philly, you've got to get a grip."

Day by day, week by week, my team and I had to come up with new ways to generate cash and improve the business. After Jackie and I spoke about my health, I set myself some goals and one was to make my way up to A-Grade tennis. Of course, I never made

it past the Whangarei Open, let alone Wimbledon, but within a year I lost most of the weight, the depression lifted and the business turned a corner.

Working closely as a team we learned dozens, maybe hundreds of things that ultimately made our business better. Many of them we've codified into our Group Fitness Management education experience, which we've delivered to thousands of clubs around the world.

Since then, I've worked through three more global crises – the pandemic being the toughest. Each crisis is always awful, but after you survive the first, you know you can do it again. There's nothing like hardship to bring the best out of us.

I'd love to have been able to learn those lessons without the pain, but that's not real. You have to live through it to learn. We've made more mistakes than I care to count over the years, but you learn from them and you go again. The most important thing you learn is that resilience is essential if you want to be around long enough to make a lasting difference.

Kia Kaha [Maori for 'be strong'].

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Mills

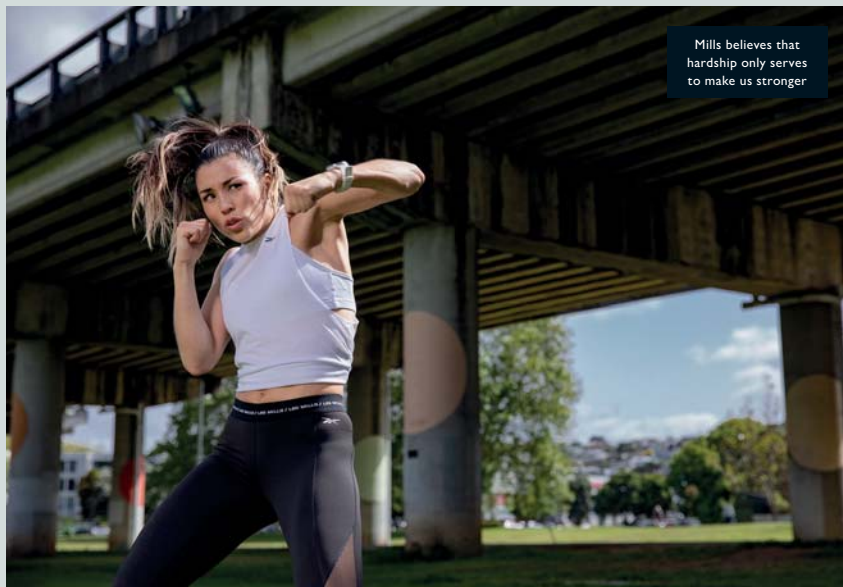
Originally published: HCM 1 2023





You have to live through the pain to learn, says Mills

PHOTO LES MILLS



Mills believes that hardship only serves to make us stronger

PHOTO LES MILLS / ANDREW PARRIS



For the first decade we worked every day, lived pay cheque to pay cheque while we tried to figure out the business

Chris Rondeau

Former CEO, Planet Fitness



PHOTO: BILL TRISLOW

My overarching life lesson has been learning the value of hard work. I dropped out of college at 20 and took the school of hard knocks route. I didn't go to an Ivy League school or graduate with a big degree and I didn't read my first book until I was 42 years-old.

I started at the front desk of the gym and worked my way up through the ranks. It has felt like a 30-year college degree and I'm still learning now.

At times I've felt like the underdog and I've had to play catch up. My business partners and I were not the most sophisticated bunch, but we had great passion and we believed in the model. When we got to 500 locations we were like "this is a big company, we can't just run it like three gym guys anymore". So in November 2012 we brought in private equity. That was a big step forward and I learned a lot from them.

Then one of the partners retired and I was elevated from COO to CEO and all of a sudden we were doing budgets and I'd never done those before. Three years later we went public, which was another learning curve.

Around 2016, a year or two after the IPO this started to change. I was meeting with well educated, super smart people – all the investors and analysts who ask good (and tough) questions and I realised there wasn't a question I couldn't answer off the tip of my tongue. No matter how smart and well educated they were, no one knew the business better than I did. That's when my confidence level rose and any doubts stopped.

Building strengths

It's a strength that I've worked in all parts of the club. I've worked the front desk, been a trainer, a manager, a regional manager, COO and CEO. I understand the trials and tribulations of staff and how to engage members, as well as how to do all the day-to-day stuff, such as checking members in and billing. I love working in the gyms.

Pre-COVID I used to work the front desk once a quarter because I'd learn things about making the jobs easier for our staff, or the experience better for members.

If I could go back and change things, I don't think I would. It's been very tough, but we now have more than 2,400 locations in six countries and 17 million members and are still driving membership growth. The drive and underdog mentality made me work that much harder. If I'd taken another route I might not be where I am now: we could have been a few years later in developing our model and someone else might have got the opportunity before us.

Although I wasn't much for education when I was growing up, if I could give my younger self some advice, I'd say pay attention at school – especially in business class – and read more books. The learning curve throughout my career has definitely been a struggle at times. For the first decade we worked every day, lived pay cheque to pay cheque and had credit card debt while we tried to figure out the business. Luckily, with passion and hard work we made a go of the business.

Planet Fitness has grown to be one of the biggest fitness franchises in the world



PHOTO: PLANET FITNESS

UPDATE AT 16 SEPTEMBER 2023

Planet Fitness board ousts CEO Chris Rondeau

In a shock move, the board of Planet Fitness ousted Chris Rondeau from his role as CEO in September 2023, replacing him with Craig Benson, a member of the board and business heavyweight.

Board chair Stephen Spinelli said: "As we enter the next chapter of Planet Fitness's journey, the board felt now was the right time to transition leadership."

Spinelli said Rondeau was obliged under his existing agreement with the company to serve in an advisory role to "ensure a smooth transition". An executive search firm was appointed to find a new permanent CEO.

Rondeau remained on the board, but will be "nominated for re-election at the next AGM", said Spinelli. As part of his severance package, he was awarded a bonus of around US\$800,000 and continues to receive his basic salary of US\$950,000 for two years while he's restrained by a non-compete agreement. He's also been bound by confidentiality clauses. Rondeau has since started a franchise business in the carwash sector.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Rondeau

Originally published: HCM 5 2023





I discovered our customers are more loyal than I imagined, so I wish I'd worried less

Martin Seibold

CEO, LifeFit Group



German consumers have been loyal to LifeFit Group



In 2012 I was appointed to handle the restructure and sale of Fitness First in the UK. It was an old-fashioned mid-market brand that had been built in the 90s to the standard of the 70s, so as soon as the low cost operators came in, it lost market share.

That period was very challenging: we had to dust off the old Fitness First, starting with how the teams worked and then the whole look and feel of the brand. But it wasn't stressful, because we had a huge investment programme, successful teams and members who liked the product, which meant there was a lot of excitement. It was a fantastic period and I would do it over again.

In 2017 I moved to Fitness First Germany, which was experiencing a lot of self-created troubles. We took the appropriate learnings from the UK and strategically invested in and repositioned the company, founding the LifeFit group in 2019 – a multi-market segment platform with a number of brands, including Fitness First, Elbgym and Smile X at the beginning. These were followed by brands such as Barry's and Xponential's Club Pilates.

But the pandemic stopped our ambitious expansion plans in their tracks, and the last three years have been by far the most challenging of my career on many levels: people, cash position, process transformation, as well as on a personal level. With more than 20 years' experience in the international fitness market, I've experienced many ups and downs, but none have been as bad as the pandemic. We didn't know what we were dealing with and hadn't been trained for it.



The combined resilience of the teams helped the company survive the pandemic

Thanks to my international connections we had some warning about what was coming when the coronavirus hit, so we made plans and got off to a good start, but the length of the pandemic meant the challenges just kept on coming, which put an enormous strain on everyone.

It felt as though I was in crisis mode 24/7, dealing with the uncertainty of how long the lockdowns would last and responding to the regulation changes against the backdrop of the huge disruption in society itself. I was concerned about the health effects on co-workers, friends and family.

A time to invest

When our operating business was at a standstill we used the time to invest in our clubs and drive digitisation forward across the business. This led to a decisive leap forward in the development of our brands and fortunately we're now benefiting from this investment, with membership numbers now back above pre-COVID levels.

I learned that every crisis helps you to grow personally and from every crisis a learning or even something positive can be drawn. I was reminded about how important teams are: the combined

resilience of our teams helped us to succeed. I also discovered that our customers are more loyal than I imagined, so I wish I'd worried less.

It made me appreciate the importance of defining small challenges and keeping personal fitness levels high. I allowed myself to get very unfit and had to challenge myself to do a family relay Ironman to come back strong.

All senior operators had the same experience as me. Looking around our colleagues in Germany, it's obvious who had a brilliant product and good market position before COVID, as they are fine now, while those who didn't invest during the pandemic have problems.

The rebound has been strong in Germany, which means we're still adding members. We haven't experienced the inflation issue which the UK is dealing with and individual wealth tends to be higher in Germany so there are more households that can stomach five to 10 per cent inflation.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Seibold

Originally published: HCM 9 2023





Challenges also bring opportunities. Times get tough and then you come out of them

John Treharne

Chair, The Gym Group



PHOTO: GYM GROUP

I'm in my fourth decade of working in the sector and one of the things I've learned through the course of my career is that it moves in cycles.

Times get tough and then you come out of them.

I've been through a number of challenging periods: the 90s recession, the City falling out of love with the sector and the 2008 financial crash. Much of the time it's circumstances outside of the sector's control which makes doing business difficult.

I'm naturally optimistic, but I've also learned to keep calm: there's no point in panicking. Interest rates once rose to 18 per cent – I could have given in – but then they came down. Energy prices will eventually come down too. Although

I predict the sector will have to become more sustainable, as this is important to our members.

I was fortunate to have the great mentorship of a chair who drummed some important lessons into me. It was both these and the experience of the recession in the 90s which informed the development of The Gym Group. Firstly, always put the customer and their needs front and centre. We created a low cost, high quality, 24/7 model because our research told us that's what people wanted.

Secondly, the people who work for you are the key to your success: reward them properly and let them do their jobs with minimal interference. I've never been a fan of a highly centralised business.

Challenges also bring opportunities. The low cost sector benefited from the economic climate of 2008 and this will happen again now. There will always be demand for good quality at an affordable price and I also believe in the resilience of our sector. People can eat, drink and watch films at home, but to access the experience we offer – the buzz of a class, lifting free weights and running on a treadmill – they have to go to the gym.

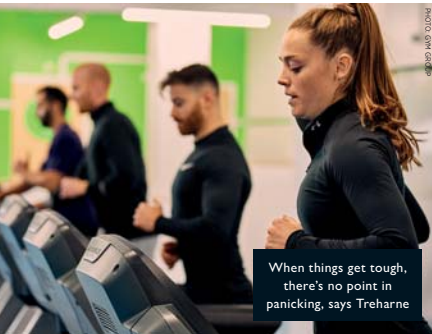


PHOTO: GYM GROUP

When things get tough, there's no point in panicking, says Treharne

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Treharne

Originally published: HCM 1 2023



Low cost gyms can thrive in economically challenging times


A wide-angle shot of a modern gym interior. The walls are painted a vibrant blue, and the floor is covered in black rubber matting. On the left, a long row of treadmills is neatly arranged. In the center, there are several weight benches and a rack filled with black dumbbells. To the right, a large mirror reflects the gym's interior, and a sign with the word 'lift' is visible. The lighting is bright and even, creating a clean and inviting atmosphere.

PHOTO: GYM GROUP



The Gym Group always puts the needs of members first

PHOTO: THIRD SPACE



*I thought about
leaving the industry,
but when I started
looking for jobs
elsewhere I realised
how much I wanted
to stay in health
and fitness*

Colin Waggett

CEO, Third Space



Without doubt the hardest year of my career was when I was chief executive of Fitness First during the advent of budget clubs. Looking back, that time was a 'boil the frog' moment* – when it gets harder and harder, but you can't pinpoint the moment when all is lost.

I joined Fitness First in 2005 and there was a purple patch of five or six years where we grew the business from 250 to 550 clubs worldwide. But then we had the double whammy of the financial crisis starting to bite, combined with the growth of budget clubs which were offering a better value proposition. I can remember the manager of one club asking me what we were going to do about the fact that we were charging £39 a month for a tired facility when the shiny new budget club across the street was only £12.

Due to the financial crisis we were operating under tighter financial constraints, which meant we couldn't invest in our clubs, or our teams, to the extent we would have liked. We tried to operate our way out of it – selling memberships harder and driving the secondary revenue, but it wasn't working. We had our backs to the wall, facing a syndicate of 60 banks that weren't interested in supporting the company, they just wanted to recover some money.

It culminated in a day of the long knives in February 2012, when myself and some of the management team were axed by the private equity owners. I felt deep disappointment and a sense of failure, as well as the realisation that no one is indispensable. However, there was also some relief at being released from fighting a situation I'd lost control of. It wasn't my problem any more.

I spent a year thinking about what to do next. Our kids were young so we took the time for some family holidays. Feeling bruised, I thought about leaving the industry, but when I started looking for jobs elsewhere I realised how much I wanted to stay in health and fitness.

Third Space was able to emerge strongly from the lockdowns, says Waggett



Keep innovating

My biggest lesson from the situation was that it doesn't matter how good you think you are, if the proposition isn't good enough you'll eventually run into trouble.

We were too inwardly focused as a business. I've learned to be outward looking and to operate with confidence, but also with a degree of paranoia about what else is going on and where the customer might go. You have to keep innovating and be clear-minded about why the customer should choose you.

Having learned which sites are vulnerable when the tide goes out, I'm now even more selective about choosing new locations and have also learned to be conservative on the financial side, which is how Third Space emerged strongly from the lockdowns.

In the long-run everything has turned out well. The industry is more dynamic than it was then, offering so much more choice, and the budget gyms have done wonders for the market in terms of growing penetration and reach. While it was bruising at the time, I'm happier now than I ever was and I'm grateful to be in the market I'm in now. As a chief

exec, it's good to have some hard times on your CV and I enjoyed the time off with my family.

The mid-market is now in great shape. At the time it covered the whole industry, now it's part of a more diverse industry. I'm really pleased that the successful parts of Fitness First continue to thrive across a number of continents. That still gives me pleasure, as does getting together for beers with my former colleagues from Fitness First!

* The boiled frog metaphor, used by Charles Handy in his book, *The Age of Unreason*, (www.hcmag.com/charleshandy) suggests that a frog, placed in cold water that is slowly heated will not sense any danger until it boils to death, just as humans who do not notice that the world is changing can face catastrophic consequences.

MORE

Online: www.hcmag.com/Waggett

Originally published: HCM 3 2023





I used to look at myself in the mirror at three o'clock in the morning and say "why the fuck are you doing this?"

Dave Wright

Founder and CEO, Myzone



PHOTO: MYZONE

The toughest time of my career was in 2011 to 2012 – about a year after I'd launched Myzone. CFM, my company which sold gym memberships, used a collections company to handle contracts. That company was taken to court for having illegal contracts and 98 per cent of these were for CFM.

Although I moved our membership administration away from them, they continued to collect the money, so we lost £7.2m of what we were due and there was nothing I could do about it.

As this was shortly after the launch of Myzone, we were having technical issues and product recalls and our monthly CFM income went down from £480,000 to £112,000 at the same time as Myzone needed investment.

It was like being punched in the face with your hands behind your back and not being able to do a thing about it. Everything was on the line.

I would meet with my financial controller and make the decision about who we could pay that week and I didn't take a salary from Myzone for six years. It was a stressful time.

I said to my team that we had to sell our way through it, that Myzone would eventually change the health of the world and if they stuck with me they would be paid handsomely.

From years of selling memberships, speaking to people and owning my own gyms, I knew Myzone

would be a global success, but many people doubted it and when the two crises hit at the same time I used to look at myself in the mirror at three o'clock in the morning and say "why the fuck are you doing this?"

'Bring it on'

As awful as it was, I did believe I would look back with hindsight and see it had happened for a reason and I do. You can't appreciate the good times if you don't have bad times. And when you're flush with cash you make silly decisions. What I developed from that time was a laser focus on profitable, efficient operations. I've always been able to deal with adversity by thinking that it's only a moment in time. Whatever it is at some point it will be over and then you'll be stronger for it.

I've always been a big believer in learning about – and developing – mental strength. I started out working with kids, being a camp director in Australia and America, which was all about teaching them mental resilience. When you run a sales and marketing company you have to become adept at overcoming objections and dealing with rejection, so I've constantly read books and gone to seminars on how to train your mind to deal with adversity.

I believe it's not what happens to you but how you respond which makes the difference. So every time I get presented with adversity, I ask myself what can I do to deal with this and how can I find a solution? It's

The launch and expansion of Myzone into a global brand has not been without its hurdles



all about moving from your reptilian brain – your flight and fight – to the neocortex, which is about solutions.

This thinking has served me well. I've got quite a few friends who run their own businesses and when COVID came along we all felt alive. I just thought "bring it on, I've faced adversity, this is where I shine and we'll bounce through it", as we did.

Melbourne, which is where my brother runs a number of my gyms, was hit really badly. I kept saying to him this was our time to show we're engaged with our community and he stepped in and grabbed it by the horns.

It was nothing compared to the adversity we had dealt with before. Once you've been through one difficult time you know you can do it again and again. You ask yourself, have I been through this situation before? And what did I do about it? And you end up stronger for the experience.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Wright

Originally published: HCM 10 2023



PHOTO: RYMWHEEL



*Failure is considered
a negative word,
but it can lead to
so many positives*

Ruth Zukerman

Founding trio of SoulCycle



Ruth Zukerman, co-founder of SoulCycle, shared insights into a significant learning experience stemming from the dissolution of her partnership with SoulCycle.

