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AUGUST 2009

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INTERVIEW

FX LEISURE

director Stuart Taylor on creating
an engaging environment

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brain health

With an ageing population, managing Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia is an increasingly important priority for the health services. A ministerial dementia research summit at the Royal Society in London on 21 July called on the government to increase funding for research into both treatment and management.

Figures from 2006/07 show that £29.2m was allocated to dementia research. This compares with £246.6m to cancer research and £75.6m to research into heart disease. Dementia affects around 700,000 people in the UK and, speaking at the event, care services minister Phil Hope said research should secure a greater proportion of the 2011 budget. His calls were supported by 31 experts who signed a letter calling for the budget to be trebled to £96m a year.

With the issue of brain ageing and the management of people with dementia high on the political and social agendas, and getting attention from leading academics, the spotlight is also falling on the role exercise can play in managing the symptoms and dramatically improving the quality of life of sufferers.

A healthy diet and moderate exercise are promoted by experts as protection against mental decline and dementia; results presented at the Alzheimer's Association 2009 Conference held in Vienna, from 11-16 July, suggest a 'heart healthy' diet, and maintaining or increasing physical activity, may help preserve memory and thinking abilities.

The research looked at the effects of the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, which consists mainly of fruit, vegetables, nuts/legumes, whole grains, low fat dairy and fish. The diet is recommended for high blood pressure or pre-hypertension

Healthcare professionals report that exercise leads to calmer and more healthy behaviour, better lifestyle patterns and a greater sense of wellbeing among dementia and Alzheimer's sufferers

sufferers. A consequence of reducing blood pressure is a reduction in the risk of dementia and according to Dr William Thies of the Alzheimer's Association: "Research continues to show us that there are lifestyle decisions we can make to keep our brains healthier and lower our risk of memory decline."

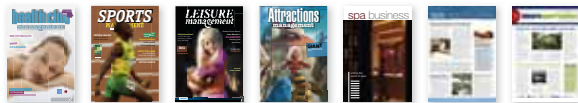
Also at the conference, Dr Deborah Barnes of the University of California in San Francisco presented research findings based on a survey of 3,075 older adults, which showed that cognitive decline is slower in those whose physical activity levels remained constant or increased. "Sedentary individuals should be encouraged to engage in physical activity at least occasionally," said Dr Barnes.

Speaking in the last issue of *Health Club Management*, Dr John Ratey from Harvard Medical School outlined research which showed that exercise can cut the incidence of Alzheimer's in half. He also explained that exercise has been shown to delay the onset of the decline by between 10 and 15 years.

As well as helping prevent dementia, exercise can have a calming and positive impact on dementia sufferers. Technogym has been working with care homes specialising in working with elderly sufferers. The results have been very encouraging, with healthcare professionals reporting that exercise leads to calmer and more healthy behaviour, better lifestyle patterns and a greater sense of wellbeing. All the evidence suggests that our industry has an important part to play in helping vulnerable people who are battling this challenge, as well as helping prevent or delay the onset.

Liz Terry, editor

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REEBOK & CIRQUE DU SOLEIL LAUNCH INNOVATIVE GYM WORKOUT FOR WOMEN – **JUKARI Fit to Fly™**

Reebok-Cirque du Soleil's workout could, say consumer testers, be the "best workout experience ever". Plus the launch of a striking new product range

In 1989, Reebok revolutionised women's fitness with the creation of Step Reebok. Now the company has revealed its latest intentions with the launch of its fitness phenomenon – the innovative gym workout, JUKARI Fit to Fly™ – which took place at the Reebok Sports Club in Canary Wharf, London.

The workout is the first in a series of initiatives to come out of a new, long-term partnership with globally renowned entertainment company, Cirque du Soleil.

JUKARI Fit to Fly makes fitness fun again by introducing a new way to move in a gym workout. It's accessible to all women, regardless of fitness levels. The hour-long workout has been created on a specially-designed piece of equipment called the FlySet. The result is a workout that gives the sensation of flying while strengthening and lengthening the body through cardio, strength, balance and core training.

The classes have launched in top gyms in major cities around the world including Hong Kong, Delhi, Mexico City, Madrid, Paris, Krakow, Munich, Seoul, Kuala Lumpur, Buenos Aires, Santiago, Montreal, Los Angeles and New York. The workout has already attracted many A-list fans – including supermodel Bar Refaeli and actresses Mischa Barton, Jaime King and Molly Sims.

The Reebok-Cirque du Soleil partnership and JUKARI Fit to Fly workout are the direct result of insights into what women really want from exercise. A survey of 15,000 women across 25 countries in 2008 found that, while nearly half

of all women know that exercise and keeping fit is very important to their overall health, less than 25 per cent participate often in fitness. Specially-commissioned Reebok research looked at why this might be. The findings showed that nearly two-thirds (61 per cent) of all women would work out more if it were more fun. More than half (54 per cent) felt exercise was a chore.

Says Katrin Ley, head of women's at Reebok: "These insights proved that women were unmotivated and uninspired to exercise, but that they would work out more often if the gym were more fun. The combination of Reebok's heritage in women's fitness and the fun, excitement and innovation that Cirque du Soleil brings to its craft mean that we are in a unique position to provide a solution to this need. The result is a whole new way to move through the JUKARI Fit to Fly workout plus a new range of products to wear, designed specifically for women."

the reebok & cirque du soleil partnership

In early 2008, the two brands came together with a single objective: to make

fitness for women fun again. They embarked on a journey to create an inspirational workout that would shake up and invigorate a woman's gym routine. After eight months of development and rigorous testing, JUKARI Fit to Fly was ready.

Says Uli Becker, president of Reebok: "Reebok has a strong history in women's fitness, and Cirque du Soleil is world-renowned for creativity and innovation. The combination of our companies' unique DNA creates a first-of-its-kind partnership which will change the way women experience the gym."

Says Mario D'Amico, CMO at Cirque du Soleil: "This partnership is the perfect fit. Reebok understands what women want from fitness and what products work best, while our performers are renowned for their athleticism, choreography and artistic flair. The challenge to bring these two skill sets together to create a new gym workout was very exciting for us."

the jukari fit to fly workout

JUKARI Fit to Fly isn't just fun to take part in – it's an effective, hour-long total body workout of cardio, strength, balance and core training.

A trained instructor guides a class of up to 12 people through the workout moves using the FlySet (see images); this hangs from the

gym ceiling and has been designed specifically for JUKARI Fit to Fly.

The FlySet consists of a durable, three-stranded rope fixed to the ceiling, with a 360-degree swivel point at an adjustable length, with two attachment loops. The FlyBar, a 4.5lb neoprene-coated attachable steel bar, is placed through the two loops, which can be varied in height, to create an apparatus that strengthens and lengthens the body as



Classes use a special FlySet, which is suspended from the ceiling



JUKARI Fit to Fly: The sensation of flying

you experience the sensation of flying during the workout.

Leslie Calvagne, Reebok's training director for JUKARI Fit to Fly, worked with Cirque du Soleil for 12 months to create the workout and the equipment. She says: "We set ourselves the task of creating the 'smile while you're sweating' workout, and the hundreds of women who have already taken this class tell us we have succeeded."

"JUKARI Fit to Fly is a head-to-toe workout that's new, different and, above all, fun. Working with Cirque du Soleil has been an incredible experience and we're delighted with the result – as are our gym partners around the globe who have seen it, tried it, and who will be launching it to their members this year."

As the creative inspiration behind the project, Cirque du Soleil played a crucial role in creating the class. As Lyn Heward, creative director of the Reebok-Cirque du Soleil programme, says: "From day one, we committed to making sure every move would be inspired by real moves Cirque du

Soleil artists do as part of their shows. Anyone taking the JUKARI Fit to Fly class must leave it feeling they have experienced something different, with that Cirque du Soleil flair. The skill came in adapting and testing these moves so that they felt real but, at the same time, easily accessible for anyone."

the product

To complement JUKARI Fit to Fly, Reebok has also created two collections of women's fitness apparel and footwear: On the Move and the Reebok-Cirque du Soleil collection.

Both consist of products which can be worn for a range of fitness disciplines, from running to yoga, JUKARI Fit to Fly to tennis. All have been developed and designed with a deep understanding and knowledge of the unique way a woman's body moves.

Reebok's head of women's apparel, Michele Slobin, led the Women's Product Creation team. She says: "The Reebok On the Move and Reebok-Cirque du Soleil collections provide women with a high level of

performance without sacrificing any attention to style and detail.

"The collections contain versatile pieces that can be mixed and matched together or integrated into every woman's daily wardrobe, providing a fashionable and contemporary fitness range that can be worn both in and out of the gym."

global marketing support

The launch of JUKARI Fit to Fly will be supported by a global marketing campaign throughout 2009. Running online, outdoor, in-store and in-print in key markets worldwide, the campaign will feature JUKARI Fit to Fly action imagery and Reebok On the Move and Reebok Cirque du Soleil apparel and footwear.

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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p70



write to reply



Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry? If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: healthclub@leisuremedia.com

proximity and convenience – but also price – key to success

I was interested to read the 'Chasing Pavements' research article in last month's *HCM*. The research findings suggest that people do more exercise if they live in communities where shops, transport links and recreation facilities are within walking distance.

We've recently been involved in a number of projects to analyse where our clients' members live in relation to their club/centre. Our findings not only

back up the report, in that proximity and convenience are indeed crucial factors to success, but also suggest that the potential for increasing new exercisers from a small geographic area is much, much higher than we might have anticipated.

Our findings for a variety of different clients show that an appropriately priced facility at the centre of the community can generate local member penetration levels within half a mile of 30 to 40 per cent – and that doesn't include those who are going to our clients' competitors. From a marketing perspective this is crucial information.

Our strategy as an industry must be to put our core offering at the heart of the community and pursue a long-term policy of education through improved marketing communication. In other words, let's persuade our neighbours about the benefits of regular exercise and how we can help them achieve results. Our research, like that summarised in *HCM*, shows that, if we get this message right, the potential is huge.

andy kidd
md, hattrick



People exercise more if affordable facilities are within walking distance



©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/WANDY DEAN

Exercise programmes should promote future health as well as current fitness

tailored programmes needed for older members

I was very interested to see that the *FIA* and *Medical News Today* websites both focused recently on an established study looking at how exercise programmes reduce the risk of falls and fractures in elderly women with osteoporosis.

The study, published in *The Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)*, sought to assess types of exercise given to older people to help address balance, strength and agility. It measured the effect of exercise on static and dynamic balance, as well as knee extension strength; the results demonstrated that exercise improved both of these. It also reduces the risk of fractures by maintaining bone mass and decreasing the risk of falls.

When we exercise, it's important to develop muscular strength that can be put to functional use, developing an increased range of movement, ensuring muscle groups are co-ordinated and improving dynamic stability of the joints. This will reduce the risk of injury and enhance performance.

We should tailor exercise programmes carefully to promote future health as well as current fitness levels.

peter hope
business development manager,
balancemaster

the letter of the law

Taking early legal advice can often prevent a problem becoming a dispute. The team at Croner Consulting answers readers' questions

Q What are Data Protection Privacy Notices and what do they have to contain?

A Privacy Notices are the statements given to individuals when personal data is given by them (for example when completing a membership application), which explains what use will be made of that data, and how and why it will be processed. Many notices at present contain legal jargon and are not easily understood by non-lawyers.

The Information Commissioner has therefore launched a code of practice to stop the use of confusing privacy notices which prevent people from understanding exactly how their information will be processed. The code requires notices to be user-friendly and clear, and to be written in plain understandable terms. Failure to comply with the code may mean that you are breaching the first data protection principle – that data must be processed lawfully and fairly.

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¹ Source: Euromonitor Sports Nutrition 2008 + AC Nielsen Sports Drinks 52 weeks to 27/12/08.

in brief...

new equipment for richmond sites

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council has completed a £90,000 upgrade of four of its publicly-operated health clubs. Fitness suites at Teddington Pools, Hampton Sports Centre, Shene Sports Centre and Whitton Sports Centre have undergone a revamp which included the installation of new CV and resistance equipment supplied by Cybex. Cybex installed VRI Duals strength equipment at all four of the sites, as well as a FT360 cable machine at Whitton, 750T treadmills at Teddington, Hampton and Shene, and Stage 2 IFL-accredited CV and strength equipment at the Teddington and Shene centres.

centre investments ditched for outdoor activities

Tending District Council in Essex no longer proposes to roll out Lifestyle gyms at leisure centres across the district. Plans by the council's former administration to overhaul sports facilities in Walton, Dovercourt and Harwich have been dropped by the current leadership, in preference for the promotion of outdoor activities such as walking, cycling and watersports. The re-introduction of a tourism strategy to encourage greater use of activities related to the area's heritage and natural environment will now be put in place.

new leisure centre planned for rushden

A £13m leisure centre will be built at Manor Park in Rushden, Northamptonshire, to replace outdated facilities at the Splash Leisure Pool and the Pemberton Centre. The scheme will comprise a six-lane, 25-metre swimming pool and a teaching pool, as well as a four court sports hall, dance/exercise studios and a health and fitness suite. The facility will be project managed by global consultants Mace, whose previous projects include the London Eye and the British Museum's Great Court, and will be designed by FaulknerBrowns Architects.

gps lack access to referrals

Less than half of general practitioners (GPs) have access to an exercise referral scheme, according to new research published by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF).

A survey by MHF has found that there are "significant barriers" preventing patients from accessing exercise on prescription. The report mentions funding constraints within local government and primary care trusts (PCTs) as one of the most significant issues, but also warns of a lack of recognition of the benefits of exercise referral.

The report, called *Moving on Up*, states that there is currently a significant lack of awareness of exercise schemes among GPs and other healthcare professionals who might refer patients (see Talkback, p28, for further discussion).

Of the GPs who have access to a referral scheme, however, nearly 80 per cent use it on a regular basis.