Zukerman acknowledged the unexpected nature of the event and the challenge of letting it go, recognising the lessons she learned about trust and the impact of repeating relationship patterns that don't serve well.

SoulCycle originated when a rider in Zukerman's spin class proposed the idea of starting a boutique spin business. Having spent six years honing her spin instructor skills and building a loyal following, she embraced the opportunity. SoulCycle took off, especially after the launch of a second location in the Hamptons, gaining exposure to a wealthy clientele.

Despite the business's success, a lack of a signed partnership agreement led to Zukerman's exclusion as a partner by her co-founders. They suggested she stay on as an instructor, a difficult transition for Zukerman, who was a single mom supporting two daughters.

Despite the challenges, she continued to teach classes at the studio she had helped create. Two years later, Zukerman was approached by private

Zukerman left
SoulCycle to help
launch Flywheel



PHOTO: FLYWHEEL

equity individuals to launch a spin business with a new angle – Flywheel. This became a significant competitor to SoulCycle, adding metrics to the spinning experience. Zukerman took the transformative lessons from her SoulCycle experience, recognising patterns from her past and understanding the importance of trusting her own decisions.

The challenging journey led her to reevaluate her approach, empowering her to hire a good lawyer for Flywheel and trust her instincts. Her subsequent success and experiences inspired her to write the book *Riding High: How I Kissed SoulCycle Goodbye, Co-Founded Flywheel, and Built the Life I Always Wanted*.

Zukerman became a public speaker, sharing her story and lessons learned. She highlighted the positive

aspect of failure, viewing it as an opportunity for valuable lessons and personal growth. Reflecting on her journey, Zukerman also recognised the impact of being raised by a narcissistic mother and how it influenced her decision-making.

Despite moments of failure having some harsh consequences, she learned to embrace these learning opportunities, achieving growth and success through hard work and personal development.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Zukerman

Originally published: HCM 8 2023



SPONSORED

Jason Eaton with
England athlete and
member, Ellie Wallace



JASON EATON

The GM of The Club & Spa Bristol tells us about the cutting edge club refresh that showcases the Technogym Artis Line

The club is open
to local residents
and hotel guests



The Club & Spa Bristol is a membership health club situated in the DoubleTree by Hilton Cadbury House Hotel in North Somerset, UK. With an ambitious refurbishment of the gym space, The Club & Spa has introduced Technogym Artis Line, becoming one of the first locations to feature this innovative cardio collection.

Cadbury House has been a luxury hotel and club destination since 2006 and part of the DoubleTree by Hilton brand since 2009. In addition to 3,500 members, the gym is open to spa day visitors and guests of the 132-bed hotel.

A superior visitor experience

The Club & Spa's gym is a powerful selling tool for the hotel, offering a unique proposition when compared to local fitness facilities and acting as a destination for non-members.

"We're constantly innovating our offers," says GM Jason Eaton. "The gym is a great space to showcase what makes us different and the refurbishment was the perfect opportunity to work with our equipment partners Technogym to create something unique."

The vision for the gym refresh was to optimise use of space, introduce an elevated digital offer and bring in best-in-class new cardio and strength kit to cater for the growing membership.

"We had a long wish list and Technogym helped us bring the vision to life," he says. "Its equipment is the best on the market and nothing else compares – particularly in terms of cardio kit and digital functionality."

“We believe the new Technogym equipment is superior to anything else that’s available”



The club already
had 3,500 members
before the refit

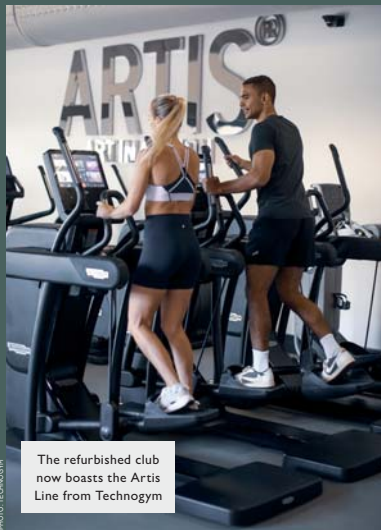


The refurbishment was the perfect opportunity to work with Technogym to create something unique

Jason Eaton



The club is using the Technogym app to drive the customer journey



The refurbished club now boasts the Artis Line from Technogym

► Stand-out features to attract and retain

The refurbishment includes the addition of the innovative Technogym Artis line with Technogym Live Digital Interface, Technogym Skill Line and key pieces of strength kit, including Pure Hack Squat and Pure Hip Thrust.

"The Artis cardio equipment gives us a clear advantage over other facilities in the area," Eaton said. "It's been a big talking point among members. Technogym is a master of innovation and it's amazing what the kit can do."

"We believe the new Technogym equipment is far superior to anything else that's available. From the virtual content, to the size of the screens – it's a brilliant way for us to show members that we've been listening to what they want."

An elevated digital journey

The Club & Spa has migrated from Technogym Mywellness app to the new Technogym App as part of its commitment to a forward-thinking digital member journey. This offers Eaton and his team advanced features for member communication, promotions and interaction.



PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

"Using the Technogym app is a great way to keep all our member comms in one place," he explains. "Not everyone is on social media or wants to receive emails. The app allows us to send messages and reminders, promote events, and engage with our members on a deeper level. It connects with third party apps to make life easier for them, too."

Wow-factor equipment creates buzz with members

The upgraded gym space features clear zones for cardio, stretch, free weights and strength training, with Technogym Skill Line products forming a designated HIIT training area.

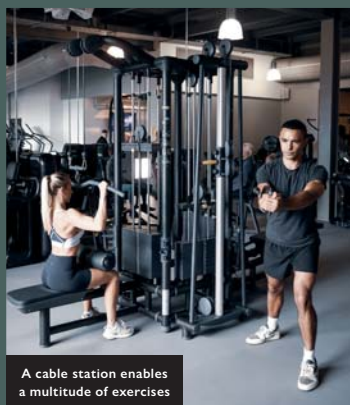
The Club & Spa is an early adopter of the new Technogym Skill Up and Eaton says this exciting piece of kit will be a great selling point for the club.

"We worked hard to reflect member requests and feedback," he said, "and this meant investing in more leg training strength kit, advanced cardio equipment and a central cable station that opens up more upper body training opportunities. We think we've covered as many bases as possible and we have to thank the Technogym team for their valuable input."



Coaches work closely with members

PHOTO: TECHNOGYM



A cable station enables a multitude of exercises

PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

Elevating gym staff expertise

The gym refurbishment has already generated excitement among members, gym staff and hotel regulars. As Eaton explains, the benefits of the refresh go beyond introducing cutting-edge equipment, it's also a valuable opportunity to refresh systems and procedures, offer gym instructors advanced training and unite club and spa staff over an exciting project.

"We can all be proud of what we've achieved and I hope members will see their feedback represented in the choices we've made," he says. "I feel confident the new gym – along with the new marketing materials and imagery supplied by Technogym – will attract new members, so we can continue to help more people enjoy being fit and healthy." ●

More: www.technogym.com/HCM

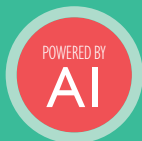
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PEOPLE

A look back at some of the leading
fitness and wellness industry movers
and shakers interviewed by
HCM journalists over the past year



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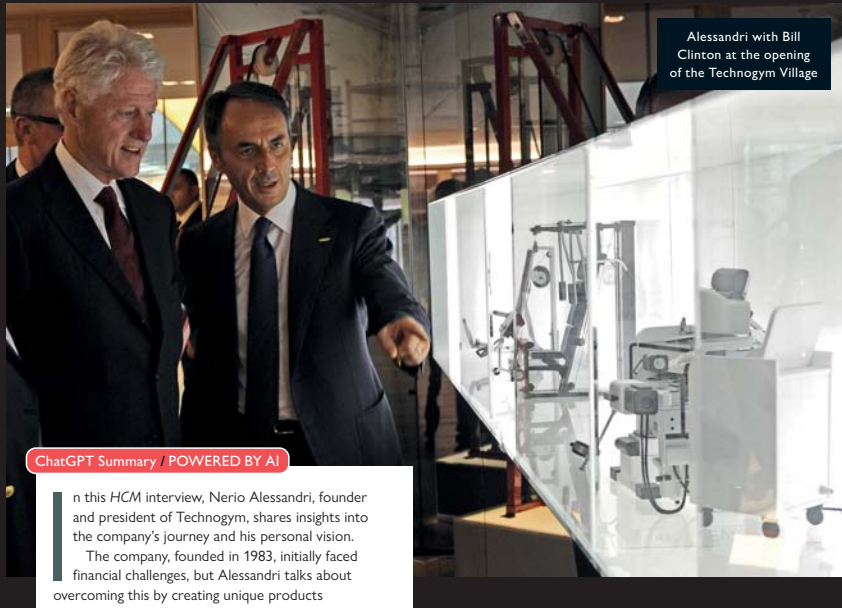
p144 / James Winterbottom
Director of strategy and innovation, Wigan Council UK



The vision – helping people live a better life though wellness – will never change for us

Nerio Alessandri

Founder and president, Technogym



ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

In this HCM interview, Nerio Alessandri, founder and president of Technogym, shares insights into the company's journey and his personal vision.

The company, founded in 1983, initially faced financial challenges, but Alessandri talks about overcoming this by creating unique products customers were prepared to pay for in advance.

Design is a key aspect for Technogym, adding both functional and emotional value. As a designer himself, Alessandri emphasises the importance of style and design in providing an engaging experience. He shares ongoing R&D efforts, focusing on a unique digital ecosystem to make the industry more attractive and credible to users and stakeholders.

The Technogym Ecosystem, developed over the years, integrates with various fitness equipment brands, allowing users a personalised training experience anywhere. Alessandri discusses the significance of the hybrid offering, not seeing home fitness as a competitor but an opportunity for operators to connect with users outside the facility. The company launched Technogym Corporate Club to cater to this hybrid model.

He sees Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a game-changer in the industry, enhancing personalisation. Technogym's ecosystem utilises AI to optimise training experiences based on individual needs, habits and passions, driving engagement and results. In the interview, Alessandri also explains the company's wellness concept, promoting a holistic lifestyle.

Alessandri reflects on Technogym's involvement with the Olympic Games and the development of the Wellness Valley in Italy. He emphasises the positive impact of investing in wellness for public health and the economy.

The interview delves into the company's commitment to sustainability, with initiatives such as reducing waste, saving energy and creating a circular economy through product refurbishment.

On the accessibility of wellness, Alessandri suggests focusing on educational programmes and starting wellness education early in schools. For young people, exercise can be made desirable through gamification, socialisation and innovative content, he says.

The industry's potential to improve global health and collaborate with the medical community is discussed. Alessandri sees opportunities in sports performance and mental health-related programmes. The challenges facing operators involve moving away from a focus on marketing and pricing, towards a value-based approach.

The interview concludes with Alessandri addressing comparisons with Apple, acknowledging similarities in origin, design focus, and a commitment to innovation. He highlights the no-compromise approach shared with Steve Jobs, expressing it through Technogym's motto, "masterpieces are made of details".

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Alessandri

Originally published: HCM 4 2023





PHOTO: KINEZIS



I had the idea to use the same brand and same space to do both fitness and entertainment, but with different opening hours

Xavier López Ancona

Founder, Kinezis and Kidzania

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Xavier López Ancona, the founder and CEO of Kinezis, shares the inspiration behind the innovative concept that combines fitness, entertainment, and wellness in a single space.

With a successful track record as the creator of Kidzania, Ancona embarked on a two-year global exploration to identify opportunities aligned with the growing trend of health and wellness.

The concept of Kinezis emerged from Ancona's observations during his travels to 32 countries, 52 cities and 400 properties worldwide. The strong global trend towards health and wellness, coupled with the popularity of active entertainment, such as trampoline parks, inspired him to create a completely new concept based on health.

Changing habits

Recognising the increasing focus on wellness, Ancona delved into research that highlighted the global desire for exercise and healthier eating habits. A revelation from health club reports indicated that 85 per cent of gym-goers prefer working out before 10.00am or after 6.00pm, while entertainment purchases typically occur between 10.00am and 6.00pm.

This insight led to the groundbreaking idea of utilising the same space for both fitness and entertainment under the Kinezis brand, operating with distinct opening hours.

Kinezis breaks convention by integrating three businesses in one venue: Kinezis Fun, Kinezis Fitness, and Kinezis Health. Leveraging expertise in entertainment and recognising the potential in the wellness industry.

In Mexico, Kinezis Fitness provides a diverse array of 18 workout options, including treadmills, cycling, rowing, obstacle courses and studios for yoga, Pilates, and more. The venue adopts a boutique approach with immersive environments, large screens, and top-tier coaches, including some of Mexico's best athletes.

Kinezis Fun, focused on adrenaline-filled experiences, features climbing walls, slides, trampolines, bouncing nets, inflatables and attractions, setting itself apart as a one-of-a-kind entertainment destination.

Completing the trio, Kinezis Wellness offers a spa with the first hammam in Mexico, treatment rooms, a sauna, hot tub, ice bath, and relaxation areas. Wellness services include body composition analysis, access to nutritionists, bloodwork, and future plans to include mental health services.

A distinctive feature involves providing visitors with wearables that monitor various health metrics, emphasising the enjoyment of movement. Memberships offer flexibility, allowing users to tailor their experience based on their preferences.

The ambitious nature of Kinezis has posed marketing challenges, particularly as Kidzania's brand recognition



Entertainment centres tend to be busy during the day, while gyms are busy early morning and evening

in Mexico may lead people to assume the venue is primarily for children. Ancona acknowledges the initial hurdle of bridging the gap between entertainment enthusiasts and gym-goers but notes positive reviews and repeat business as indicators of success.

Global expansion

As Kinezis serves as a prototype, ongoing adaptation and refinement are key. Lessons learned include the need for adjustments in venue size, culinary operations, and spatial arrangements. Ancona emphasises the importance of a social environment and envisions the

potential for global expansion, drawing on established partnerships in countries such as the UK, Japan, Korea, India and the UAE. The goal is to achieve rapid growth for Kinezis in five years, with plans to open and run sites in Mexico, South America and the US, while also leveraging partnerships for developments worldwide.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/LópezAncona

Originally published: HCM 5 2023





Our aim is for Sea Lanes to act as a catalyst in the regeneration of this area of Brighton

Duncan Anderson

CEO, South Downs Leisure



In a recent *HCM* interview, Duncan Anderson discusses the Sea Lanes project, a new swimming centre on the seafront in Brighton, UK, designed to be a gateway between pool and open water swimming. Here's a ChatGPT summary of the key points:

Sea Lanes overview

Sea Lanes is positioned as the national open-water swimming centre in Brighton, featuring a 50m, six-lane outdoor pool/lido right next to the beach.

The facility aims to bridge the gap between traditional pool and open water swimming, serving as a hub for the sport. In addition to the pool, Sea Lanes includes changing rooms and 34 business units housing various facilities and support services.

The project is owned by four main shareholders: Ross Gilbert (MD of QED Properties), Joe McNulty (MD of Copse Mill Properties), Andy White (founder of Ocean Set), and open water swimmer Simon Murie of Swim Trek.

The idea for Sea Lanes had been in development for eight years, with the shareholders winning a council competition to develop the land formerly occupied by the Peter Pan Leisure Park.

Wild swimming growth

Sea Lanes strategically taps into the growing trend for wild swimming. The founders acknowledge the significant market and interest in outdoor swimming, especially amplified by the pandemic.

The exhilarating experience of swimming in the wild or the sea has contributed to the increasing popularity of open-water swimming.

The total investment for Sea Lanes amounted to around £5m. This includes £2.7m for the pool and £2.2m for the accompanying business units. The funding was sourced from the four main shareholders and a bank.

Membership boom

Since its opening, Sea Lanes has experienced a booming business, with 1,550 members signing up for monthly memberships.

The pay-and-play option has also seen strong uptake, with over 5,000 people using Sea Lanes within the first month. Membership fees range from £50-£55 per month, with additional concessions available for students. Despite challenges such as the utility crisis and inflation, Sea Lanes reports surpassing its financial targets.



PHOTO: SCOTT LEWIS/ISTOCK

Sea Lanes taps into the huge growth in open water swimming

Eco-friendly design

Brighton-based Evolution Architects played a crucial role in designing Sea Lanes. The decision to build a 50m pool, rather than a 25m pool, was influenced by site restrictions and the desire to provide a substantial swimming space.

Sustainability is a core focus for Sea Lanes, with several eco-friendly initiatives in place. Anderson says the pool temperature is designed to align with sea swimming experiences, using solar gain and insulation. The facility uses eco-friendly cleaning products, upcycled plastic for lockers and cubicles, and staff uniforms made from recycled plastic bottles. The plant room is hydrogen-ready, and Sea Lanes collaborates with ecologi.com to plant trees for every new member.

Model for the future

Sea Lanes represents a successful model combining traditional pool facilities to meet the growing demand for open-water swimming, Anderson says. The emphasis on sustainability, community engagement, and a diverse range of activities positions it as a model for future open-water swimming centres. The founders' approach has resulted in a facility that caters to the active and sporty culture of Brighton.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Anderson

Originally published: HCM 6 2023





Some of Aniston's favourite workouts are done on the Pvolve Precision Mat



I'm excited to spread the word about the incredible Pvolve method

Jennifer Aniston

Team Pvolve

Jennifer Aniston shares insights into her partnership with Pvolve, a functional fitness method that she discovered during her recovery from a back injury in 2021. Aniston noted that Pvolve's approach to functional fitness allows individuals to work around their current limitations, eliminating the need to wait for full recovery before starting the method.

Having personally experienced the benefits of Pvolve's workouts, Aniston has become an official partner, collaborating with the brand on product development, marketing, and programming strategy.

She emphasises the effectiveness of Pvolve's method, highlighting the company's clinical advisory board, which includes medical doctors and experts in various disciplines. The board contributes to the development of workouts, ensuring their efficacy and participating in clinical studies to continually improve the method.

Aniston expressed her love for Pvolve's patented equipment, such as the P.ball, P.band, and P.3 Trainer, along with her favourite combination of the Precision Mat, ankle bands, and gliders. She highlighted the convenience of these tools, particularly for travel.

The interview touches on Aniston's favourite Pvolve routines, which focus on core and arm movements using equipment such as the P.band and P.ball. Aniston's preferences have been curated into a collection of on-demand workouts on Pvolve's platform, titled 'Jen's Picks'.

Discussing the new Pvolve ad campaign, titled 'A strength that sets you free', Aniston shared that it was filmed in Los Angeles with the creative collaboration of 72&Sunny, Academy Award-winning director Loren Denis and celebrity photographer

Zoey Grossman. The ad, emphasising strength and freedom, is distributed on social media platforms and streaming services such as Hulu and Peacock.

Aniston encouraged everyone to try the Pvolve method, emphasising its adaptability to different fitness levels. Pvolve's functional fitness approach incorporates natural movement patterns, and its hybrid model allows members to join live or on-demand classes through the website or the Pvolve App.

Pvolve currently operates in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Diego, with plans for global expansion and franchise growth. The founders envision having 250 studios by 2025, catering for digital members in 70 countries and expanding into Canada and the UK.

The collaboration with Aniston is seen as a significant boost for Pvolve, with the founders expressing excitement that someone of Aniston's fitness level and access to various options would fall in love with the method. Pvolve aims to change the conversation around fitness, emphasising the connection between fitness, health, and wellness with a focus on scientific inquiry. The global expansion plans align with providing women more choices in how and when they work out. Pvolve's approach aims to empower women to prioritise feeling good without sacrificing their wellbeing for appearance.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Aniston

Originally published: HCM 8 2023





The majority of the adult population has some kind of long-term health condition and if health club operators want to expand their business, this is where they need to be

Lou Atkinson

Head of research, Exi

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Lou Atkinson from Exi discusses the platform's role in revolutionising healthcare through digital therapeutics. Exi operates as a Software as a Medical Device (SaMD) business, specifically designed to empower professionals to prescribe and refer patients to exercise while assisting individuals with long-term health conditions by safely increasing their physical activity levels.

The platform comprises two main components: a smartphone app for end-users and a secure data portal for healthcare professionals. Users input personal information, including demographics, current physical activity levels, and medical conditions, enabling the app to generate a personalised, evidence-based physical activity prescription.

The app incorporates behaviour change support, using rewards for extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to keep users engaged in their prescribed activities.

Atkinson says Exi addresses 23 comorbid physical and mental health conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, stroke, asthma, COPD, depression, anxiety and stress. The goal is to create sustainable, health-enhancing behaviour change, with a focus on reducing hospital admissions and medication costs, as supported by data from both the UK and US healthcare models.

The platform connects exercise with the medical profession through a secure practitioner data portal, allowing professionals to track participants' progress in real-time. This tracking enables tailored support and efficient resource allocation, reinforcing the idea that exercise is integral to overall health.

Healthcare professionals, often lacking confidence in their knowledge of physical activity, can rely on Exi to provide safe and effective exercise prescriptions, fostering informed conversations with patients.

The exercise prescriptions guide users on the frequency, duration, and intensity of their activities, promoting autonomy and choice to enhance adherence. Exi gradually progresses individuals toward achieving or approaching the National Physical Activity Guidelines for healthy adults, personalised to each user's health needs and starting point.

Using wearables alongside the smartphone app is recommended for validating exercise intensity, providing heart rate data, and boosting user confidence.

Exi is recognised as a Class One medical device in the UK, Europe and the US, with plans to achieve Class Two certification. The platform is FDA-compliant, ORCHA-approved for NHS use, and adheres to ISO and CA quality assurance requirements.

Exi offers a bridge for individuals with health conditions who might not feel comfortable in traditional health clubs. The platform allows for remote programme delivery until individuals are ready to join an in-person community. Atkinson says this enables health clubs to open their facilities to a broader audience, with Exi providing support for both highly qualified professionals and those with less specialised qualifications.

She called for health clubs to build credibility with the healthcare sector by formalising and demonstrating competencies and stressed the importance of recruiting individuals with a non-sporting background, incorporating psychology and behaviour change, and creating a welcoming culture and environment.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Atkinson

Originally published: HCM 5 2023



Atkinson says clubs
must build credibility
with the health sector





With Anvil, I tried to be intriguing and titillating. There's a combination of grit and glamour, akin to the shiny chrome on a Harley Davidson

David Barton

Gym U



David Barton, the founder of Gym U, shares insights into his expertise, the philosophy shaping his approach and the concept of Gym U in a post-pandemic world.

Reflecting on his experience, Barton emphasises the unpredictable nature of success, acknowledging that there is no specific qualification to prepare for the alchemy of a successful gym.

Barton's philosophy is deeply rooted in his transformative experience on entering a health club for the first time. Witnessing local criminals and police officers working out side by side, he was captivated by the energy that transported him to a different world. This moment became the catalyst for his lifelong dedication to creating an infectious and intoxicating atmosphere in his gyms, aiming for members to feel as though they're entering the best party in town.

In response to the challenges posed by the post-pandemic world, Barton introduced Gym U as a groundbreaking concept. Located in Chelsea, New York City, Gym U occupies the space of the original David Barton gym, which opened over two decades ago. Barton's commitment to tailoring each gym to its local demographic is evident,

drawing inspiration from the movie *Metropolis* for Gym U, giving it a Deco and Expressionist feel.

Gym U sets itself apart from competitors through its carefully curated space, reflecting the vibrant personality of New York's Chelsea neighbourhood. Premium fitness equipment and personal training, featuring brands such as Pannatta, are positioned as key differentiators.

The best of tech

Technology plays a crucial role in Gym U's offerings. The gym incorporates ARX adaptive resistance equipment, leveraging patented motorised resistance and computer software to maximise workout efficiency. Collaborating with the Precision Health Alliance from Australia, Gym U provides members with a full epigenetic diagnostic profile, integrating AI to offer personalised insights into health and fitness needs based on genetic predispositions. The Neubie, an electrical stimulation therapy, has also been introduced for optimised performance and recovery.

When questioned about future-proofing the business, Barton underscored the importance of fostering community and personal engagement and while acknowledging the need to stay





Barton has launched
Gym U in Chelsea,
New York City

abreast of science and technology trends, he emphasised that creating the right environment and delivering excellent customer service are timeless elements that never go out of style.

He envisions the perfect customer journey as one where new gym-goers feel comfortable and welcomed. Gym U focuses on community-building, ensuring a dynamic and enjoyable workout experience. A roster of hand-picked trainers collaborate with members to identify fitness goals and develop tailored workouts.

Design, according to Barton, is not merely about aesthetics but about creating an emotional experience. Collaborating with architects and creatives, Gym U's space is designed to encourage movement from the moment members walk through the doors. Lighting and sound are considered essential, contributing to an enjoyable environment geared toward fitness.

Drawing inspiration from movies, music, paintings, buildings and his imagination, Barton shares his motivation and inspiration. Reflecting on the best gym he's seen, he recalls a simple gym in Nantucket, highlighting the importance of creating an unpretentious atmosphere.

For his personal wellness, Barton discloses a focus on strength training as the most effective way to combating ageing.

The interview unveils a multi-faceted approach to the creation of gyms and authentic fitness experiences.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Barton

Originally published: HCM 7 2023





When I went onto a hospital payroll in the late 90s, it was eye-opening for me to start creating programmes in that setting

Debbie Bellenger

**Founder and CEO,
Body By Definition**



Bellenger: the industry needs to address the health crisis

Debbie Bellenger, on a mission to elevate the health and fitness industry into wellness, discusses the urgent need for adaptation to address a growing public health crisis. She emphasises the changing landscape with rising obesity and burnout rates in the United States, highlighting the inadequacy of traditional fitness programmes for diverse populations, including those with health issues.

Bellenger underscores the industry's responsibility to evolve and cater to a broader demographic, emphasising the importance of education and lifestyle programmes. She urges fitness professionals to move beyond the traditional focus on the fit 10 per cent, to create beginner and intro programmes that incorporate activities such as meditation, mindfulness, and walking groups.

Addressing collaboration with the medical community, Bellenger acknowledges resistance on both sides. Fitness professionals must meet physicians' expectations by providing certified, data-driven, and evidence-based outcomes. She calls on health club owners to recognise their role in changing population health outcomes.

Bellenger outlines practical steps for the fitness industry to cross over into wellness, stressing

the importance of non-exerciser outreach. She recommends changing language, marketing, and imagery to be more representative, along with modifying programming to address barriers and trauma that contribute to self-sabotaging health behaviours.

She emphasises the need for a data-driven and evidence-based approach, and the importance of welcoming facilities for all populations. Bellenger stresses the urgency for the industry to grow up and adapt to the evolving health landscape, underscoring the significant opportunities for fitness professionals to make a positive impact.

While acknowledging the ongoing challenges and limited awareness within the industry, Bellenger urges fitness professionals to step up, find gaps in public health and become wellness professionals. She encourages the adoption of the medical wellness model and says the time is ripe for the industry to address the critical health needs of the population.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Bellenger

Originally published: HCM 4 2023





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Blum built the business without any VC funding



I'd love Heartcore to be in every major city in the world

Jessie Blum

CEO, Heartcore

In a recent *HCM* interview, Jessie Blum, CEO of Heartcore, discussed the brand's strategic shift during the pandemic, focusing on becoming an expert in Dynamic Pilates. She highlights the uniqueness of its Pilates equipment, and describes the transformative experience Heartcore aims to provide for mind, body, and soul.

Blum outlines how the pandemic prompted Heartcore to reposition itself from a boutique studio and gym to a specialist in Dynamic Pilates. The Coreformer, Heartcore's proprietary Pilates equipment, is seen as a crucial factor that sets the brand apart. Blum says the Heartcore experience aims to go beyond delivering a great workout, focusing on creating a welcoming and transformative atmosphere for its community.

Covid challenges and opportunities

Blum acknowledges the hardships faced during the pandemic, requiring operational adjustments and a re-evaluation of the brand's offerings. Heartcore swiftly adapted by launching Heartcore Online, recognising the importance of staying connected with the community through digital platforms. Despite the challenges, Heartcore has experienced significant post-reopening success in its London studios.

Reflecting on the pandemic, Blum notes the rapid transition to online platforms and the raw, personal connection formed during livestreamed classes. Heartcore's commitment to being human, showing integrity, courage, heart, and strength resonated with the community, she says. The brand's online presence has expanded internationally, fostering a thriving global community.

Heartcore's Pilates concept distinguishes itself through conditioning-focused workouts, making classes accessible to a broader demographic. Blum describes the Coreformer as critical to success, providing a unique and bespoke experience.

Heartcore has grown a community of 45,000 members



PHOTO: JESSIE BLUM / HEARTCORE

Performance and growth

Physical studios are designed to be an extension of the brand's values – comfortable, intuitive, personal, welcoming and inspiring.

Brand extensions include curated retreats, a retail and lifestyle line, a unique scent, Pilates accessories, and a clothing line.

Heartcore plans to open more studios in central London and launch an international studio partner programme. She expresses confidence in the business model's successful translation into new markets.

Brand Extensions and Licensing:

Heartcore's brand extensions include curated retreats, a retail and lifestyle line, a unique scent, Pilates accessories, and a clothing line. Blum plans to grow the brand through licensing, offering partners comprehensive support, including business planning, teacher training, and access to Coreformers. The ultimate goal is to have Heartcore studios in every major city worldwide.

Technology, Marketing, and Brand Building:

Heartcore currently utilises Mindbody software and booking tools. Blum emphasizes the importance of delivering the best possible classes, relying on word of mouth as a successful marketing strategy.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Blum20

Originally published: HCM 3 2023



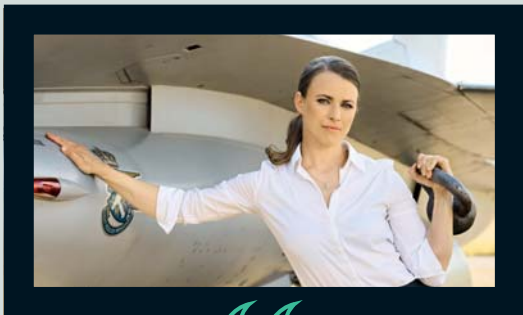


PHOTO: JAKOB HELBERG



*I give women the tools to experience
how much power their bodies have*

Anna Bogdanova

Founder, the Anna Bogdanova Strength Method

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

In a recent interview with *HCM*, Anna Bogdanova shared insights into her approach to strength and power training specifically designed for women.

The Anna Bogdanova Strength Method focuses on incorporating hormonal and nervous system considerations, promoting joint and ligament strength, and enhancing skin and connective tissue elasticity.

The training method is a blend of kettlebell exercises, neuromuscular training and gentle movements, with an emphasis on micro training sessions that last just five minutes (or possibly more, depending on the individual participant's preference).

The programme diverges from conventional cardio-focused routines, offering a unique perspective that prioritises power training.

Core Purpose

Bogdanova's core purpose is to empower women by providing them with tools to recognise the potential and strength of their bodies.

Rather than focusing on appearance, she aims to cultivate self-confidence and self-mastery, encouraging women to appreciate what their bodies can achieve.

Backstory

Bogdanova's journey into health and fitness developed from being an unsporty child who later became fascinated with the gym during her teenage years.

However her initial approach centred around burning calories, which eventually led to health issues. After collapsing one day due to overtraining, she shifted her perspective on fitness, recognising the importance of aligning training intensity with the body's recovery capacity.

Applying her background in change management and behaviour design to her training, Bogdanova explored functional neurology to understand how the nervous system influences the body. This approach led to her developing a method that emphasises sensory exercises, cranial nerve stimulation, mobility work, and strength training.

Online Offerings

Bogdanova provides a range of programmes in Danish and recently launched her signature Wingwoman program in English.

These training programmes feature small, manageable exercises that require as little as five minutes a day.

Bogdanova offers
her Wingwoman
programme in English

PHOTO: JACOB HEDRIG



Bogdanova emphasises the importance of maintaining a routine even during chaotic times, as it creates a positive domino effect, fostering increased energy and strength.

Strength training

The CEO highlights the significance of strength training for women, particularly as they age. Sarcopenia, age-related muscle loss, becomes a concern even for younger women. Strength exercises play a crucial role in building muscle mass, increasing insulin sensitivity, and addressing cognitive health risks associated with perimenopause.

Bogdanova's message to trainers working with women is to shift the focus to strength training.

She advises incorporating fewer reps, longer pauses, and stimulating fast twitch muscle fibres.

Additionally, she encourages a shift in perspective regarding nutrition, emphasising the importance of real food and discouraging the diet mentality. She advocates for an adequate intake of protein and rejects the notion of low-carb diets, stressing the importance of energy balance and sustainable caloric intake for optimal health and performance.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Bogdanova

Originally published: HCM 6 2023





*Our ambitions are to expand globally
to introduce Studio Society to key
markets, reshaping fitness paradigms*



Bev Brinkworth
and Rosanna Tucker

Bev Brinkworth and Rosanna Tucker

Co-founders, Studio Society and CoverMe



PHOTO: STUDIO SOCIETY / COVERME

Studio Society, an innovative group exercise concept, immerses members in CGI-animated environments, transforming traditional workouts into exhilarating experiences.

Developed to disrupt the stagnant landscape of fitness studios, the concept marries technology with coaching, incorporating scent, sight, and sound to create a unique and motivating atmosphere.

The idea for Studio Society emerged from a desire to revolutionise the fitness studio space, which had seen minimal changes since the 1980s. The founders envisioned a world where working out transcends the mundane, becoming a thrilling experience rather than a chore. The primary challenge faced during the concept's development was securing suitable sites, with high demand from approximately 17 competing gym operators for every potentially zoned location.

The customer journey at Studio Society begins with app bookings and seamless entry using fingerprint recognition. Members enter one of the four studios, surrounded by a 270-degree animated environment that incorporates lighting, sound, and scent, providing an immersive workout experience. The training offerings are holistic, encompassing power, strength, and cardiovascular exercises, with over 250 classes per week, including yoga, Pilates, martial arts, boxing, Spin, and HIIT.

Members can also benefit from Boditrax body analysis and personalised nutrition plans, fostering a deeper understanding of their fitness and nutritional needs. Despite the integration of technology, the human touch remains a vital aspect of the experience, with the Studio Society team and instructors playing crucial roles in motivating and supporting members.

The response to the digital screens and immersive experience has been overwhelmingly positive, with members enjoying the freedom to lose themselves in the workout without the distraction of mirrors.

Pricing options include both pay-as-you-go and membership plans, with competitive rates starting at £59 per month, devoid of joining fees or contracts.

Studio Society actively cultivates a sense of community among its members through regular events, social evenings, and charity challenges. The small and dedicated team, along with freelance instructors, contributes to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Sense of community

Looking ahead, Studio Society has global aspirations, with plans to expand internationally and discussions underway to open two new sites in 2024. The business weathered the challenges of the pandemic by swiftly adapting, introducing virtual classes, community challenges, and a hotline for member support.