In the report, MHF makes a number of recommendations to address the barriers. These include PCTs funding the range of exercise activities; healthcare professionals and exercise staff involved in referral schemes developing closer working links; and a variety of exercise activities to be offered, in addition to gym-based programmes, to cater for patients' different interests and fitness levels.

Commenting on the report's results, Rosi Prescott, CEO of Central YMCA, says: "Despite the increasing evidence base to support exercise schemes, much more needs to be done to persuade those in the health service of their benefits."

"Although the number of GPs who would prescribe exercise is increasing, it's disappointing that it remains so low. More needs to be done to ensure that all people working within primary care have access to exercise referral schemes. There should be no postcode lottery."



Less than half of all GPs have access to an exercise referral scheme

barr selected for carnegie revamp

Carnegie centre is set to undergo a £17m redevelopment of its facilities

Barr Limited, the Paisley-based construction company, has been appointed by Fife Council as the main building contractor for the £17m refurbishment of Carnegie Leisure Centre in Dunfermline.

Work at the facility, which will undergo an internal and external renovation as part of the revamp, will form part of the council's wider £50m scheme to improve leisure facilities in Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes.

Plans for the upgraded Carnegie Leisure Centre include two purpose-built aerobics studios, a new 90-station fitness suite, new changing and reception areas, a new group cycling room, and a new indoor play centre for children.

A health village, incorporating sauna, steam and spa services, will also be established as part of the project.



When complete, the leisure centre will include a 25m, six-lane swimming pool

work to start on billingham

Billingham Forum has closed to the public to allow construction work on a £15m refurbishment scheme to get underway at the leisure complex, which is expected to last for 18 months.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and operator Tees Active are working in partnership on the revamp, which will include the creation of a new six-lane, 25m swimming pool with a new training pool and existing learner pool.

An extended gym, providing 30 additional stations, and a new dance studio also form part of the scheme. In addition, there will be an enhanced reception area; improvements to the indoor bowls court, the four-court

sports hall and two squash courts; structural improvements to the theatre area; and an upgraded ice rink facility.

Morgan Ashurst, the Warwickshire-based construction company, has been appointed to deliver the scheme, which aims to ensure that the Billingham Forum is 'future-proofed' for at least 25 years, thereby providing a modern facility for local residents.

SBC's cabinet member for regeneration and transport, councillor Bob Cook, says: "The countdown for this major refurbishment really starts now. The work will transform what is a hugely popular facility at the heart of Billingham."

haverhill centre to re-open

Haverhill Leisure Centre in Suffolk has re-opened following a multi-million pound refurbishment.

The centre, which is operated by Abbeycroft Leisure on behalf of St Edmundsbury Borough Council, has undergone a £5.2m redevelopment of its facilities.

The centre's fitness suite, which was moved into an adjoining pod during the closure, has almost doubled in size and has been re-fitted with new equipment, including the G7 line of

resistance equipment from Matrix. The centre is the first facility in the UK to install the new range.

The main sports hall has been re-fitted with a new spring floor, while a glass-walled second floor mezzanine has been created to add a dedicated combat sports area.

Other work included the re-tiling of the swimming pool hall, the building of a new spectator seating area, and the installation of new lighting and ventilation systems.



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The term 'recovery' is everywhere in the world of sport these days. If it's not the punishing tennis schedule or the long rugby season it's something else. But while some people know how important recovery is to the elite, many don't know how important it is to themselves!

Recovery is important to everyone doing sport. Put simply, it's the ability to speed your readiness to exercise again without compromising your athletic ability. It includes simple strategies such as warm downs and stretching, but probably the most important is the right nutrition.

Ultimately nutrition fuels your training and competition; therefore during the recovery period after exercise it is important to think about three key elements:

1. Replace carbohydrates that you have just burnt running, cycling or swimming
2. Consume fluids to help rehydrate your body and replace electrolytes lost via perspiration
3. Protein is also important to help muscle recovery as it promotes what we call protein synthesis

Combined and consumed in the first few hours after training would be an ideal strategy and means you should be able to maintain momentum and compete at your highest level!

Nick Morgan

Head of Sport Science for Lucozade Sport

The LSSA has extensive knowledge drawing on over 30 years of experience in sports nutrition research.
www.thelssa.com

update

news

Dance: A satisfying workout



thumbs up for dance classes

A survey from Sport England shows that people taking part in dance and exercise movement are more satisfied with their experience than participants in any other form of physical activity.

According to the Sport England study, which measured the quality of experience for regular participants in more than 40 sports and activities, an overwhelming 89 per cent of those taking part in dance were satisfied with the organised activities.

The survey measured satisfaction with the quality of the sporting experience and focused on the overall service that participants received from their national governing body – everything from staff to value for money, and from fitness benefit to performance development.

Andrée Deane, chief executive of the Fitness Industry Association (FIA), says: "Exercise, movement and dance as a concept is compelling, engaging and fun. These results are a credit to the teachers who motivate their classes."

revamp for comber leisure

Comber Leisure Centre in Comber, County Down, Northern Ireland, is to undergo a £1.5m revamp.

The refurbishment includes proposals to expand the existing Momentum gym and increase the amount of fitness equipment from 27 to 65 stations. A new fitness and dance studio will also be built. The existing children's soft play area will be relocated, while the changing facilities and social areas will be updated and the main synthetic sports pitch and tennis courts resurfaced.

Mayor of Ards, councillor Billy Montgomery, says: "Comber Leisure Centre needs to be brought up to date. This work will ensure local people have access to modern health and fitness facilities in attractive surroundings."

"The refurbishment also makes economic sense, as a completely remodelled centre will be much more appealing, generate more usage and, therefore, more income to offset the overall costs of running the centre."



The gym will expand to 65 stations

huddersfield plans unveiled

Kirklees Council has unveiled its plans for the construction of a new £36.2m sports centre in Huddersfield, which is to form part of the wider regeneration of the West Yorkshire town.

The new facility will be built on the Spring Grove car park in Springwood. It is to be funded by the sale of the existing Huddersfield Sports Centre site in Southgate, for the development of a new Tesco supermarket.

Plans for the new complex include a leisure water attraction incorporating a beach, a wave machine, a flume and a sidewinder, while other facilities will include a 25m, eight-lane swimming

pool, a teaching pool with moveable floor, and a fitness suite.

Two sports halls and facilities for climbing, squash and martial arts also form part of the proposals, as well as a café and a children's area, in a bid to promote health and wellbeing among the local community.

A planning application for both the new sports centre and the Tesco supermarket are due to be submitted within the next few weeks, before a public consultation is held to enable local residents to comment on the plans.

If approved, work is set to start on the new sports centre in late 2010.



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The revamp at the centre will include an upgrade of the fitness facilities

£2.8m revamp for donyngs

Donyngs Recreation Centre in Redhill, Surrey, is in line for a £2.8m refurbishment led by the facility's new operator, Nuffield Health.

A partnership project with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, the revamp will include an upgrade of the centre's gym facilities. The redevelopment of the fitness suite, which is set to cost £320,000, will include increasing the number of stations from 72 to 100.