The founders have also launched CoverMe, an app connecting group exercise instructors with work opportunities. The app addresses the lack of interaction between instructors and clubs, providing a platform for collaboration. CoverMe has garnered support from Angel Investors and industry figures such as John Treharne, founder of The Gym Group, and Emma Barry of Trouble Global.

The app's roll-out ambitions include expansion to the US and Australia. The revenue model involves taking a percentage of earnings from each gig, dependent on the price per instructor and club size. The long-term vision for Studio Society involves global expansion and further integration with AI to enhance the fitness club's experience and education.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/StudioSociety

Originally published: HCM 9 2023





You can't commoditise what is, in essence, a health and wellbeing service

Peter Bunday & Mark Sesnan

GLL



PHOTO: GLL

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Mark Sesnan and Peter Bunday, key figures in the establishment and growth of GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited), discussed the organisation's evolution, values, challenges, and future plans in an interview with HCM.

Creation of GLL

In 1993, GLL was formed as a spin-out from Greenwich Council with the aim of disrupting compulsory competitive tendering (CCT). The founders recognised the need for a new model that could balance social and financial outcomes in the provision of health and wellbeing services. GLL's mission centres on improving the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of local communities.

GLL is a staff-owned co-operative with 100 per cent ownership by its employees. The structure ensures a non-profit distributing approach, reinvesting all profits into the business. With a commitment to long-term principles, GLL positions itself as a "100-year company."

Current organisation

GLL has grown to become the largest social enterprise in the sector, operating 375 culture and leisure venues across the UK. This includes 240 leisure facilities, 120 libraries, and 15 children's centres. GLL collaborates with local councils and

communities across the UK and has absorbed a number of smaller trusts into its network.

GLL actively lobbies for the recognition of leisure as a statutory service, emphasising its crucial role in supporting public health and alleviating pressure on the NHS. The organisation has also faced challenges related to the energy crisis, with a significant increase in energy costs impacting its operations, particularly in running swimming pools.

The interview highlights the collaboration within the health and fitness sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector came together through organisations like UK Active to address common challenges and advocate for support. The importance of fostering collaboration across the entire sport and physical activity sector is emphasised.

Five-year plan

GLL's five-year plan focuses on innovation and impact, aiming to strengthen communities and health. It seeks to establish a unique selling proposition (USP) in the market, differentiating itself through a commitment to family, health, wellbeing, and community value. The plan is designed to set GLL apart in a competitive landscape and showcase its distinctive approach.

GLL aims to deliver £2bn of social value over the next five years, quantifying its impact at the



GLL is the largest social enterprise in the sector, operating 375 facilities across the UK

borough and ward levels. The social value model, developed in collaboration with partners, considers factors such as physical activity, health and wellbeing, education, crime diversion, and cultural activity.

Sesnan expresses strong opposition to councils bringing leisure services back in-house without proper scrutiny. He argues that such decisions should be based on evidence of benefits to residents, both financially and in terms of service capability.

GLL emphasises its commitment to delivering value and warns against councils making decisions for political reasons.

Conclusion

The interview provides insights into GLL's history, values, challenges, and future plans. GLL's commitment to social enterprise, employee ownership, and delivering social value underscores its unique position in the leisure and wellbeing sector.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Bundey/Sesnan

Originally published: HCM 7 2023





This is a rare case of an unqualified VAT win for local authorities. Not only will most of their leisure facility income be VAT-free, but their VAT costs will still be recoverable

Nick Burrows

Director, PSTax



Nick Burrows, director at PSTax, discussed a significant change in the law regarding VAT on local authority leisure services in the UK. The HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) announced in March 2023 that local authority leisure services, including gym memberships and facility visits, are now classified as 'non-business' supplies for VAT purposes. Previously, local authorities managing leisure facilities in-house were required to treat these services as business activities, subject to a 20 per cent VAT.

The change stems from court action by three local authorities – Midlothian Council, Mid-Ulster District Council, and Chelmsford City Council – challenging HMRC on the tax status of their leisure services. The courts ruled that local authority leisure services, due to their unique statutory/legal framework and constraints, can be treated as 'non-business' for VAT purposes. The courts also considered whether this treatment would distort competition with the private sector, with HMRC not appealing on the competition point.

Burrows highlights the legal obligations in Scotland and Northern Ireland to provide leisure services, making them statutory, while in England and Wales, legislation governs local authorities

differently from the private sector. The legal considerations include the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, among others.

The change is a significant VAT win for local authorities (LAs), allowing most of their leisure facility income to be VAT-free, and their VAT costs related to leisure services to remain fully recoverable.

Local authorities can make one-off refund claims for VAT previously paid to HMRC, with examples of claims going back up to seven years. The impact of the change on private sector operators remains uncertain, with potential for HMRC to claw back refunded VAT if legal challenges succeed.

The scale of the impact is notable, with over 20 per cent of leisure facilities currently owned and managed in-house by local authorities across the UK. The change provides financial relief for overstretched local authority budgets, freeing up funds that were previously allocated to VAT on leisure services.

Reclassification

Proposed changes to the organisation of leisure facilities by UK councils, including gyms and health clubs, could result in not-for-profit leisure trusts benefiting from up

If the case is
appealed, money
could be repayable



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DEAN DIBOOT

to £78m in VAT savings annually. The changes involve the creation of 'Agency Agreements' between trusts and councils, following a successful legal challenge to VAT legislation in March 2023. The ruling reclassified facility visits by local authorities as 'non-business,' exempting them from paying VAT on income and allowing reclamation of VAT on related costs.

While LAs benefited, not-for-profit trusts were left with irrecoverable VAT on expenditure. Some trusts are exploring the 'Agency Agreement model, where they collect income on behalf of the LA as its 'agent', making expenditure VAT-reclaimable.

Community Leisure UK estimates potential benefits from £50-£100k per facility (£39-£78m annually across the sector). The proposals may concern private sector fitness operators, as they would be the only operators not benefiting from VAT breaks. HMRC is reconsidering the scope of the March VAT treatment ruling.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Burrows

Originally published: HCM 8 2023





We're planning to open 250 studios by 2025, including in Canada and the UK

Julie Cartwright and Rachel Katzman

Co-founders, Pvolve



Julie Cartwright and Rachel Katzman, co-founders of Pvolve, share insights into the company's journey, achievements, and vision for the future. Over the past five years, Pvolve has evolved from a small startup with a single studio to a fitness leader, boasting digital members across 70 countries and studios in major US cities.

The company's method combines low-impact movement and resistance training, providing a sustainable workout that not only tones and strengthens the body but also improves posture, balance, and flexibility.

The impetus for starting Pvolve came from Rachel Katzman's personal experience. Struggling with high-impact workouts and diagnosed with scoliosis, she discovered functional training, which not only produced desired physical results but also alleviated discomfort and enhanced her overall wellbeing.

The Pvolve method prioritises functional movement, reducing the potential for injury and promoting long-term health benefits.

Pvolve offers a variety of classes tailored to specific goals, including Strength and Sculpt, Cardio Burn, Progressive Weight Training, Mat Definition, Recover and Stretch, and Meditation and Mindfulness. The company continually collaborates with trainers and medical experts to develop new applications for its method, addressing women's needs at different life stages.

Science-guided approach

The company's Clinical Advisory Team, comprising medical doctors and health and fitness experts, plays a crucial role in developing evidence-based, science-guided fitness approaches. The team covers specific areas relevant to Pvolve's work, such as physical therapy, physiology, and gynaecology.

Pvolve's inclusive approach ensures accessibility for individuals of all fitness levels, emphasising progress and results without compromising the body. The company's hybrid model, combining in-person and digital workouts, provides flexibility for users, fitting into their busy lives.

Looking ahead, Pvolve aims to scale its business model further, with plans to have 250 studios open by 2025. The company's global rollout includes expanding into Canada and the UK, leveraging its base of digital members and physical studio locations. The franchise model, requiring a minimum liquid capital of \$250,000 and a minimum net worth of \$750,000, is designed to accommodate different locations and populations.

In the next five years, Pvolve envisions expanding globally, changing the fitness conversation and providing women with more choices for their workout routines.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.HCMmag.com/Pvolve

Originally published: HCM 1 2023



Classes focus on supporting women to deal with life stages such as menopause and fertility



ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



Health and fitness is an industry I really believe in and I felt it was not being treated respectfully

Liz Clark

CEO, IHRSA



PHOTO: NIKHIL / PSMEDIA.COM

Liz Clark, CEO of IHRSA, discussed her journey leading the association during challenging times, her focus on reimagining IHRSA, and the broader landscape of the fitness industry. Clark shares her passion for the association model, aiming to assist companies and industries with policies, reputation, and positioning. She acknowledges the lack of recognition for the health and fitness industry during the pandemic and expresses her commitment to changing the narrative.

The interview delves into IHRSA's lobbying efforts, highlighting the challenges of making the voice of the fitness sector heard among numerous registered trade associations in the US. Clark emphasises the need to build awareness and correct misconceptions, presenting the fitness industry as a contributor to preventative healthcare.

Healthcare conversations

Having previously worked in the sugar industry, Clark draws parallels between the organised approach of the sugar industry and the fitness industry's need to shift and become part of healthcare conversations. She underscores the importance of policy-makers understanding the benefits of exercise for mental health.

Clark's vision for reimagining IHRSA involves a marathon, not a sprint. Structural changes, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and education for members on leveraging their voices with policy-makers are part of the ongoing transformation. Clark

discusses the bylaws prohibiting non-profits from IHRSA membership but expresses openness to finding new paths forward, including potential partnerships with non-profits for research initiatives.

The interview explores international collaboration with trade bodies like EuropeActive, World Active, and Aus Active. Clark is open to working with overseas partners and discusses potential collaborations on research initiatives. She also stresses the importance of streamlining research efforts and avoiding duplication.

Addressing concerns about pay and training in the fitness sector, Clark acknowledges the challenge and highlights the importance of offering training and certifications for career growth. She notes the industry's unique narrative regarding its impact on bodies and minds, which can attract talented individuals.

Clark discusses emerging trends in the fitness industry, noting the resurgence of free weights and cold plunges, as well as the growing focus on nutrition and recovery. She sees a shift where more people exercise for mental health rather than physique, with wellness trends incorporating features like massage chairs and cryotherapy.

Future focus

IHRSA's short-term goals include rebranding and strategic planning, focusing on advocacy, education, and research.

The longer-term vision involves the association being recognised globally as the credited voice

PHOTO: SMUTTEROCK / GROUND PICTURE

More people are now
exercising for their mind
as well as their body



for the health and fitness industry, advocating for preventative healthcare. Clark highlights the ambitious goal of being recognised both in terms of recognition and financial perspective.

The interview concludes with a discussion of the PHIT Act, sponsored by IHRSA, which seeks to allow Americans to use pre-tax dollars for health-related expenses, including health club memberships and fitness equipment.

Clark shares the progress and support for the PHIT Act, emphasizing its potential impact on making physical activity more accessible.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Orrgren

Originally published: HCM 10 2023





We're working on a superyacht that has three separate gyms – one each for the owner, the guests and the crew

Tim Colston

Co-founder, Superyacht Fitness



Tim Colston, co-founder of Superyacht Fitness, discussed the establishment of the innovative venture dedicated to enhancing physical and mental well-being on superyachts for owners, guests, and crew. Leveraging Colston's 35 years of experience in the fitness industry and Glen Taylor's 16 years in the yachting sector, Superyacht Fitness offers strategic on-board gym equipment packages tailored to the unique needs of each vessel.

The idea for Superyacht Fitness emerged during a conversation about setting up a home gym for a high net worth family. Colston, intrigued by the lifestyle aboard an £80m superyacht, recognised a business opportunity. Upon meeting Glen Taylor, passionate about addressing mental health issues among boat crews, the duo founded Superyacht

Fitness, taking 18 months to thoroughly understand the sector's challenges and opportunities.

As co-founders, Colston and Taylor bring a wealth of experience to the venture. The team strategically partners with equipment suppliers, personal trainers, physiotherapists, psychologists, mental health specialists, wellness experts, and nutritionists. The focus is on building a business model that stands the test of time.

The business caters to the high demand for solutions addressing crew welfare issues within the superyacht industry. While new superyachts take several years to launch, the retrofitting market provides immediate opportunities. Colston describes various installations, highlighting the diversity driven by vessel size and owner preferences. Some projects involve creating separate gyms for owners, guests, and crew.

Colston outlines the differences between boat-board gyms and land-based counterparts, considering factors like weight, space constraints, equipment security in high seas, and the need for state-of-the-art, reliable machinery. Superyacht Fitness offers a global service and maintenance agreement to ensure seamless support even in remote locations.

Marketing efforts initially rely on Glen Taylor's extensive network within the yachting community. The company also collaborates with a maritime marketing agency to launch the brand. Colston emphasises the connection with the health and fitness industry, citing the partnership with Myzone as a central element. Myzone plays a key role in fostering a sense of community and camaraderie among yacht crews.

Regarding pricing, Colston notes the highly personalised nature of each gym and the range of facilities within a yacht. The fit-out process involves collaboration with specialist shipyards worldwide, with early involvement crucial for effective planning, especially in retrofitting projects.

Colston hints at an upcoming announcement about Superyacht Fitness's foray into spa and wellness facilities, underscoring the importance of holistic well-being in the superyacht lifestyle. The venture is poised to make a significant impact by providing comprehensive fitness solutions to enhance the overall experience for superyacht owners, guests, and crew members.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Colston

Originally published: HCM 5 2023





*We want Forest House to be the place
that ticks all the boxes: that isn't just
another health and fitness club*

Tom Edwards & Jon Williams

**COO Tom Edwards and MD Jon Williams
of The Really Fine Leisure Company**





The gym floor, with interior design by Sarah Mannerings

PHOTO: SOLUTIONWORK CREATIVE

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Tom Edwards and Jon Williams, co-founders of The Really Fine Leisure Company, discussed their Forest House concept and the unique approach they are taking in the fitness industry.

The concept is a culmination of 10 years of experience running multiple brands, including The Marlow Club, PilaYoga, and The Fitness Experts. Forest House, located in Watford, is described as a 'greatest hits compilation', bringing together the best elements from their previous ventures. The £3m club is situated within the West Herts Sports Club, providing members access to various sports facilities, including tennis courts, cricket, football, and five-a-side football.

The building underwent a complete transformation, with only the walls remaining intact. Collaborating with Jeffrey Jordan Architects and designer Sarah Mannerings, the goal was to create a space with a Soho House members' club vibe – comfortable yet with a wow factor. The name 'Forest House' reflects the surrounding environment, with a commitment to sustainability, including plans for solar panels and tree planting.

Unique Offerings

Forest House focuses on group exercise, featuring a range of studios such as Flow for yoga and Pilates, Reform for reformer Pilates, Ride for indoor cycling, and a functional fitness studio. The open gym floor, lounge, therapy rooms, and squash courts complete the offerings. An emphasis on time, energy, and space sets Forest House apart, with classes offered in various durations (20, 40, 60, and 80 minutes) and labelled by energy levels (Revive, Thrive, Strive).

The club takes a holistic approach, incorporating mindfulness, breathwork, and meditation within its studios. Therapy rooms provide not only physical treatments but also mental health support. The lounge serves as a hub, accommodating diverse

preferences related to time, energy, and space, whether members seek solitude or community engagement.

Ambitions for Forest House:

The founders aim to reach full capacity within 13 months of opening, targeting July 2024. The membership model, priced at £100 a month for a 12-month contract, has garnered significant interest, with 200 members paying deposits within a few weeks of pre-sale. Edwards and Williams envision Forest House as a unique and special addition to the community, with potential plans for international expansion, although the focus is on finding the right locations.

The interview also provides insight into the development of other brands within The Really Fine Leisure Company, including The Marlow Club and PilaYoga Studios. The founders discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their business, highlighting the support of members who paid fees during lockdowns, allowing the company to weather the challenges. Despite the setbacks, the business is now back to capacity, with increased membership prices and a transformed usage pattern, making the club a social hub for members.

Edwards and Williams' Forest House concept represents an innovative and holistic approach to fitness, focusing on community, sustainability and flexibility in response to member needs. The success of their previous ventures and resilience displayed during the pandemic position the company for continued growth and potential international expansion.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/ReallyFine

Originally published: HCM 6 2023





*I want to lift the sector, move it forward,
stretch it, help it become what it really can be*

Mike Farrar

Chair, UK Active

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Mike Farrar, chair of UK Active and former CEO of the NHS Confederation, discusses his journey, the role of UK Active, and the transformative potential of the fitness sector in healthcare.

Farrar describes the NHS Confederation as the membership body for the entire National Health Service, focusing on influencing policy, facilitating networking, and representing the NHS to the public. Drawing parallels, he sees UK Active as having a similar role in the physical activity sector – convening, sharing best practices, advocating to the government, and delivering a crucial message to the public.

A lifelong passion for sports policy and management led Farrar to take on roles nationally and locally. When the pandemic hit, he shifted his focus to full-time roles supporting organisations affected by the crisis. Post-pandemic, the opportunity to chair UK Active aligned with his passion for sports and leisure, offering a purposeful role with a strong sense of social justice.

Farrar embraces a broad definition of the physical activity sector, emphasising inclusivity. He underscores the importance of being agnostic about where and how people engage in physical activity, focusing on the overarching goal of promoting activity for mental, physical, and social wellbeing.

Farrar advocates ambitious goals and emphasizes the need to present specific schemes to potential partners. He explores potential areas, including social prescribing, university collaborations, musculoskeletal programmes, cancer prehab and rehab, and child and adolescent mental health initiatives.

Incorporating fitness into healthcare

Recognising the health, economic, and social contributions of the fitness sector, Farrar envisions a smarter and more precise business case to secure funding. He stresses the importance of speaking to the immediate needs of healthcare, such as reducing

waiting lists, improving ambulance handovers, and operating within budget constraints.