A feasibility study is underway to look at initial plans to relocate the gym to a larger section of the centre, as well as the

addition of a new cycling studio, a sauna, treatment rooms and a dedicated kids' fitness area. The study will also investigate options to remodel the reception area, café, changing rooms and soft play area.

Current facilities include a six-court sports hall, six squash courts, a health suite, a crèche and a dance studio.

The 25m pool is also expected to benefit from a facelift, along with repairs to the lighting, heating and ventilation systems to reduce energy use. Nuffield Health manages all three of the council's leisure centres.

breathe yoga centre to open

A new purpose-built club dedicated exclusively to yoga, wellbeing and pilates is set to open in Beckenham, Kent, this month.

Called Breathe, the club has been co-created by Claire Dunphy and

Nick Clarke, who both have more than 20 years' experience in the fitness industry.

Offering a complete range of yoga disciplines, Breathe will feature both hot and traditional yoga classes.

in brief...

fia welcomes fitness report

The FIA has welcomed a new report, backed by the Conservative Party, which seeks to boost the health and fitness levels of the country (see also p20).

Fred Turok, FIA chair, says the report – *We're All In This Together, Improving the Long Term Health of the Nation* – is "excellent news for the health and fitness sector".

The report recommends that a single, branded vehicle should be established to deliver three key health messages: healthy diet, understanding the 'calories in, calories out' equation, and responsible drinking. It also recommends amending the current tax system to support all forms of physical activity through a reduced VAT rate. Turok says: "This is a major milestone for everyone who works in, or is associated with, the sector."

new gym for haringey sports centre

White Hart Lane Community Sports Centre in Haringey, London, has opened its new £200,000 Active Strength gym. The 189sq m (2,034sq ft) gym is equipped with Technogym's Pure Strength resistance equipment, plus a range of cardio kit supplied by Escape Fitness, Pullham Sport and Technogym. The gym will also offer weightlifting platforms for amateur, semi-professional and professional training. Building work was carried out by Apollo and took nine weeks to complete.

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training news

skills gaps to close in south east

The National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure has awarded Academy Provider status to several training providers in the south-east, as part of a strategy to improve the standards of training in the region. So far, the companies that have received recognition for their health and fitness training include Amac Training, Lifetime and The Skills Partnership. All three will be offering a range of qualifications including Level 2 Fitness Instructing and Level 3 Personal Training. The approved providers will join an established network of the best quality training providers across the country, and will be recognised by employers and individuals wanting to work or progress in fitness.

dance gaining ground

The UK has experienced a rapid growth in dance leadership training, according to Sports Leaders UK (SLUK). An increase in demand for dance courses from schools and community groups has seen the number of SLUK's Level 1 in Dance Leadership courses grow by 25 per cent in the past year.

Michaela Hutchings, head of operations at SLUK, says: "We expect to register 10,000 dance leaders in the coming year. This has grown from zero in just four years."

leeds college accredited by nsa

Leeds Trinity & All Saints college in Yorkshire has launched a new foundation degree for people aspiring to be physical activity teachers. As Academy Provider for Community Sports Enterprise – accredited by the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure – the college has introduced Supporting Learning: Sport, Physical Education and Health. The work-based degree is designed for teaching assistants, sports coaches, youth workers and health advisors looking to learn new ways to educate young people about healthy lifestyles.

zigzag upgrades xer-dance

ZigZag is introducing intelligent wireless tracking cards to its Xer-Dance platform, so users will be able to compare their scores with friends and 'dance mates' around the world.

The cards, which will also monitor users' activity levels from a number of different angles (see below), are part of an upgrade to the Xer-Dance system's Pump it Up software. They will allow ZigZag's five-step dance mats to recognise their user and automatically transfer their exercise data to an online portal.

Fergus Ahern, MD of ZigZag, says: "The new software will be a real bonus for dancers, who will each be given a card that can be carried in a pocket or clipped to clothing, much like a membership card.

"Their individual information, including the frequency and length of exercise, along with steps taken, calories burned



Dancers will be able to compare their scores with other participants

and scores achieved, will be remotely uploaded onto a dedicated Xer-Dance site. This will allow them to monitor their own progress and compare their scores with their friends and school colleagues, as well as with other dancers from across the country – and even around the world."

london wasps climbing to fitness

London Wasps Rugby Club has installed a Versaclimber (pictured) and Versapulley exercise machine at its training ground in Acton.

The Guinness Premiership side is using the new equipment during the close season, to keep players' fitness levels up in preparation for the gruelling pre-season training.

London Irish and Leicester Tigers rugby clubs have also recently taken delivery of Versaclimber machines.



Versaclimber will be used to prepare for pre-season training

new dancing stage launched

Japanese gaming company Konami has given Dance Revolution (DDR) X its public European debut at the Japan Expo event in Paris, France.

Celebrating the 10th year of the DDR dance machine, the 'X' model brings a range of updates and overhauls, with new décor, a larger screen (37" widescreen LCD) and additional tracks, taking the total number of songs to almost 400. The 'X' model is to be shipped throughout the continent, with a second production run being planned due to the number of orders received.

dll invests in keiser kit

David Lloyd Leisure has invested more than £200,000 in Keiser's M5 Ellipticals, M3 Indoor Cycles and Air Resistance equipment. Two of its sites, in Swindon and Worthing, are the first in the UK to offer Keiser's M5 Elliptical.

The Swindon site – still branded Next Generation – had eight M5s installed at the end of March, while five were installed at David Lloyd Worthing in June.

Keiser's M3 bike is already a feature in key DLL sites, but an additional 70 bikes have been installed at eight sites throughout the UK.

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in brief...

dance mat first for aura

Aura Tullamore Leisure Centre in County Offaly has teamed with ZigZag to launch Ireland's first fitness-related dance mat classes.

The site, run by Tullamore Town Council and Aura Sport and Leisure Management, has invested in ZigZag's five-step dance mats – said to be the first dance mats in the health club sector in Eire – for use in its dedicated children's fitness room, as well as at external events.

"You can't just add an activity to the timetable and expect people to come," says Stuart Martin, Aura's group fitness and retention manager. "The taster events have demonstrated what fun the dance mats can be, and the proof is in the number of people now coming to the centre specifically to use them."

The centre currently runs only kids' dance mat classes, but has been doing taster sessions with adults, including older adults, and plans to introduce classes for these audiences too.

escape appointments

Escape Fitness has strengthened its team in continental Europe following continued growth across the region. Raimo Treffers joins from Life Fitness, as trade sales account and distribution business manager, while Katrin Jaernecke is the new national key account manager for Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

club med 30th birthday

Club Med, the fitness chain in Paris, will be celebrating its 30th birthday in September with an open-door event in five of its 22 clubs.

Members and non-members will be able to come along to try out activities at the clubs, with a different theme in each of the five locations: Zen, techno, fitness, sport and wellness. The sessions will take place across the whole day, until 1am, with Zumba sessions – the Latin-inspired rhythm and movement classes – playing a role throughout. Members can bring a friend to the sessions.

turkey's hilton dalaman opens

The Hilton Dalaman Golf Resort & Spa officially opened on 19 June. Operated under a franchise licence agreement with Gocay Tourism, Management, Investment, Transportation & Trade Inc, the resort is Hilton Hotel Corporation's ninth property in Turkey.



Spa offers 18 treatment rooms as well as four VIP treatment rooms

The new 410-room resort has its own private kilometre-long beach and a range of leisure facilities, including a 6,000sq m health club and spa.

The Precor-equipped gym offers CV and resistance equipment, an indoor jogging circuit and a studio for meditation, yoga and pilates classes. Facilities are currently only available to guests, but memberships will be sold from next year.

The spa is one of the region's largest holistic themed spas, with 18 treatment rooms, four VIP treatment rooms, 10 spa suites, two Turkish baths, four saunas, a steamroom and a spa pool.

There are also seven outdoor and three indoor swimming pools and two tennis courts, while an 18-hole golf course and nine-hole golf academy facility are scheduled to open in 2010.

vivafit hits 100 clubs in portugal

The opening of VivaFit's latest club in Lisbon has taken the franchise to the 100-site milestone in Portugal.

A further 21 locations are set to open by the end of the year – 19 in Portugal and two in Spain – representing an investment of €3m and an annual growth rate of 23 per cent year-on-year.

CEO Pedro Ruiz says: "Reaching the one hundred milestone, without any stores closing in the last six years, is a clear indicator that our brand and franchising system are secure investments."

"Portugal is still a growing market: penetration rates are lower than average in the EU, which means that we still have a large, untapped market to conquer."



VivaFit, the women-only franchise, offers pilates classes to its members

positive results in australian member survey

Sixty per cent of Australian gym-goers are either satisfied or very satisfied with their gym, according to the 2009 Australian Fitness Industry Survey (AFIS), conducted among 7,000 members by direct debit service provider Ezytap.

Based on the survey, 64 per cent of members are female, with 31 per cent aged between 26 and 35.

Ten per cent said the cost of the membership was not as important as the benefits received, and 39 per cent said clubs were in general value for

money. Members claim to visit between two and three times a week, mostly to do a cardio and weights workout (67 per cent) or a group fitness class (34 per cent). Many employ the services of a personal trainer (17 per cent), but 51 per cent say they reached their goals due to advice given by the club, as opposed to having to pay for PT.

The survey also reported a very competitive local market: 20 per cent of clubs have 10 or more local competitors within a 10-minute drive time.

edited by kate cracknell email: katecracknell@leisuremedia.com



The 900sq m spa: Designed with the colours of the Mediterranean in mind

willow stream for monte carlo

Fairmont Monte Carlo has opened a new spa and fitness centre as part of a €45m refurbishment of the hotel.

Located on the sixth and seventh floors of the 602-room hotel, the fitness suite opened on 1 May, while the spa – one of the group's Willow Stream-branded spas – opened on 4 July.

The 600sq m, Technogym-equipped fitness suite offers views of the Riviera coastline and Mediterranean Sea, while aerobic, stretch and yoga classes are available in a private studio. Open to both hotel guests and local residents, annual membership costs €2,500 per person or €4,500 for a couple. Personal training is also available.

The 900sq m spa, designed by interior architectural firm Wilson Associates, is connected by spiral staircase to the fitness suite. Facilities include eight treatment suites, all of which have balconies and pedicure/manicure chairs overlooking the famous hairpin turn of the Grand Prix. A private experience room is available for personalised self-treatment – a therapist prepares the room and guests then spa on their own. There are also two couples' suites with double tub, double steam and overhead rain shower, while a hammam, sauna and experiential showers are available in each of the changing rooms.

A rooftop pool offers 360° views over the Principality, the Riviera and the sea.

ihrsa and ehfa sign agreement

EHFA and IHRSA have reached an agreement over each association's role in Europe. Key points include:

- EHFA acknowledges IHRSA as the global federation that acts as an umbrella to EHFA and national federations.
- IHRSA acknowledges the role that EHFA plays in public policy, as the primary representative body of the European health and fitness industry to the institutions of European governance, with IHRSA playing a supporting role.
- EHFA will co-operate with IHRSA to actively influence public policy discussions at global organisations (eg WHO, OECD), wherever they are based, when this impacts the health and fitness industry.
- IHRSA supports the concept of EHFA's development of EREPS.
- EHFA recognises that IHRSA will continue to provide support and advice



Harm Tegelaars (left) of EHFA, and IHRSA's Joe Moore (right) sign accord

to IHRSA's national strategic partners, member federations and other members on all aspects of the health club business.

The agreement also acknowledges that the bodies may hold different positions on individual issues and that, in those cases, they will act in stakeholders' best interests.


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from the board



two years on

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association (ehfa)

Little more than two years ago, I became president of the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA). Since then, we have made quite an impact in Brussels, representing the European health and fitness industry to the institutions of European governance.

As an industry, we have to influence policy upstream, before it hits our clubs and centres via Westminster, devolved assemblies or local authorities. This means shaping policies and directives before they leave Brussels, where 70 per cent of UK law is drafted.

In order to achieve this, EHFA has managed to secure considerable industry support. This was seen in June when the CEOs of Europe's 17 largest operators came together to strategise the future of the industry.

What emerged from that meeting was simple: wherever you operate, we have simple facts to acknowledge. As an industry we must continuously get better at what we currently do. We must then take what we currently do and continue to innovate aggressively so we create our own future. Finally, we must work together through our national, regional and global associations to shape the environment in which we operate.

mps line up to support clubs

The MoreActive4Life campaign received a kickstart from the government when Secretary of State for Health Andy Burnham said: "Making just small increases in your activity levels can make a big difference to your overall long-term health."

"Active people are up to 50 per cent less likely to be at risk of major chronic disease like coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer. But not enough of us do the recommended 30 minutes, five days a week."

"Change4Life is helping families eat well, move more and live longer and has prompted a lifestyle revolution. The FIA's MoreActive4Life campaign will make an important contribution to this wellness revolution."

The campaign has already spurred a number of MPs into action, with a steady stream heading down to their nearest FIA club to help promote the campaign in their community:

- Richard Caborn, the Labour MP for Sheffield and Minister of Sport in 2001, was at Gym Plus at the Copthorne Hotel on 31 July
- Martin Linton, the MP for Battersea, will be at Latchmere Leisure Centre, Battersea, on 3 August
- Gillian Merron, Minister of State (Public Health) at the Department of Health and the MP for Lincoln, was another active promoter at Yarborough Leisure Centre

- Meg Munn, MP for Sheffield Heeley, was at Fitness First in Millhouses, Sheffield, last month

In addition, there are a growing number of supporters in Westminster – the Rt Hon John Battle MP for Sheffield, Tony Lloyd MP for Manchester, and Ben Bradshaw MP for Exeter and Member of State for Health and South West among them – who have been lending their support to promotions for their local MoreActive4Life clubs.