Engaging with NHS decision-makers

Farrar aims to create demonstrator projects by directly engaging with influential figures in the NHS, focusing on reducing waiting lists and improving patient outcomes. He emphasises the need to lobby government effectively while simultaneously creating channels to approach opinion leaders in the health service.

While acknowledging that not every part of the sector may be fully prepared, Farrar commends the enthusiasm and vision of UK Active and the sector's leadership. He sees a collective willingness to upskill and meet the challenges, emphasising the increasing importance of the fitness sector's social contribution.

Farrar highlights the need for better data to demonstrate the sector's impact to potential customers and partners. He stresses the importance of showcasing achievements and delivering strong social, economic, and health value.

Additionally, he advocates for improved government collaboration across departments to present a unified voice.

Personal motivation

Farrar's personal motivation revolves around elevating the sector, transforming its image, and making fitness services accessible to everyone. He emphasises the importance of achieving the goal of getting five million more people active, with a subtle focus on addressing the needs of those with the greatest socioeconomic challenges.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Farrar

Originally published: HCM 2 2023





Farrar comes to the physical activity sector following a career in the health service

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



We're opening 500–600 studios a year, so in five years there'll be another 3,000 studios on top of the 3,000 already open

Anthony Geisler

CEO, Xponential Fitness



PHOTO: Xponential Fitness

Xponential Fitness, led by Anthony Geisler, has evolved significantly since its 2019 acquisition of Stride Fitness. In 2023, the company boasted a portfolio of 11 boutique fitness brands, including Lindora, Rumble Boxing, and BFT. Geisler emphasises a focus on being the biggest and best in each modality rather than entering crowded segments.

Xponential, now present in 23 countries, operates around 3,000 studios, with nearly 400 outside the US. The projected total studio revenue for the year is close to US\$1.4bn, and a new studio opens every 15 hours. Geisler provides insights into the performance of key brands within the portfolio.

Club Pilates, the oldest and most established brand, contributes around a third of revenues. Geisler notes its impressive growth, with average revenues per studio increasing from US\$550k in 2019 to over US\$900k in 2023. Pure Barre, YogaSix, and StretchLab also show strong performance, with StretchLab boasting over 900 licenses sold and an average unit volume exceeding US\$600k.

Geisler acknowledges the time it takes to bring new acquisitions up to Xponential standards and highlights the importance of evaluating each brand's potential for growth. The company's portfolio strategy allows for flexibility, considering factors such as consumer preferences and brand performance.

Addressing potential changes in the portfolio, Geisler explains that Xponential continually

assesses the optimal mix of brands. While unlikely to shut down a brand, they may consider selling if it no longer aligns with broader capital allocation goals. The focus remains on maximising value for shareholders and supporting franchisees.

Regarding Club Pilates' growth, Geisler revisits the initial estimate of 900–1,000 locations in 2019 and now sees potential for around 1,700 studios in the US. Collaborations with LA Fitness further expand the market reach for existing franchisees.

Xponential utilises aggregators such as XPass, Gympass, and ClassPass to optimise class attendance and fill empty seats. The majority of the business operates on a subscription model, with surge pricing based on demand.

The company embraces digital offerings through XPlus, providing content from its brands. Partnerships with Meta and Litesport enable the development of virtual and mixed reality formats for various brands, expanding the reach of Xponential beyond physical studios.

Looking ahead, Xponential aims to continue its successful trajectory by selling more franchises, opening studios, and maximising revenue, with international expansion being a key focus.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.HCMmag.com/geisler

Originally published: HCM 11 2023





Rumble combines
boxing-inspired circuits
with resistance training

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Gonzalez has been on a journey with Barry's from being a customer to global CEO





Even now, whenever I teach classes, people will tell me how Barry's has changed their life

Joey Gonzalez

CEO, Barry's

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Joey Gonzales, CEO of Barry's, shared insights into the evolution of Barry's Bootcamp, its diverse modalities, global expansion, and the celebration of its 25th anniversary. The interview delves into the origin story of Barry's, from founder Barry Jay's early experiences in a traditional gym to the creation of the first Barry's Bootcamp in West Hollywood in 1998.

Gonzales, who started as a client and later became an instructor and manager, discusses the brand's transformation over the years. The initial military-themed approach with a strict and challenging workout has evolved into a more inclusive and positive experience while retaining the essence of the iconic Red Room, designed to feel like a nightclub.

The conversation touches upon the growth of Barry's, from its humble beginnings to becoming a global fitness phenomenon with 84 studios in 14 countries. Gonzales emphasises the importance of focusing on each new modality's success before introducing additional ones, highlighting Run x Lift, Ride x Lift, and the strength-only concept Lift as integral components of the Barry's family.

The interview covers the launch of Barry's X, the digital platform offering live and on-demand workouts at \$39.99 a month. Gonzales discusses the unique features of Barry's X, including the live connection to the community, and future plans for expanding into more modalities.

Gonzales shares the story behind the development of Ride, a modality that replaces treadmills with bikes, catering to clients who prefer low-impact exercise. He also discusses plans for

expanding Ride globally, ensuring consistency and quality in scaling the new product.

Regarding Lift, the strength-only concept, Gonzales talks about its inception in response to client preferences and its success as a popular product with a different studio footprint. The focus remains on ensuring that each new modality aligns with the Barry's brand and delivers an exceptional experience.

The interview delves into the global expansion plans of Barry's, including upcoming studio openings in the US and international markets like Israel, Bahrain, and the Iberian Peninsula. Gonzales envisions reaching 200 studios globally before 2030, emphasising corporate ownership and a strategic approach to expansion.

In terms of investors, Gonzales mentions North Castle Partners and the potential for another private equity play in the future. The interview concludes with insights into Barry's 25th-anniversary celebrations, highlighting the brand's strong connection with its customers and the continual innovation that has contributed to its enduring success.

In summary, Gonzales provides a comprehensive overview of Barry's Bootcamp, detailing its history, evolution, global expansion, diverse modalities, digital platform, and plans for the future. The emphasis on authenticity, innovation, and customer connection underscores Barry's remarkable journey as a fitness brand.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Gonzales

Originally published: HCM 9 2023



ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



Benefit Systems debuted on the Warsaw Stock Exchange in 2011 with an issue price of US\$26 per share. Today, shares are worth US\$410

Tomasz Groń

MD, Benefit Systems



PHOTO: BENEFIT SYSTEMS

Tomasz Groń, managing director of Benefit Systems, discussed the company's role in delivering employee benefits, including health and fitness services, to business customers. Benefit Systems, which debuted on the Warsaw Stock Exchange in 2011, has become a leader in both non-financial benefits and the fitness market in Poland.

The company's flagship product is the MultiSport card, introduced in 2004, allowing employees to access various facilities across the country, covering 40 activities and sports. With 1.3 million users in Poland and over 1.8 million globally, the card offers access to approximately 5,000 partner facilities. Additionally, Benefit Systems owns over 190 clubs in Poland and 25 outside Poland.

Beyond the MultiSport card, Benefit Systems offers a rich portfolio of services and non-financial solutions, including the MyBenefit platform and the MultiLife programme focusing on employee wellbeing. The company also operates in international markets such as the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovakia, and is testing the MultiSport program in Turkey.

Groń emphasises the importance of their fitness clubs as part of the MultiSport ecosystem, with over 200,000 members across various club brands.

The clubs are strategically located in large urban centres and offer not only fitness classes but also additional amenities such as squash and badminton courts, pools, wellness zones, and kinesiotherapy.

Benefit Systems continuously updates its offerings to align with user needs and market trends. Groń highlights their efforts to address mental health, introducing stress-reducing classes and expanding wellness zones. The company is also growing its fitness club portfolio organically and through acquisitions, with plans to open new clubs in different cities.

The company's mission focuses on promoting sport and healthy lifestyles, with initiatives like the MultiSport Foundation's Active MultiSport Schools programme and the Full of Sport campaign, challenging stereotypes related to physical activity for people with disabilities.

Benefit Systems aims to have a positive impact on the corporate world by supporting end-users and employers to harness physical activity to counteract stress and improve work-life balance.

The *MultiSport Index 2023* survey indicated that physical activity made 82 per cent of MultiSport card users feel better, with 94 per cent agreeing that it translated into greater energy, motivation, and commitment at work.



Only 8 per cent of Poland's population of 41 million are deemed to be physically active

PHOTO: BENEFIT SYSTEMS

The company also emphasises sustainability, being part of the B Corp movement since 2018. Employee volunteering programmes, financial loans for sports facility partners, and donations to support sports facilities are among the social impact initiatives.

Looking ahead, Benefit Systems plans to explore new solutions for expanding the fitness network and enhancing services, with a focus on wellness zones, recovery and new technologies to address the effects of a sedentary lifestyle. The ZdrawAppka app, combining fitness club benefits with preventative healthcare advice, is part of their ongoing development.

Gron's personal motivation lies in the vision of an active society that's fully aware of the benefits of exercise. He appreciates the positive changes it can bring to customers' lives, and the success stories of individuals improving their health and quality of life through training.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Gron

Originally published: HCM 8 2023





*Our vision is for all
our centres to provide
the widest range of
wellness services,
under one roof*

Duncan Jefford

**Regional director,
Everyone Active**



Jefford says the company is spending £7.5m on upgrades in the next 12 months



ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Duncan Jefford, regional director of Everyone Active, discussed the significant changes in the operator's approach to fitness and wellness, emphasising the need for an omnichannel experience for customers. The transformation is based on a thorough analysis of customer data spanning 10 years, reflecting shifts in exercise preferences and trends.

The gyms, spanning over 200 locations nationwide, will undergo refurbishments and layout changes to enhance the fitness experience. The focus will shift towards strength training, free weights, and functional spaces for mind, body, and recovery. Cardio machines will be slightly scaled down due to decreasing demand. The investment in these upgrades across various sites amounts to £7.5m over the next 12 months.

Collaborating with GT3 Architects, Everyone Active plans to enhance its fitness spaces not only in terms of equipment, but also by upgrading the interior design. Specific changes include increasing the size of mind and body zones, universal zones, and dynamic areas, tailored to each location and inspired by the brand's colours.

The company analysed data from its customers before designing the new gyms



PHOTO: MARKEL GRABONSKI / EVERYONE ACTIVE

Everyone Active is expanding its fitness offerings beyond traditional gyms, introducing boutique studios like the Fortis concept, which combines HIIT classes with premium experiences. The company also collaborates with franchises like F45, CrossFit, Fight Klub, More Yoga, and virtual pool workout company Hydrohex, enriching the diversity of experiences at their sites.

New supplier partnerships with Peloton and Life Fitness aim to enhance the 360-degree wellness offering. A new cycling concept called EA Cycle is set to launch, with plans for nationwide classes within the next 12 months. Partnerships with Therabody and InBody will bring wellness, recovery, and stretching solutions to functional spaces.

Digital plays a crucial role in the transformation. The Everyone on Demand (EOD) app, launched in 2020, offers a range of wellness products, attracting around 15,000 regular users monthly. The company leverages digital operations and partnerships to adapt to changing customer needs, engaging with over half a million users through their app and social media platforms.

To address sustainability concerns, Everyone Active is working on a Net Zero Strategy, aiming to make its central support hub operationally net zero by moving to a renewable energy tariff and eliminating natural gas as a heating fuel. Longer-term goals include decarbonising all relevant emissions from corporate operations by 2030.

Jefford emphasises the need for the fitness industry to showcase its economic and social value. By working with industry bodies and evolving leisure services to meet modern users' needs, Everyone Active aims to position leisure centres as essential community hubs that provide a wide range of experiences. The Social Value Calculator, developed in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, shows the monetary value of participation across Everyone Active's centres, amounts to £198m per year.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Jefford

Originally published: HCM 1 2023





PHOTO: THE HEALTH FOUNDATION

The nation's health is central to society's strength and growth. We should be demanding more from government

Katherine Merrifield and Gwen Nightingale

**Job-share assistant directors,
The Health Foundation Healthy Lives team**

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

In September 2023, Merrifield and Nightingale collaborated with HCM on a statement about government health strategy as follows:

"There was a moment in 2021, at the point the UK's Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) was launched, when focus was finally given to improving the nation's health and reducing inequalities.

Then Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid, said: "By focusing on preventing and not just treating poor health, [OHID] will break the link between people's background and their prospects for a healthy life."

This was to be the moment the building blocks for good health would finally be considered across the whole of government and OHID would coordinate activity across Whitehall "to address the wider drivers of good health, from employment to housing, education and the environment".

Ambitions have been diluted

Fast forward two years and this ambition is barely recognisable. A commitment to produce a standalone, cross-government health disparities white paper has been diluted beyond recognition. The agenda is now a minor feature in the major conditions strategy (www.hcmmag.com/majorconditions), a document rooted firmly in the Department of Health and Social Care and more specifically the NHS.

While the document lists primary prevention – tackling the root causes of ill health – as a priority, there are no substantive commitments likely to reverse stalling life expectancy trends or the gap that exists between different areas.

There's only one new policy announcement in the prevention space and this is government consulting on adding pack inserts to tobacco products to encourage



The manifestoes for the next election will be a chance for change

smokers to quit. This new policy is not enough to address the impact of risk factors such as obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption on people's health.

The report is anchored in the role of clinical services and places too much focus on individual behaviour change and personalised prevention. This ignores broader evidence on the state's crucial role in taking population-level action on risk factors and the wider determinants.

Lack of ambition

This lack of ambition should be a concern for us all. The nation's health is central to society's strength and growth. Having commented on previous moments when the ambition was watered down, it has become increasingly difficult to find anything new to say or be surprised by the lack of ambition shown. Perhaps

it's unsurprising then that the external commentary around the strategy is quiet, reflecting a feeling that there is nothing to gain by making the same points – again – accepting that a government in its last year of a five-year term is unlikely to make bold, new moves.

But the point that communities are being left behind by a lack of ambition and leadership is one to continue making. We should be demanding more from government. There will be very little impact on life expectancy without a new approach that has strong political leadership at its core.

MORE

Online: www.hcmmag.com/healthlives

Originally published: HCM 9 2023



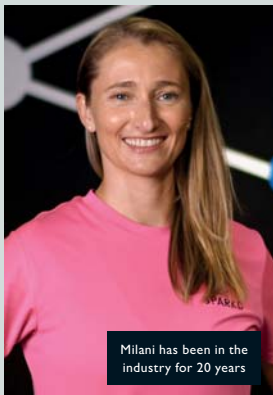
ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



I was particularly motivated to develop this concept as we lost my grandfather to Alzheimer's

Anna Milani

founder, Sparkd Fitness



Milani has been in the industry for 20 years

Sparkd Fitness, founded by Anna Milani, is pioneering a unique approach to fitness that combines physical and cognitive training. The gym, initially launched in Singapore, is on a mission to enhance longevity and brain-body performance, with global expansion plans underway and a current focus on securing funding for scaling operations.

At the core of Sparkd's fitness philosophy is brain-body fitness training. This innovative approach involves a multi-component modality encompassing cardiovascular and strength training, coordination, motor skill training, and cognitive motor training.

The latter, also known as dual-task training, requires individuals to perform both physical and cognitive tasks simultaneously. This combination of activities has been shown to increase neuroplasticity, providing tangible brain health benefits in daily life. Milani emphasises that this approach not only yields results but is also fun, gamified, and engaging, catering to those who might find traditional workouts monotonous.

Milani's vision

With a background spanning 20 years in the health and fitness industry, Milani's inspiration for Sparkd stems from a personal connection. Losing her grandfather to Alzheimer's fuelled her determination to create a fitness concept that addresses the evolving physical and mental needs as individuals age. She envisions

Sparkd as the gym of the future, a place that caters to a broader spectrum of well-being beyond aesthetics. Milani's passion lies in democratising brain-body training and raising awareness of the profound impact of exercise on both physical and mental health.

The journey from concept to implementation involved extensive market research over 18 months, examining global fitness trends. Milani discovered that the type of training Sparkd offered was typically reserved for elite athletes or individuals with neurological conditions.

Her mission became clear – to make this training accessible to the general population, with a focus on prevention. Educating the audience about the benefits of brain-body fitness proved challenging initially, requiring a balance between scientific principles and approachability. Client feedback remains instrumental in refining Sparkd's messaging and evolving its technology and customer journey.

Becoming a Brain Health Trainer:

Milani stresses the importance of cognitive flexibility and openness to upskilling for trainers at Sparkd. New hires undergo training through the company's online academy, covering brain health-related courses and technologies used by Sparkd.

For its customers, Sparkd offers a diverse range of services, including group classes, personal training sessions, and team-building events. Group classes





Dual-tasking is known to boost neuroplasticity

attract participants from a wide age range, while personal training sessions are more customised, involving validated physical and cognitive tests.

The gym caters to clients with specific goals related to performance and longevity, drawing attention from individuals with conditions such as Parkinson's, mild cognitive impairments, early-stage dementia, or those recovering from stroke or cancer.

Tech integration

Sparkd integrates cutting-edge technology from various global suppliers to enhance the fitness experience. The seamless blending of physical exercises with different technologies is a key aspect of Sparkd's approach.

While personal training clients can track their progress through data, efforts are underway to extend this feature to group class participants. Sparkd continues to scout and research new products to stay at the forefront of the industry.

The company is also developing an on-demand solution to facilitate anytime training, recognising its importance for scaling the business. Clients can already complete cognitive tests and use the Neurotracker at home, emphasizing flexibility.

Milani envisions vast potential for brain-body fitness across populations, including children, adults, and seniors. The applications extend well beyond gyms and health clubs, being suitable for schools,

colleges, universities, hotels, corporates, senior living facilities, and smart cities. The convergence of fitness, wellness, and the medical sector excites Milani, reflecting the holistic approach of Sparkd.