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Change4Life and MoreActive4Life:
A lifestyle revolution, encouraging people towards the 5x30 goal

have I got news for you

As the launch of MoreActive4Life continues to gather momentum, the media has been lending its support to the campaign. From BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio Bristol, Radio Manchester, Radio Sheffield and Radio WM to the *Newcastle Chronicle*, *Sheffield Star* and a whole host of other publications. Some of our favourite comments emerging in support of the campaign include:

".... cheaper gym sessions to cut obesity"

Evening Standard

"This is the best so far."

The Times

".... first steps to a more active lifestyle"

Marketing Week

".... couch potatoes urged to get off the sofa"

Lincolnshire Echo

girls allowed: single-sex approved

Following a successful lobbying campaign by the FIA, the government has agreed that the new Equality Bill will clarify the fact that single-sex services and employment policies in both public and private fitness facilities are supported by the law.

The Government Equalities office advised the FIA that "exceptions under the Equality Bill will enable single and separate sex services to be provided for men and women. Private fitness centres can therefore continue to have women-only facilities, including women-only fitness classes. Mixed membership fitness centres will also continue to be able to offer different levels of membership, as long as both men and women are treated equally and allowed equal access to differing membership levels. It will also be lawful for women-only fitness centres to exist."

The FIA believes that there are many reasons that may lead both men and women to prefer a single-sex environment. Women of all ages and backgrounds often shy away from exercise because of the fear of looking unattractive or sweaty, or because they feel intimidated by inappropriate behaviour from men. Occasionally, women can be made to feel that they are in the way of 'serious' male participants who resent their presence. In addition to these complex sociological factors, there are also cultural or religious considerations which influence women's choices



STOCKPHOTO/CONGRAD COLLS

Women-only clubs and classes are legal and backed by government

regarding exercising. These become less problematic in a single-sex setting.

"This is a victory for common sense. Now thousands of women who, for religious, cultural or personal reasons want or must exercise in a women-only environment can do so," says David Stalker, FIA operations director.

"We welcome every development which reduces any barriers to women exercising and encourages all women to feel confident and secure in a supportive fitness environment."

a different perspective at flame

When Caroline Shorthouse, a Cystic Fibrosis (CF) sufferer, addressed more than 700 industry professionals at the recent FLAME Ball of Fire, a hush fell across the room.

As the 17-year-old modestly and uncomplainingly revealed the intricacies of her daily routine of exercise, physio and drugs – vital to allow her to lead a 'normal' life – those in party frocks and black ties listened in respectful silence.

"A few minutes later, every man and woman in that room reached into their wallets and handbags and together raised almost £2,800 for the event's nominated charity, The Cystic Fibrosis Trust," says David Stalker, operations director for the FIA.

"Caroline really touched the soul of everyone sitting in that room. I know her compelling and very moving message will be carried to clubs and leisure centres across the country."

CF is the UK's most common life-threatening inherited disease. Caused by a single defective gene, the disease attacks internal organs, especially the lungs and digestive system. Each week, five babies are born with CF and three young people die, mostly due to lung damage. Average life expectancy is just 35, although this is improving. An active lifestyle and physiotherapy is essential to help maintain healthy lungs. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust is the UK's only national charity dealing with all aspects of CF.



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a strategy in the making

Steven Ward, the FIA's public affairs and policy manager, gives an update on the Public Health Commission's new report



Shadow health minister Andrew Lansley made a speech in June last year which was seen as the start of a process to formalise the Conservative Party's public health strategy. In the speech, he established an independent Public Health Commission (PHC). The PHC was formed to bring together all the key players to establish the responsibility of government, industry and the charitable sector in meeting the public health challenges of diet, physical activity and alcohol use. Shortly after the speech, a letter arrived at the FIA inviting Fred Turok, the FIA chair, to join the PHC to represent the FIA. The final report of the PHC, *We're All In This Together*, was published on 1 July 2009.

towards vat cuts?

The report makes 48 specific recommendations. These range from extending the ban on advertising junk food to children, to extending the Change4Life campaign. The recommendation that received the most coverage was the call to reposition physical activity as a healthcare provision, thus reducing its rate of VAT to 5 per cent. This is a new take on the VAT argument that the FIA adopted as its position, through its Vanguard Council, in December 2008. We have been promoting it ever since.

The reasoning behind the inclusion of this recommendation was a prevailing view that an individual should not be penalised for taking responsibility for themselves, their family or their employees if they're doing something to benefit their health through improved levels of physical activity, thereby reducing the cost to the taxpayer of ill-health.



In the battle against obesity, we must shift the focus from 'energy in' to 'energy out'

The PHC Report called for an end to the 'Wellbeing Tax'. Establishing this term as political currency is crucial. Could we one day have a new area of policy debate around Wellbeing Taxes alongside the debate over Green Taxes?

The FIA saw a number of its key policy objectives reflected in the PHC final report. These include the creation of a pool of funds to match-fund the evidenced-based corporate wellness programmes implemented by small and medium-sized enterprises.

The report also has implications for funding at local level, where one recommendation suggests piloting the ring-fencing of public health budgets of Primary Care Trusts.

There's also the potential, at last, for a review of the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), the system that dictates the rewards available to GPs for providing certain services. It has long been a frustration that smoking cessation services receive 73 QOF points, whereas interventions related to obesity receive eight and those related to exercise referral receive none.

energy in : energy out

A call was also made to unite the various public health pathways of treatment in primary care into a single Preventative Care Pathway which provides individuals

with the opportunities to improve their diet and be more active, while ensuring that the necessary tools such as exercise referral and walking schemes are available for commission.

Nonetheless, the most potent recommendation of the report was the fundamental repositioning of the public health debate. It's possible to argue that for too long, the media, government and charitable sectors have focused on attacking the food and advertising sectors, placing with them the blame of the growing public health challenges we face as a nation.

The food sector has taken this onboard. They've adjusted their marketing techniques. They've reformulated their products. They've set themselves on a path towards a future where their products meet the needs of an increasingly health-conscious consumer. It's time to shift the balance of debate away from 'energy in' and focus resources on encouraging 'energy out'.

If the expertise and facilities of the 'energy out' sector can be adjoined to the consumer reach and marketing nous of the 'energy in' sector, we may reach a mutually beneficial balance that transforms the health of the nation. The FIA will remain at the forefront of these developments and ensure that 'energy out' warrants the attention it deserves.