Global roll-out

Starting in Singapore, Sparkd is next planning to expand into Thailand, and explore opportunities in other areas of Southeast Asia. Interest from Europe is also being considered.

The US market represents a significant potential, and the brand is actively seeking the next round of investment for global scaling. Silent investors currently support Sparkd's vision.

The ultimate goal of Sparkd Fitness is to empower individuals to lead fulfilling lives in both body and brain, providing the opportunity for everyone to train like elite athletes. Milani firmly believes that brain-body performance improvement is achievable for everyone, underlining Sparkd's commitment to democratising this transformative approach to fitness.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Milani

Originally published: HCM 9 2023



Morris wants to make
quality wellness offers
accessible to more people





*It feels as though we've
come out of the pandemic
and lit the afterburners*

Brian Morris

CEO, Aspria

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

In a recent interview with Brian Morris, CEO of Aspria, he highlighted the recovery and growth the company has experienced post-COVID. Morris expresses gratitude for the loyalty of members during club closures and mentioned financial recovery to pre-COVID levels, with member numbers close behind. Aspria secured a €50 million financing tranche from Fortress Investment Group in 2021, indicating the significance of health and wellbeing on a global financial scale.

Discussing the societal shift, Morris notes that the pandemic has changed people's priorities, highlighting the importance of embracing life and finding a balance between work, leisure, and family time. Aspria aims to facilitate this balance by offering comprehensive wellness facilities under one roof, minimising time wasted on travel.

Aspria's major projects include the ongoing development of Aspria Roosevelt in Brussels, a 140,000sq ft club set to open in 2024. The company is also investing in existing clubs in Italy, Germany, and Belgium. Morris reveals plans for further expansion within existing territories and exploring new markets.

Introducing Aspresso, Morris describes it as a family-friendly brand with a lower price point (€50–€60 a month) compared to Aspria. Aspresso aims to cater to a broader market with large outdoor activity spaces, swimming, fitness, group exercise,

and family facilities. The first Aspresso site, Aspresso K7 Valencia in Spain, relaunched in April, with plans for three more clubs in Rome, Germany, and Italy.

Morris highlights the uniqueness of Aspresso, positioning it in the relatively unpopulated 'budget family' segment. He emphasises that Aspresso is not a copy of other operators but follows Aspria Group DNA, focusing on private funding.

Discussing Aspresso's rollout plans, Morris reveals the next site in Rome, followed by clubs in Germany and Italy, with further expansion in Spain and other European markets. The company's strategy includes acquiring, rebranding, and remodelling existing clubs for faster growth.

Expressing excitement about Aspresso, Morris emphasises its role in making improved health and wellness accessible to a larger population. He sees it as a positive change and a way for the Aspria Group to give back to the community. Members of the senior team, some with two decades of experience, share Morris's enthusiasm, marking a step change for Aspria after navigating challenges in recent years.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Morris

Originally published: HCM 4 2023

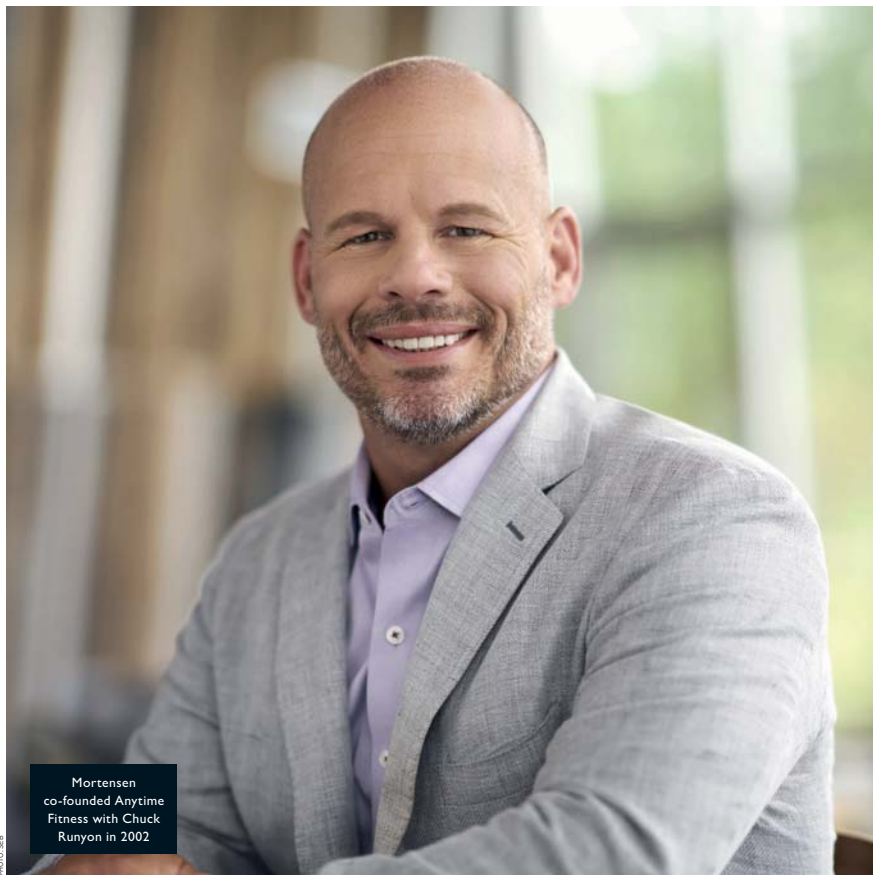




*Within the next five years, we want
to get to 10,000 units globally*

Dave Mortensen

President and co-founder of Self Esteem Brands



Mortensen
co-founded Anytime
Fitness with Chuck
Runyon in 2002

Self Esteem Brands
wants to impact
100 million people

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Dave Mortensen, president of Self Esteem Brands, shared insights into the company's evolution and future plans. Established in 2012 as an umbrella for personal care brands, Self Esteem Brands includes

Anytime Fitness, Waxing The City, Basecamp Fitness, The Bar Method, Stronger U Nutrition, Healthy Contributions, and ProVision Security.

The company, with over 5,500 locations globally, prioritises acquisitions aligned with personal care, fitness and wellness. Mortensen outlines four pillars crucial for acquisitions: investing in the right people, aligning with a meaningful purpose, demonstrating performance in franchising, and fostering a positive, enjoyable working relationship.

Regarding future acquisitions, Mortensen expresses a perpetual interest in growth. While exploring areas like mental health and skincare, he indicates a preference for larger-scale franchises in the future. The company's brands, including Anytime Fitness, Waxing The City, and studio brands, are experiencing positive growth, with impressive average unit volumes.

Anytime Fitness is set to expand into France, targeting over 350 clubs. Mortensen is excited to enter the French market and outlines plans for bringing studio brands to France. The company is also eyeing expansion in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, focusing initially on supporting Fast Fitness Japan and launching studio brands in Sydney, Australia.

Self Esteem Brands will establish a larger global presence, expanding into Latin America and Europe. The company adopts an 80/20 approach, maintaining consistency globally while allowing 20 per cent of localisation in partnership with master franchisors.



PHOTO: SEB

Mortensen discusses evolving the Anytime Fitness model, emphasising the growing interest in strength training and the integration of cardio within strength workouts. The company launched a new app, prioritising customer accessibility and empowerment by allowing them to track and drive their health improvements.

Stronger U Nutrition, a nutrition brand, is introduced to embed nutritional support across Self Esteem Brands. Another brand, Healthy Contributions, connects with corporate wellness and insurance providers, fostering industry-wide collaboration.

Looking ahead, Mortensen sets ambitious goals, aiming to reach 10,000 units globally within the next five years. The focus includes organic growth from existing brands and additional growth through acquisitions. The company also aims to impact 100 million people worldwide, highlighting the untold stories of positive impacts on individuals' lives as a personal driving force.

Mortensen's dedication to watching teams, franchisees, and the company make a difference in the world underscores his passion for driving positive change through Self Esteem Brands.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Mortensen

Originally published: HCM 7 2023



ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



Over the next 25 years, we intend for RSG to remain one of the most successful fitness companies in the world



Dr Jobst Müller-Trimbusch



Hagen Wingerts Zahn

PHOTOS: RSG

Dr Jobst Müller-Trimbusch & Hagen Wingerts Zahn

Co-CEOs of RSG Group

HW: Taking over the reins from the late Rainer Schaller has been an honour, given my long association with the company as the business manager for Germany. Rainer's considerable achievements, from pioneering discount fitness to creating innovative brands, make his impact on the fitness industry lasting. Despite the tragic circumstances, it's an honour to manage RSG Group alongside Jobst.

JMT: Rainer's visionary leadership challenged and inspired us all. Having joined RSG Group as CFO three years ago, I learned a lot from him. The responsibility we feel in our new roles as co-CEOs is immense, recognising that we cannot replace Rainer. However, our goal is to make the company sustainably profitable and continue his legacy, supported by the team he developed over the last 25 years.

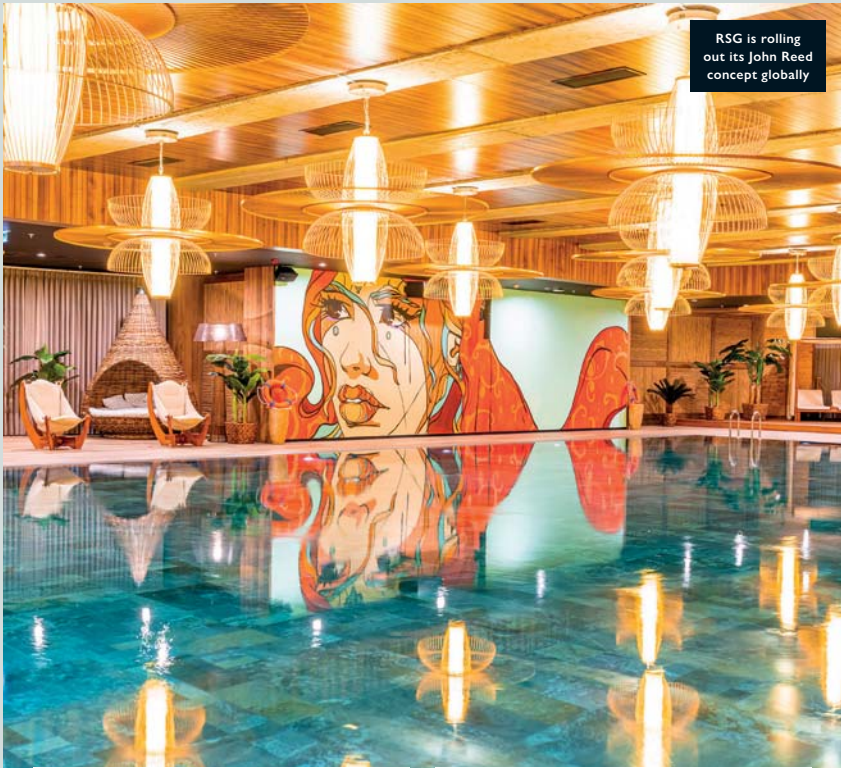
HW: The period since October 21, 2022, has been challenging due to the incomprehensible shock and loss of Rainer, his family, and colleagues. Despite the

grief, the company has remained fully operational. The unique corporate culture at RSG Group fostered a remarkable sense of community among employees, supporting each other through this difficult time.

JMT: In December 2022, Hagen and I officially took on the role of co-CEOs. The continued operation of the company, the support of employees and business partners, and the fact that RSG Group remains family-owned are sources of encouragement. Our collaborative management, in consultation with the new Schaller family owners, ensures effective leadership.

HW: While all major decisions are made collaboratively, Hagen and I bring different and complementary areas of expertise to the table, allowing us to allocate responsibilities efficiently.

Restructuring the company will be a major task as it has been tailored to Rainer for the past 25 years. We aim to focus more clearly on our fitness brands, intending to be a leading fitness



RSG is rolling
out its John Reed
concept globally

company globally. Our goal is to actively shape the fitness market and continue as a trendsetter.

Rainer built a treasure over the past 25 years with 22 fitness and lifestyle brands. Our emphasis now is on strengthening and expanding our core fitness business. The diversity of our fitness club concepts, from McFit to John Reed to Gold's Gym, presents significant potential.

JMT: The launch of Heimat last year marked a unique concept with its first club in Los Angeles. The exclusive women-only private members' concept, Heimat by Waris Dirie, was introduced in Paris this year. Collaborative ventures like Sergio Ramos by John Reed and Heimat by Waris Dirie will likely continue based on personal connections and shared values.

HW: The US, being the birthplace of modern fitness, holds immense growth potential for RSG Group. Our expansion includes Gold's Gym, McFit, and John Reed studio openings across Europe and the US in 2023. Sustainability is a key focus,

demonstrated by Gold's Gym Berlin becoming the first commercial gym to receive LEED Platinum certification for sustainable construction.

JMT: The RSG Group operates in 48 countries, with 395 company-owned gyms in 13 countries. While exiting Poland in 2022, the acquisition of Holmes Place Spain complemented our portfolio. We are currently considering the sale of our Spanish portfolio, including McFit gyms, Holmes Place sites, and a Sergio Ramos by John Reed fitness club.

HW: Our commitment is to remain one of the most successful fitness companies worldwide, building on the legacy created by Rainer's visionary entrepreneurship.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmag.com/RSGupdate23

Originally published: HCM 3 2023





We're focused on moving Core Life into the most affluent cities globally: London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Dubai, Singapore and Tokyo

Justin Musgrove

CEO Core Life (now CEO, Fitness First UK)



Musgrove believes in the sector's potential to drive societal change

In a recent interview, Justin Musgrove, former CEO of Core Life, reflected on his intriguing journey from leading The Bannatyne Group in the UK to becoming a transformative force in the evolving fitness landscape of Saudi Arabia.

Venturing into Saudi Arabia:

Musgrove's attraction to Saudi Arabia in 2019 was spurred by an offer from Leejam Sports Company, the largest health club operator in the Middle East. The ambitious Vision 2030 transformation programme in Saudi Arabia, focusing on national fitness and health, aligned with Musgrove's expertise. He found the country's commitment to colossal projects like Neom and the changing health trajectory fascinating.

Evolution of fitness in Saudi Arabia

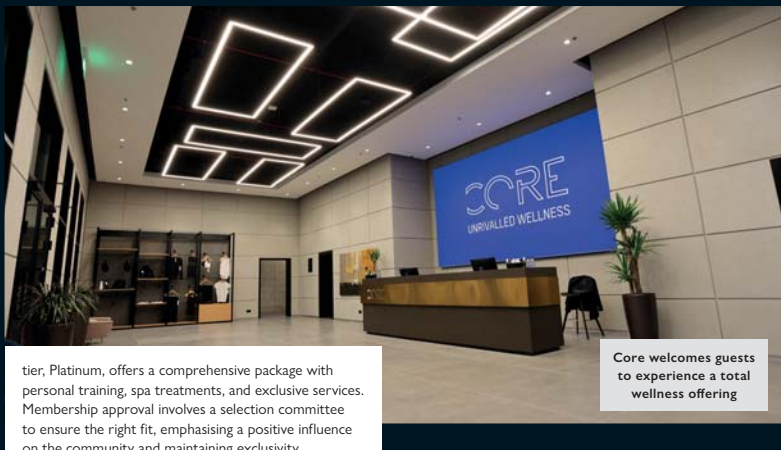
Arriving in 2019, Musgrove witnessed a significant shift in the Saudi fitness landscape. The market, reminiscent of the UK in the 80s and 90s, experienced explosive growth, with the number of gyms doubling and the entry of High-Value-Low-Price (HVLN) brands. Bodybuilding dominated initially, but there was a notable evolution towards functional training, and gender-segregated gyms gradually welcomed mixed communities.

The Core Life concept

As the CEO of Core Life, Musgrove oversees an exclusive lifestyle brand owned by Kun Investment Holding. Core Life spans social wellness clubs, restaurants, hotels, retreats, adventure excursions, medical services, and activewear. The brand's flagship, Core Social Wellness Clubs, focuses on an integrated approach to mind, body, and soul wellness.

Membership and exclusivity

Core Life adopts a tiered membership structure with Platinum, Gold, and Silver levels. The highest



Core welcomes guests to experience a total wellness offering

tier, Platinum, offers a comprehensive package with personal training, spa treatments, and exclusive services. Membership approval involves a selection committee to ensure the right fit, emphasising a positive influence on the community and maintaining exclusivity.

Core growth plans

Despite substantial investment, Core Life is nearing breaking even in Riyadh after just one year. Musgrove envisions global expansion into affluent cities like London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Dubai, Singapore, and Tokyo. Each city will host a single Core Social Wellness Club, tailored to the local environment while preserving the brand's international appeal.

Innovations and connectivity

Musgrove highlights the Core Connect programme, an integrated approach to fitness, spa, and nutrition designed to enhance the quality of life. The programme, centred around mind, body, and soul pillars, involves personalised plans and collaboration among experts to achieve holistic wellness. Musgrove highlights the importance of preserving personal connections in a tech-driven fitness landscape.

Future aspirations

Musgrove envisions returning to the UK, engaging in non-executive roles, and contributing to the fitness sector's advocacy efforts. He emphasises the need for the industry to have a seat at the table, showcasing its societal contributions. As a member of the Global Health and Fitness Alliance, Musgrove believes in the sector's potential to drive positive change and calls for government incentives and support.

In summary, Justin Musgrove's journey from the UK to Saudi Arabia reflects the dynamic evolution of the fitness industry, and his leadership at Core Life epitomises an integrated, exclusive approach to wellness that transcends borders.

UPDATE (HCM news 6 October 2023)

Justin Musgrove is new CEO of Fitness First UK

Industry heavyweight, Justin Musgrove, has joined Fitness First UK as CEO. A strong operator with a track record of achieving results in private and listed businesses, Musgrove has just returned from the Middle East, where he was CEO of Leejam and Core Life.

The big hire comes as Fitness First is rebuilding following a challenging restructuring case which concluded on 29 June, when the court used its cross-class cram down powers to push through rent reductions to save the business from liquidation.

Musgrove has a strong background in health and wellness, having been at Center Parcs for 19 years from 1998 to 2007 years and then Bannatyne for 12 years, latterly as CEO – a role he took up the year after the company was embroiled in a serious fraud case.

While at Bannatyne, he oversaw a £50m refresh of the estate, and was responsible for the entire health, fitness, spa and wellness portfolio.

He tackled three roles in the Middle East, rolling out wclubs for Leejam as CEO, before moving to Kun Sports as CEO and then developing and launching the Core Life brand

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Musgrove

Originally published: HCM 1 2023

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Musgrove2

Update published: HCM 6 2023





The academy has a clear commitment to serving Mallorcans who can work out in the gym and use the spa

Rafa Nadal

Rafa Nadal Academy



Nadal is one of the top tennis players of all time, with 22 grand slams to his name to date

Rafael Nadal, the tennis icon, has significantly transformed his hometown of Manacor in Mallorca through the establishment of the Rafa Nadal Academy by Movistar. This sprawling complex, initiated in 2014, serves as a testament to Nadal's commitment to fostering tennis talent and providing a seamless integration of education and sports training.

Nadal's vision

Growing up in Manacor, Nadal experienced the challenges of balancing tennis training and education. In response, he established the Rafa Nadal Foundation in 2008, focusing on supporting disadvantaged children. The academy, conceived in 2014 and inaugurated in 2016, was designed to implement protocols derived from Nadal's successful career, offering top-notch facilities for novice to professional players.

Academy facilities

The Rafa Nadal Academy features extensive indoor and outdoor tennis courts, a hydrothermal spa, Technogym-equipped gym, Les Mills classes, pools, hotel, restaurants, and the Rafa Nadal Xperience museum. The bilingual Rafa Nadal International School on-site facilitates the development of young talents, providing both tennis training and a world-class education.

Community engagement

Nadal's commitment to his hometown is evident through the academy's role as a local economic driver,



Nadal works with upcoming stars at the academy in Mallorca

employing over 300 locals and offering facilities like the Rafa Nadal Sports Centre to the community. The academy's growth in phases has expanded its reach, and the second phase, completed in 2021, added more tennis courts, supporting tournaments and training.

Wellness and medical

The academy collaborates with Quiron Salud Sports Clinic, offering comprehensive wellness services such as general medicine, sports medicine, nutrition, physiotherapy, and injury prevention. Health packs, including the Premium Health Pack, provide clients with a week-long holistic health analysis and treatment, reflecting Nadal's emphasis on overall well-being.

Global expansion

Beyond Manacor, Nadal's vision is realised through the academy in Kuwait and the Rafa Nadal Tennis Centres. These centres, developed in international holiday resorts and tourism destinations, offer coaching plans using training systems based on Nadal's experience. The academy's success has positioned it as a global model for the intersection of sports, wellness, and health.

Training philosophy

The training philosophy at Nadal's academies and centres focuses on coordination and injury prevention. Focusing on the foundations of coordination, balance, responsiveness, and footwork, the training extends to asymmetry management and strengthening and stabilising muscles to prevent injuries common in tennis. Nadal himself follows a rigorous training routine, showcasing the effectiveness of the academy's protocols.

In summary, Rafa Nadal's commitment to his roots in Manacor is exemplified through the transformative impact of the Academy.

Beyond its local significance, the academy stands as a global beacon for tennis development, wellness, and holistic health, driven by Nadal's passion for his sport and community.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Nadal

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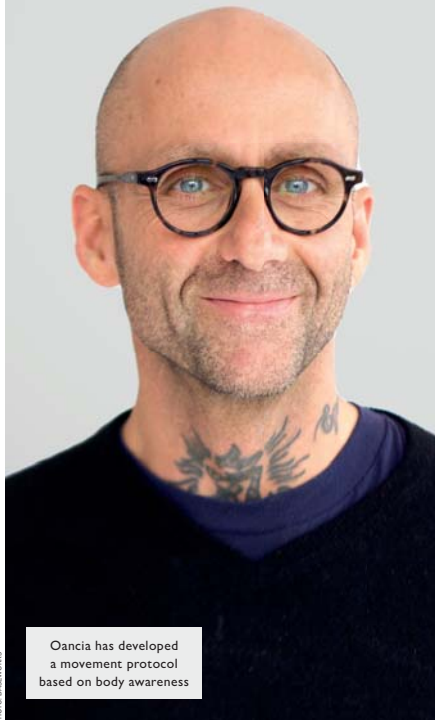




*Reliance on stimulants,
adrenaline and fitness
trackers to engage
muscles can numb
awareness of our bodies*

Patrick Oancia

Founder, Baseworks



Oancia has developed
a movement protocol
based on body awareness



Patrick Oancia, founder of Baseworks, introduces the Baseworks Method, an innovative contemplative practice that focuses on reshaping an individual's movement habits to enhance overall physical and mental wellbeing.

Holistic method

The Baseworks Method is a contemplative training practice designed to shift attention and engage muscles in a unique way, fostering unlearning of movement habits. By transforming the relationship individuals have with their bodies, the method aims to promote efficient and safe movement. The holistic benefits include gains in strength, flexibility, mobility, relaxation, improved motor skills, injury prevention, and rehabilitation.

Oancia's journey as a student, teacher of movement, and experiences with various injuries influenced the development of the Baseworks Method. Observations in the fitness industry, coupled with reflections on training approaches, led him to create an approach that addresses limitations intelligently. The method draws inspiration from Oancia's personal training across disciplines, his experiences with injuries, and insights from physiotherapy. Baseworks has evolved into a cross-disciplinary platform, collaborating with professionals in diverse fields such as music, mathematics, and architecture.

Global reach

With over a hundred instructors in 18 countries, the Baseworks Method has a global presence. Instructors, trained in various modalities, apply the



PHOTO: BA. SEWONKIS



PHOTO: BA. SEWONKIS

method to personal training, yoga, physiotherapy, and dance education. The method is accessible online 24/7, offering a platform for hybrid learning in combination with in-person teaching. Specialised events, courses, and workshops are conducted globally.

Improved resilience

Baseworks attracts people from diverse backgrounds seeking to enhance physical condition, skills, and overall health. Clients report improvements in strength, flexibility, joint mobility, posture, balance, body awareness, and spatial awareness.

The method's positive impact extends to mental health, reducing stress, improving resilience, enhancing mood regulation, and fostering better sleep quality. Clients also observe improved emotional regulation, self-esteem, and interpersonal acceptance.

Reimagining the future

The Baseworks team envisions branching out into different directions with cross-disciplinary research and collaborations. They plan to further develop digital, in-person, and hybrid learning offerings, expanding the application of the method through collaborations. Training for health, wellness, fitness industry professionals, businesses, and educational

institutions is on the agenda, with potential consideration for a franchise model. The aim is to establish a niche for The Baseworks Method adjacent to the sports, health, fitness, and wellness industries.

The team focuses on continuous investment in scientific research and collaborations, exploring applications related to neuro-muscular physiology, motor learning, and mechanisms of perception and cognition. Collaboration with the tech sector to reimagine the future of education and collaboration across industries is a key focus.

In marketing, Baseworks aims to educate people about the relationship between personal improvement and dedication to compounded learning, focusing on the long-term benefits of their method rather than quick-fix solutions.

The goal is to promote the idea that reaching a certain threshold in skill and understanding can lead to faster learning curves as a natural outcome of sustained effort.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Oancica

Originally published: HCM 2 2023





World class is the dominant health and fitness brand in Romania

Kent Orrgren

World Class Romania

Orrgren is CEO of World Class and president of Romania Active

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Kent Orrgren, CEO of World Class Romania, sheds light on the evolving attitudes toward well-being and health among Romanians. Despite a 2019 Ipsos study showing only 9 per cent prioritising health on their happiness scale, a 2022 study indicates a significant shift, with 64 per cent considering physical wellbeing their primary source of happiness. Orrgren sees this transformation as an industry opportunity to educate people about the benefits of physical activity.

Discussing further insights, Orrgren highlights a report by Daedalus Online and AT Kearney for World Class, revealing that 85 per cent of Romanians not currently using health clubs are open to purchasing memberships in the next six months. This indicates substantial potential for increased physical activity across various age groups.

In terms of tax structure, Orrgren notes that Romania's health and fitness industry enjoys a

reduced VAT rate of 5 per cent, down from 19 per cent in 2018. The country's overall appealing tax structure, with a corporate tax rate of 16 per cent, is conducive to foreign investment. Orrgren highlights the significance of fiscal incentives and exemptions, particularly in the thriving tech scene, which benefits health club operators.

Regarding ownership, World Class is owned by Vectr Holdings, part of the African Industries Group, with management also as investors. Orrgren says that an ownership shift completed in July 2022, indicating preparations for future growth. Vectr Holdings has diverse interests, including agribusiness, development, and real estate.

World Class, established 23 years ago, is the dominant health and fitness brand in Romania, boasting 44 clubs and 23 swimming pools. Orrgren outlines the company's focus on providing an all-inclusive wellness experience, with a focus on exercise and

World Class is Romania's largest gym chain, with 44 clubs and 76,000 members



PHOTO: WORLD CLASS

recovery for mental and physical health. The company's goal is to change Romanians' lives positively through diverse health and fitness services. Orrgren mentions World Class's partnership with Les Mills and its premium fitness and lifestyle club concept called W.

Notably, World Class is the largest provider of swimming in Romania, addressing a demand for sports, health, and fitness centres with pools. Orrgren discusses the positive response to swimming lessons, highlighting the company's contribution to community swimming and early habit formation.

Orrgren elaborates on the new flagship club in Bucharest, opened in April 2022, featuring a rooftop running track. The club aims to cater to nearby working professionals, aligning with the Romanian fitness membership deductibility law.

World Class's strategy revolves around promoting exercise as medicine, fostering a strong organisational culture, and prioritising employee wellbeing.

Orrgren stresses the importance of building a cohesive team and maintaining close relationships with members. The company's health and fitness experts, many with certifications and degrees in relevant fields, contribute to its success.

While World Class primarily focuses on Romania, future international expansion is not ruled out. Regarding a low-cost chain, the company is exploring the possibility of a multi-brand strategy to leverage its brand strength and experience. The company's five-year strategy will focus on investments in its premium position, operational excellence, and the promotion of a balanced lifestyle.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Orrgren

Originally published: HCM 4 2023





When we founded Soul Cycle, we realised that riders came for the workout but stayed for the connections

Julie Rice and Elizabeth Cutler

Founders, Peoplehood

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

Elizabeth Rice and Julie Cutler, founders of the Soul Cycle brand, have launched their latest venture, Peoplehood. Described as a guided group conversation practice, Peoplehood aims to provide individuals with the space, support, and skills needed to foster deeper, more meaningful relationships and lead happier, healthier lives.

Concept and Platform:

Peoplehood is designed to be a trusted and safe environment where members can freely share and deeply listen to others, whether virtually or in person. The concept focuses on community and connection, offering guided group conversations called Gathers.

These 60-minute sessions include intentions, thought-provoking prompts, de-stressing breathwork, and uplifting music. Gathers, led by hand-selected and trained guides, aim to spark self-awareness, change perspectives, and lead to inspiring moments.

Peoplehood is accessible globally through the www.peoplehood.com digital platform and at its flagship location in New York City. The physical space features a coffee bar, a retail shop, and an event space for special member programming.

Community gathering

Currently, Gathers are offered in two formats – Peoplehood and Couplehood. Peoplehood is designed for individuals who come solo, offering an opportunity to meet new people, process life, and

Julie Rice and Elizabeth Cutler's new vision is Peoplehood

The club concept has been launched to help address the human connection crisis brought about by the pandemic



engage in self-reflection. Couplehood is tailored for individuals coming with their partners, focusing on intentional communication and connection. Additionally, there is a Peoplehood @Work programme targeting the corporate wellbeing sector, offering guided team conversation practices.

On the consumer side, monthly memberships start at US\$95 for Peoplehood and US\$145 for Couplehood. Introductory packages, including three Gathers, are available at US\$55 for Peoplehood and US\$85 for Couplehood.

Inspiration and Purpose:

In a world that is more digitally connected than ever, Peoplehood addresses a human connection crisis, acknowledging that healthy relationships are crucial for overall physical and mental health.

The founders highlight the three-year journey of research, data sourcing, and learning from experts to create a tool that empowers people to form new habits and build high quality human connections.

Rice and Cutler draw inspiration from their experience while working with relational health experts during the establishment of the Soul Cycle empire. Recognising that Soul Cycle not only provided a workout but also facilitated meaningful connections among participants, they aim to prioritise relationships in the post-pandemic era with Peoplehood.

The founders clarify that Peoplehood is not a therapy service but is inherently therapeutic, intending to complement individuals' portfolio of physical, mental, and social health practices.

In a world where people feel increasingly lonely and isolated, Peoplehood aspires to fill the void and place relationships at the forefront, much like the significance given to daily fitness routines.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/ricecutler

Originally published: HCM 2 2023





We spent €250k on research that identified the emergence of a new segment that sits between low-cost and mid-market and is defined as full-service, best price



Martin Seibold



Johannes Massen

PHOTOS: LIFE FIT GROUP

Martin Seibold & Johannes Massen

LifeFit Group

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI

In 2019, Martin Seibold, then CEO of Fitness First Germany, initiated a transformative move, making the company the founding brand of the larger entity, the LifeFit Group (LFG). With Oaktree Capital Management's strong support, LFG aimed to establish a significant presence in each segment of Germany's thriving fitness industry, with a focus on owning the strongest brands. Martin Seibold and Johannes Massen, MD of Fitness First Germany, provide insights into the latest developments within the business.

New segment

MS: A comprehensive €250k research effort revealed the emergence of the FSBP (full-service, best price) segment, priced between €30–40 per month. This segment, exemplified by CleverFit, combines affordability with offerings like group exercise and

sauna. Interestingly, this FSBP segment is growing faster than the low-cost sector. The premium market, especially in suburban areas, and boutique fitness are also performing well. Another notable growth area is 200sq m clubs with minimal staff and facilities, indicating a shift in consumer preferences. **MS:** LFG strategically operates in specific segments. Notably, they don't have low-cost or mid-market clubs. In the FSBP segment, they have Fitness First Red, Smile X, FitnessLoft, and the majority of InShape clubs. Premium brands include Fitness First Black, Elbgym, and two InShape clubs. In the boutique sector, they have Barry's and German master franchise rights for Xponential Fitness brands.

Red and Black

JM: Fitness First Red and Black have become essential components of LFG's segmentation. Recent investments

have focused on Red clubs, featuring reshaped gym floor products with distinct zones like Performance, Physio, and Select. Black clubs, with higher membership prices, offer additional wellness facilities.

The Fitness First brand's strength is evident in Google ratings and Net Promoter Scores (NPS), establishing it as a brand that prioritizes member experience and engagement.

Acquisitions strategy

MS: LFG's acquisition strategy involves identifying well-performing groups of clubs that align strategically and culturally. Instead of exploiting businesses facing challenges, they offer fair valuations based on pre-pandemic 2019 numbers. Founders stay on board for two years, working together to achieve pre-pandemic performance levels. This approach aims to support businesses and foster mutual learning.

JM: LFG actively listens to acquired companies, incorporating successful models and strategies into its operations.

Acquisitions like FitnessLoft and InShape strategically fill geographical gaps, enhancing the overall network. Plans involve rebranding acquired clubs to Fitness First Red or Black based on their segmentation and performance.

Market dominance

MS: We envision Fitness First becoming the strongest brand in Germany within five years, reaching 200+ sites. Clusters of Red and Black clubs, along with Elbgym's HIIT concept and boutique brands, will establish market dominance. LFG plans to actively explore M&A opportunities in multiple cities. In the boutique sector, we're committed to Barry's and plan to grow corporately-owned Club Pilates studios and Yoga Six studios. The ultimate goal is to become the first German fitness company to launch on the stock market.

Future forecast

After 10 years, Oaktree Capital Management is preparing to move on, signaling LFG's readiness for a sale. Seibold intends to continue supporting the business even after a sale, with aspirations of floating the business on the stock market. While Oaktree's support has been crucial, LFG looks towards new ownership for the next phase of growth.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/LifeFit

Originally published: HCM 3 2023





We're in discussion with health club operators about Centr x Hyrox, as there's a lot of interest in building functional fitness spaces

Andrew Sugerman

CEO, Centr

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



Sugerman was previously at Disney

Andrew Sugerman, CEO of Centr, is driven by a unique convergence of personal and professional interests. His extensive background in education, media, and entertainment, coupled with a history of participating in marathons, triathlons, and Ironman events, positions him uniquely to lead Centr with a mission to enhance people's happiness and wellbeing.

Sugerman identifies the health and fitness industry's strengths in its resilience, particularly in the face of economic uncertainty. He sees a post-pandemic shift where people prioritise their health, creating an opportunity for the industry. The future, according to Sugerman, revolves around enabling individuals to maintain their health anywhere, anytime, incorporating elements of home workouts, outdoor activities, and health club memberships.

Having played a pivotal role in developing Disney's augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) experiences, Sugerman expresses excitement about the fitness industry embracing mixed reality. He sees this trend as an avenue for innovation and opportunity, drawing parallels with his experiences at Disney.