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in brief...

new council members

The new members of the REPs Council were officially introduced at the latest meeting of the council. Helena Philippou, Ben Jones, Debbie Lawrence, Mairi Glynn and Angie Newson join Taff O'Donoghue, Gary Cole, Mada Jooste, Ali Carrington, Paul Whapham, Belinda Buttery, Marlon Wasniewski, Liz Fowler and Douglas Alexander to meet once a quarter to represent the members on the direction of the Register. REPs registrar Jean-Ann Marnoch says: "Our Council of Members is a great representation of the Register as a whole and all are totally committed to the industry and its development."

convention dates

Tickets are still available for the REPs National Convention – Professionalising the Industry – to be held at LIW in Birmingham next month. Scheduled for Thursday 24 September 2009, the day will feature a special programme of speakers, workshops and seminars as well as entry to the LIW tradeshow. A further conference for members in the north of England is planned for Friday 20 November 2009 in Leeds. For further information on both – including CPD points, ticket prices and full programme details – visit the new-look REPs website at www.exerciseregister.org

working in fitness survey

The team at the SkillsActive Research Unit has begun analysing the results of the 2009 Working in Fitness Survey. Respondents answered questions on remuneration packages, working practices, ongoing professional development and attitudes to working within the industry, as well as job satisfaction. Now in its fourth year, the survey is provides an annual insight into the working practices of the industry and is valued by employers and employees alike.



REPs registrar Jean-Ann Marnoch at the REPs Scottish conference in June

sqa recognised by register

At the REPs conference held in Edinburgh in June, it was announced that, after extensive discussions and mapping, REPs will now recognise SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) qualifications in fitness.

When candidates complete HNC Fitness and Exercise they will receive entry to REPs Level 2. Candidates completing the NPA Fitness they will receive entry to REPs Level 1. The existing SVQ level 2 Instructing Exercise and Fitness gives entry to REPs Level 2. This follows months of meetings between REPs, the SQA, other agencies and employers.

SQA qualifications manager Paul Gallacher says: "This process will enable the health and fitness industry to give recognition to our candidates wherever they choose to work in Scotland, the UK and Europe. It certainly shows the quality of these SQA fitness awards, while giving SQA a competitive edge."

With just over 1,500 Scottish members, REPs is increasingly being seen by employers in Scotland as a way of demonstrating to the public the qualifications and competence of their fitness staff. Throughout May, the Register held a number of discussions with SQA, Fitness Scotland, the national governing body for fitness in Scotland, and key employers to further enhance the support REPs can give to the Scottish fitness industry.

REPs Registrar Jean-Ann Marnoch adds: "I am delighted that SQA

qualifications are now mapped to National Occupational Standards and that Scottish students can benefit from the efforts of SQA staff who have made this possible."

"We are dedicated to professionalising the industry throughout the entire United Kingdom and are especially pleased all the hard work in Scotland has come to fruition."

"The members we met at our convention in Edinburgh were incredibly enthusiastic and passionate about working within the industry and we hope to support them in any way we can."

More than 100 delegates attended the REPs Scottish Convention, held at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena. Keynote presentations were delivered by: Dave Clark, from the Scottish Institute of Sport, on strength training and performance; Dr Colin Moran from the University of Glasgow, who spoke on the importance of exercise within different population groups; Flora Jackson, from the Physical Activity Alliance, on how to increase physical activity in Scotland; and Richard Blackmore from the FIA on improving the standards of clubs and centres in Scotland.

Members were also able to take part in a choice of six educational workshops on the importance of physical activity and exercise in cardiovascular disease, working with clients with mental health problems, leadership and accountability, goal setting techniques, postural analysis, exercise and pregnancy, realistic pilates lessons, and planning and prioritising.

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Simmonds spent 18 years at BISL

simmonds to leave bisl

Brigid Simmonds is to step down from her position as chief executive of Business in Sport and Leisure (BISL).

A challenging business climate forced BISL to review its business plan earlier this year and, as a result, Simmonds will leave her position after 18 years of service on 31 July.

Current chair Neil Goulden will also step down on the same day following a six-year stint.

David Teasdale, who produced the business review for the organisation, will take over the reins as BISL's new chair on 1 August.

Teasdale says: "It's an honour to follow in the distinguished footsteps of BISL chairs Neil Goulden and John Brackenbury. Brigid Simmonds will also be a hard act to follow."

in brief...

new blood at cyber coach

Training provider Cyber Coach has strengthened its team, appointing four new members of staff in the past four months. Keith Harris has joined the company as operations manager and will be looking after business procedures and systems. Stephanie Goddard has been appointed South London and South East sales consultant, while James Gregory has taken up his first job in the fitness industry after being appointed sales consultant for the Midlands. Lesley Rignall has also joined Cyber Coach and will take up the position of customer sales manager.

iqf appoints martin symcox

Training company IQF UK has appointed Martin Symcox as its new business development manager.

Symcox has been trained with rolling out IQF's new managerial qualification to leisure centres, sports facilities and health clubs throughout the UK.

As part of his role, Symcox will assist executive director Tara Dillon, and pool programmes manager Alex Blackwell, in enhancing the organisation's profile as an awarding and governing body within the leisure industry. Initially, he will also conduct remote research to explore examples of best practice at the IQF's Approved Training Centres – which are designed as lifeguard training centres – and use these case studies as a benchmark for other pool operators, to improve industry standards.

Symcox, who is a former contract manager with a leading leisure



Symcox will work closely with executive director Tara Dillon

management company, says: "Up until recently, I've worked on the operational side of leisure management, so I'm fully aware of the increased pressures that fall on pool operators – both budgetary and to improve standards."

wilkins lands ihrsas stipend

Brad Wilkins, director of fitness management and development for the Cooper Fitness Center in Dallas, Texas, US, has been named the recipient of the 4th Annual John McCarthy Institute Merit Scholarship.

Established in 2006 by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), through donations from industry founders and friends, the scholarship is awarded annually. It provides full tuition at IHRSA's Institute for

Professional Club Management, as well as a US\$500 travel stipend.

Wilkins has served as the director of fitness for Cooper Fitness since November 2005, and serves as the team leader of the Cooper Corporate Solutions commercial consulting line.

"Brad has done an exceptional job of growing the personal training services at Cooper Fitness Center and establishing a team approach among the staff," says Roger Ralph of the selection committee and Hockessin Athletic Club.

jubilee hall promotions

London-based health club operator Jubilee Hall Clubs has awarded promotions to two members of its head office team. Jon Giles has become the charity's new operations director, while Chas Verma has been named as the new finance director.

Phil Rumbelow, Jubilee Hall Clubs' chief executive officer, says: "Both Jon and Chas have worked with the charity for several years and have demonstrated their outstanding commitment and ability. These new job titles better reflect their actual roles within the organisation."

fisher joins leisure connection

Public access leisure provider Leisure Connection has appointed Adrian Fisher as its new human resources director. Fisher joins Leisure Connection from construction company Kier, where he was head of HR and development. At Leisure Connection, Fisher will be responsible for leading the human resources and development agenda. Fisher says: "I'm really enjoying my new role at Leisure Connection and I've been busy travelling the country and visiting individual sites. I've been struck by the enthusiasm and commitment of staff."

PEOPLE PROFILE



kevin yates

Leisure Connection's national health & fitness manager, and the winner of the 'people's choice' Future of FLAME Award, talks about winning and the value of community projects

What's your background?

Prior to working with Leisure Connection, where I've been for the last two years, I worked for Esporta as group health & fitness manager and spent 11 years with Fitness First. Before entering the industry, when I realised my dream of becoming a world-class footballer wouldn't work out, I joined the army and became a PTI after four years.