Sugerman's attraction to Centr stems from its holistic approach to wellness, encompassing fitness, nutrition, and mental wellbeing. He admires Centr's commitment to democratising health and wellness, making world-class trainers' expertise accessible to everyone through their app. He also highlights the appeal of Centr's partnership with Inspire Fitness, leveraging over two decades of craftsmanship in designing fitness equipment.



PHOTO: CENTR / ANTHONY BLASIO

The partnership with Hyrox is positioned as a strategic move to address the motivational aspect of fitness. Recognising the importance of milestones and community support, Sugerman sees Hyrox as a catalyst to inspire people to pursue their fitness goals. The collaboration benefits Centr, Hyrox, health and fitness clubs, and athletes alike.

Centr's upcoming equipment launch with Hyrox includes a range of strength training products designed for a comprehensive fitness experience. The company is also in talks with health club operators to integrate Centr x Hyrox equipment into broader functional fitness spaces.

The CEO sheds light on Centr's partnership with Lifespan.io, and their commitment to holistic wellness. By offering science-backed content on healthy ageing and longevity research, Centr aims to empower members to make informed lifestyle choices.

Mental health takes center stage in Centr's programme, reflecting a growing awareness of its significance in overall wellness. The incorporation of tools such as mindful meditations, soundscapes,

and sleep audio underscores the commitment to supporting both physical and mental wellbeing.

He outlines Centr's focus on mental health through programmes like "Power Sleep," an audio series with actor and founder Chris Hemsworth designed to improve sleep quality. Sugerman recognizes the global concern around insufficient sleep and aims to address this aspect of wellness through Centr's offerings.

The Centr app caters to a demographic Sugerman describes as "holistic explorers", individuals passionate about wellness, diverse workout programmes, and technological innovations. The user base spans a wide age range, with a large portion being in their upper 30s to mid-50s, often juggling busy lives. The app provides short, convenient workouts and family-friendly meal options to accommodate their lifestyles.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Sugerman

Originally published: HCM 11 2023



ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



We're gearing up for global expansion through joint ventures with our retail partners

Dan Summerson

MD, Everlast Gyms



PHOTO: EVERLAST GYMS

Dan Summerson, managing director of Everlast Gyms, provided insights into the UK business, global expansion plans, and the flagship gym in Gateshead. Summerson discusses the strategic approach of seeking joint venture (JV) partners for international growth, leveraging Frasers Group's retail partnerships, and the interest from potential partners globally.

The interview outlines the journey of optimising the gym portfolio in the UK, with a focus on elevating existing sites and overhauling them for growth. Everlast Gyms aims to increase from 60 to 100 gyms in the UK over the next three to five years while simultaneously preparing for global expansion through JV partnerships.

The Gateshead flagship gym serves as a central point to showcase different workout modalities and concepts developed over the past two years. Summerson highlights the importance of having a variety of workout options, from boutique elements to Big Box concepts, catering to a flexible and scalable portfolio.

The interview highlights the flexibility in JV business arrangements, allowing for various contractual models. Everlast Gyms is open to collaborating with partners globally, providing them with a range of concepts suited to their target markets.

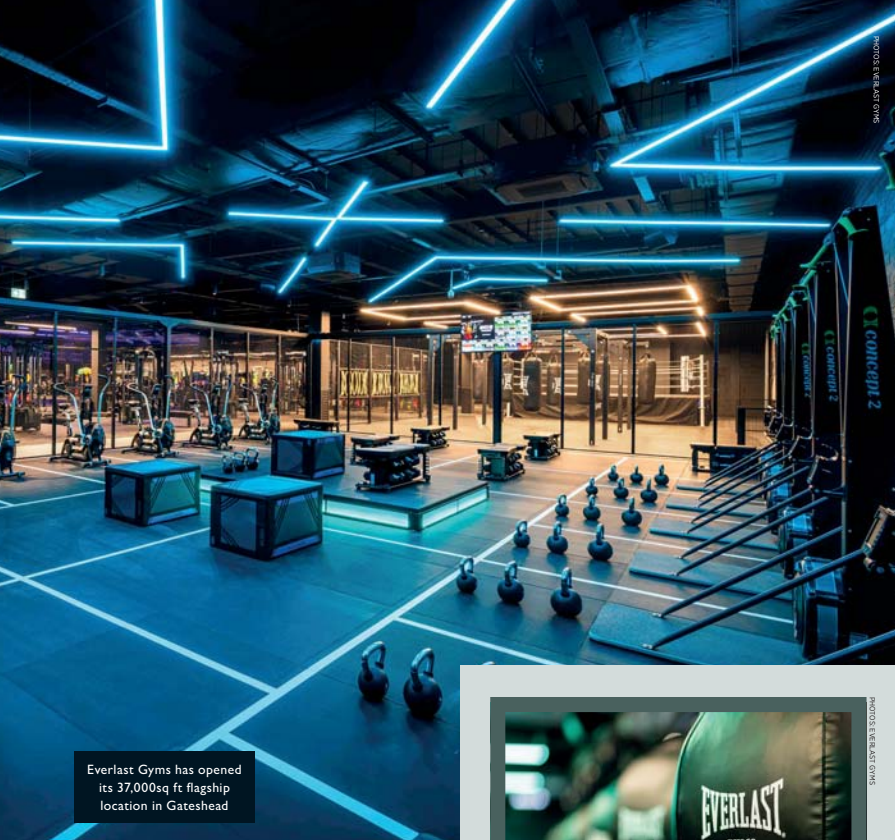
Hybrid facility

The Gateshead development, housed in a former Debenhams department store, includes a 40,000 sq ft gym, Sports Direct, and the Flannels clothes brand. The gym features multiple workout zones, diverse group exercise options, and specialised gym floor areas like Apex, 1910, and Backbone.

Summerson discusses the importance of the recovery zone called Activate, incorporating Hyperice products for recovery, physio rooms, and additional enhancements. The Gateshead gym is positioned as a hybrid facility, combining retail, co-working, and gym spaces, creating a unique offering. Transport links, the smoothie bar accessible to non-members, and a laptop zone for co-working contribute to making the gym a versatile space.

The goal is to attract at least 10,000 members, and Summerson underlines the importance of the original Everlast brand, which has been integrated into the sportswear and gym offerings.

Regarding acquisitions, Summerson notes the availability of funds through Frasers Group for strategic purchases aligning with Everlast Gyms' portfolio-building strategy. The interview concludes with insights into the Frasers Fit initiative, focusing on employee wellbeing.



Everlast Gyms has opened its 37,000sq ft flagship location in Gateshead

through physical, financial, and mental wellbeing pillars, supported by the Frasers Fit app and partnerships.

In summary, the interview provides a comprehensive overview of Everlast Gyms' growth strategy, global expansion plans, flagship gym in Gateshead, workout concepts, and the integration of the original Everlast brand. The emphasis on flexibility in business arrangements, the importance of employee wellbeing, and the unique aspects of the Gateshead gym showcase Everlast Gyms' commitment to innovation and strategic growth.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Summerson

Originally published: HCM 10 2023



The Everlast Gyms brand is now refreshed and baked into the operation

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



You must always have one foot planted firmly in order and the other firmly planted in chaos

Kevin Teixeira

MD, Warehouse Gym



PHOTO: THE WAREHOUSE GYM

Kevin Teixeira, the founder of The Warehouse Gym, shared insights into his background, the development of the fitness market in Dubai, and the unique aspects of his gym business in a recent interview.

Personal transformation

Teixeira's journey into the fitness industry began at the age of 15 when he, as an overweight teen, joined a gym and experienced transformative physical and mental changes. His passion for fitness led him to enter the industry 25 years ago, starting from the reception desk and eventually becoming the managing director. The Warehouse Gym was founded in Dubai by Teixeira, Fahad Al Rafi, and Edris Al Rafi.

Dubai dynamics

Teixeira talks about Dubai's appetite for innovation and constant demand for better ideas. The fitness market in Dubai has witnessed exponential growth, with a variety of gyms, boutiques, and concepts catering to diverse tastes. The entrepreneurial spirit in Dubai has fostered the development of independent fitness facilities, distinguishing it from markets in Europe, the US, and the UK.

Factors driving the growth of the fitness market in Dubai include an increased awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, rising disposable incomes, and a surge in the number of health clubs. The trend extends

beyond Dubai to cities like Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, showcasing the universal appeal of exercise.

Warehouse Gym's growth

The Warehouse Gym, with its distinct identity established in a converted warehouse in Dubai, has become the largest operator of premium gyms in the Emirates.

The gyms are known for vibrant communities, street art, design, music, and a sense of freedom in exercise. The concept varies in size, ranging from boutiques at 12,000 sq ft to larger facilities exceeding 40,000 sq ft. The company aims to add three to four locations annually.

Membership trends

Strength training is highlighted as the most popular form of training. The gyms are equipped with strength elements, immersive studios, personal training areas, recovery rooms, and dining facilities. Membership options range from basic packages to premium packages, with year-on-year growth even during the pandemic. The Warehouse Gym offers recovery services, including cryotherapy, infrared saunas, and massage therapy to support overall wellness.

Business model evolution

Teixeira stresses the importance of constant evolution in the gym's concept, with a focus on

Warehouse Gym will soon have 16 sites in the UAE and is opening three to four a year

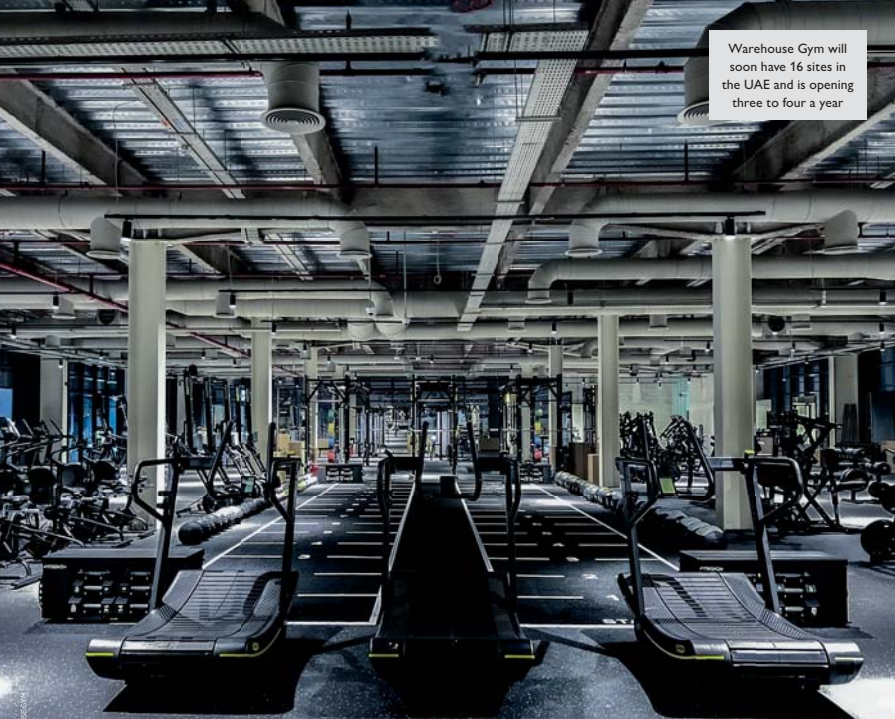


PHOTO: THE WAREHOUSE GYM

adaptation to industry changes. The business model remains flexible, but some standardisation is expected to facilitate future franchising.

Warehouse Gym plans to launch its first franchise location in 2024, offering franchisees access to the proven business model, intellectual property, branding, and back-end support.

New app

The recently launched Warehouse Gym App streamlines member check-in, provides access to membership details, facilitates class bookings, and offers information on personal trainers. A loyalty programme, Lift Loyalty, allows members to earn points for various activities, redeemable for cash against memberships, personal training, and healthy food options.

Future ambitions

Teixeira's ambitions include making The Warehouse Gym the most successful brand of health clubs globally and transforming it into more than just a

gym – a place that significantly improves people's lives. His business philosophy centres on balancing order and chaos, and he envisions continuing the journey with Warehouse Gym until the time is right to pass on the mantle to others.

Conclusion:

The interview provides a comprehensive overview of Teixeira's fitness journey, the growth of The Warehouse Gym, and the unique elements that set it apart in the dynamic market of Dubai.

With a commitment to constant evolution and a focus on community, wellness, and flexibility, The Warehouse Gym aims to leave a lasting impact on the fitness industry.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Teixeira

Originally published: HCM 8 2023



ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



We want to have a million people doing Hyrox every year

Christian Toetzk

founder, Hyrox



Toetzk says every launch post-pandemic has been a big success

Christian Toetzk, the founder of Hyrox, provided insights into the innovative mass participation fitness event that combines running and functional workouts in a large indoor space. Participants run 1km, followed by a series of eight different functional exercises, including SkiErg, sled push, sled pull, burpee broad jumps, rowing, farmers' carry, sandbag lunges, and wall balls. Hyrox is designed to be accessible, allowing individuals to participate as individuals, pairs, or in relay teams. Elite athletes aim to complete the event in less than 60 minutes.

Hyrox primarily appeals to gym members, with 98 per cent of participants coming from this demographic. It serves as a social occasion, a benchmarking opportunity, and a cost-effective alternative to other competitive events like OCR or Ironman.

Toetzk notes a significant female participation rate (around 42 per cent), distinguishing it from traditional triathlons. The community's growth has led to increased international participation, with events in the UK selling out quickly and drawing attendees from other countries.

Toetzk explains the genesis of Hyrox, stemming from his belief that gym workouts lack gamification. He aimed to provide gym-goers with a competitive event that would motivate and drive their training.

The format's success has prompted Toetzk to envision Hyrox as the premier annual fitness event, akin to the London Marathon, with other fitness events acting as feeders to grow the community. Concerning potential copycats, Toetzk is unfazed, anticipating that

fitness events will become a significant market with a growth in gym memberships. He views Hyrox as a flagship event that others can complement, contributing to the overall growth of the fitness event market.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Hyrox managed to navigate the situation by adapting to virtual events and launching in new regions. The UK launch, post-lockdown, coincided with a surge in popularity surpassing the pre-pandemic regions in momentum.

To handle the logistical complexities of organising events in multiple countries, Hyrox operates similarly to a rock concert tour, with key staff in each region and local labour and volunteers assisting. The partnership with Xponential's Body Fit Training (BFT) has been strategic, offering mutual benefits.

BFT's strong presence in Australia and Asia aligns with Hyrox's expansion plans, creating a successful collaboration. The partnership has facilitated Hyrox's rapid growth in the Asia Pacific region, with record-breaking events in Sydney and Melbourne.

Looking ahead, Toetzk envisions 170 Hyrox events in cities worldwide by 2027, with a goal of having a million people participating annually. Opportunities in new markets, like Brazil and India, will also be explored.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Toetzk

Originally published: HCM 10 2023





Hyrox participants can compete as individuals, in pairs or as part of a relay team

ChatGPT Summary / POWERED BY AI



*The social value of our
Be Well teams was
conservatively put at
£13.46m last year*

James Winterbottom

**Director of strategy and
innovation Wigan Council UK**



James Winterbottom, director of Strategy and Innovation at Wigan Council, discussed the innovative approach of Wigan Council known as The Wigan Deal. The initiative was a response to austerity measures announced by the UK's coalition government in 2010/11, aiming to avoid service cuts by building a different relationship with communities and delivering public services in a fundamentally different way.

The Wigan Deal is characterised by an asset-based, integrated and joined-up approach that focuses on people's interests and aims to connect them to positive aspects of their lives. The approach involves in-depth conversations and collaboration with community-based organisations to find creative solutions tailored to individual needs.

Winterbottom highlighted the success of The Wigan Deal, highlighting the £170m in savings achieved without cutting services. The engagement of the workforce increased, and leisure services played a central role in the initiative. The Be Well teams contributed to social value, conservatively estimated at £13.46m based on impacts on health, well-being, and healthcare utilisation.

Leisure services have been instrumental, and the decision to bring operations back in-house in 2021 reflected their importance. Winterbottom sees a significant role for leisure teams in promoting health, particularly in disadvantaged communities. During the pandemic, leisure teams volunteered to



Winterbottom is
now planning for
the next 10 years



support critical services, demonstrating the potential for collaboration between health and leisure.

The Be Well leisure team plays a crucial role in connecting individuals to health and wellbeing interventions, particularly in primary care networks. Successful initiatives include cancer pathways, where physical activity interventions have shown positive outcomes in post-surgery recovery and social interaction.

Winterbottom highlighted the practical workings of The Wigan Deal, citing an example of a man with early onset dementia whose wellbeing improved through a community-based solution involving running – a passion he was deprived of due to traditional care recommendations.

Looking ahead, Wigan Council aims to build on the lessons learned and address the evolving challenges

facing communities. Social care now constitutes a significant portion of the council budget, and the ageing population is expected to further increase its share.

The council is evaluating services with the help of consultancy SLC, focusing on past successes and fostering creativity and innovation. The transformation includes turning leisure centres into wellbeing hubs, providing space for clinical teams and community organisations. Winterbottom emphasized the need for ongoing creativity and energy from the teams to adapt to changing circumstances.

READ THE INTERVIEW

Online: www.hcmmag.com/Winterbottom

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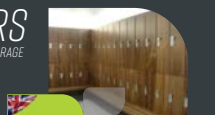
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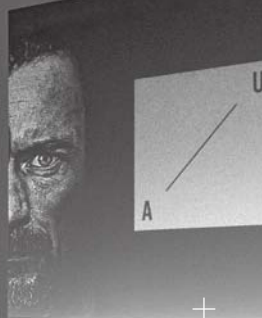
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