Tell us about your day-to-day role

As national health & fitness manager, I lead three regional fitness managers and am responsible for the operations of our 50 Harpers Fitness sites. I'm also accountable for purchasing and the management of equipment.

Why do you think you won Future of FLAME?

All the people who were nominated were exceptional, but I think it could have been my work in disability sport that tipped it in my favour.

The company has been working in partnership with Buckinghamshire University and WheelPower, the national charity for wheelchair sport, to launch a Disability Training Academy. The aim is to help increase access to wheelchair sports; coaches and exercise

professionals can get training and tuition to deliver disability sport, whether it's basketball, tennis or basic rehabilitation.

In your opinion, how does a good industry manager differ from an award-winning one?

A great health and fitness manager involves the communities they work in, to get as many people as possible being physically active more often. This can be done through involvement with local sports clubs, PCTs, GP referral schemes and disability fitness. Great fitness managers can look at what's out there in communities, generate leads and help others.

All of Leisure Connection's health and fitness managers are working with PCTs. It's a case of letting the GPs and PCTs know that facilities which can improve the health of the local area are on their doorstep. We invited representatives to tour our centres, so they could feel confident when referring patients they felt could benefit from regular exercise. We've also ensured all staff are trained to Level 3, and that each site undergoes GP referral and specialist courses. This has really helped raise the profile with our PCTs.

What do you think the industry's main weakness is?

Inconsistent training and qualifications. The fact that there are fitness coaches out there who aren't registered with REPs, or even qualified, drives me crazy! It should be a legal requirement that all trainers are registered, just like if you were a registered nurse.

What are your ambitions?

To be a director of a company or to score a goal at Wembley. If I had to choose, it would be a goal at Wembley.

What's your favourite motto?

Are you a time-teller or a clock builder?

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A refurb at Dorking, one of 50 Harpers sites, included a new boxing ring

competitive edge

13 AUGUST 09

resolution 10k

The Stroke Association is calling for hundreds of runners to take part in its first ever 10k run, which will start at 7pm in Finsbury Park, London, on 13 August.

Entry costs £10 and participants must raise at least £150 on top of this.

This is the second run in the Resolution series, which was designed to keep people fit and motivated beyond their New Year's promise. The first – a 5k race – was held in April, while the third – a 15k challenge – is due to take place in Richmond Park, London, on 6 December.

Details: www.stroke.org.uk



Runs are designed to hold people to their New Year's resolutions

PHOTO BELOW: ©STOCKPHOTO.COM/KIRSTEN JOHANSEN



108 sun salutations in three hours

31 OCTOBER 09

yogaaid

With the aim of completing 108 sun salutations (a series of yoga movements) in three hours, this challenge is not as gentle as its name implies. YogaAid, held at the Yoga Show in Olympia, will see different teachers guide people through the moves. Entry is £5 and the minimum sponsorship is £108. Monies raised will support four charities: WSPA, Prison Phoenix Trust, the Special Yoga Centre and Shishukunj (LIFE 4 CHILDREN).

Details: www.theyogashow.co.uk

Three marathons in 24 hours



24-31 MAY 10

namibia 24-hour ultra marathon

This challenge is becoming known as the ultimate endurance test for distance runners. The route in the Namib Desert covers 126km (78 miles) – three full marathons – all within just 24 hours.

Contestants will be completely self-reliant, carrying their own food and equipment, although water stations and medical tents are provided at 21km intervals. Temperatures are expected to soar up to 36°C – possibly higher. Details: www.acrossthedivide.com

20-29 MARCH 10

cycle taiwan

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) is looking for adventurous and active women to take on the gruelling bike ride across Taiwan in aid of deaf children in the UK.

Taiwan, according to travel guides, is currently the hottest new cycling destination. In this challenge, participants will cover up to 100km a day on the tropical island. The route will include rugged and steep terrain, but participants will also get to enjoy beautiful landscapes such as the Taroko Gorges and the Kenting National Park.

Registration costs £250 and sponsorship is set at £3,900.

Details: www.ndcschallenges.org.uk



Taiwan: Hot new cycling destination

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Inner IDEA, in Palm Springs in September, looks at mind-body programmes

AUGUST

18-20 28th Annual National Fitness Trade Show

Venue Reno-Tahoe, Nevada, US

Summary

Annual trade show for club owners, managers, fitness directors and PTs.
Tel +1 541 830 0400

Web www.nationalfitnessradeshow.com

SEPTEMBER

1-3 BASES Annual Conference

Venue Leeds University, UK

Summary

Sharing of knowledge and ideas to promote the spread of evidenced and innovative practice in sport and exercise sciences.
Web www.bases.org.uk/annualconf.asp

10-13 Inner IDEA

Venue Palm Springs, California, US

Summary

This event, organised by IDEA, features mind-body-spirit programming.
Tel +1 858 999 4332

Web www.inneridea.com

10-13 SIBEC North America

Venue Pasadena, California, US

Summary

A one-to-one meeting forum between owners/operators and suppliers.
Tel +1 954 942 8143

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

22-24 Leisure Industry Week

Venue Birmingham NEC, UK

Summary

Europe's largest exhibition for the leisure industry, with representatives from fitness, health, spa, sport and

attractions. Meet the *Health Club Management* editorial team in room 19.1 on the main concourse at the show.

Tel +44 (0)20 7955 3969

Web www.liw.co.uk

OCTOBER

10-11 International Fitness Forum Convention & Expo

Venue Chelsea FC, Stamford Bridge, London, UK

Summary

A trade show specifically for health and fitness instructors, along with a convention covering personal training, group fitness and mind-body sessions from world-class presenters.

Tel +44 (0)20 7093 2650

Web www.multitrax.com/fitnessforum

22-25 IHRSA European Congress

Venue Dublin, Ireland

Summary

Featuring presentations from business leaders from within and outside of the industry. Participants will have ample opportunity to network with leading industry suppliers and operator colleagues from across Europe.

Tel +1 617 951 0055

Web www.ihrsa.org

27 The Fundamentals of Nutrition and Compound Movements - FIA seminar

Venue Esporta Chiswick, London

Summary

Focusing on the importance of nutrition when exercising, plus in-depth information on compound movements.
Tel +44 (0)20 7420 8578

Web www.fia.org.uk

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gp training

Exercise and sport science highlights the vital importance of physical activity in almost every aspect of health – and yet GPs have little understanding of this field. Should this be addressed?

As their very title suggests, general practitioners (GPs) have a broad knowledge of medicine and health. Unfortunately, at present, this doesn't encompass sport and exercise science – in spite of the world-class research and clinical evidence demonstrating the vital role that exercise and fitness can play in health and wellbeing.

With a lack of in-depth education into how fitness can make a positive impact on our health – especially in terms of prevention, a buzzword in government at present – as well as a lack of access to referral schemes (see news, p10), it's no wonder GPs

tend not to prescribe exercise. Not only that but the Quality Outcomes Framework (QOF), which monitors GP practices, awards 73 QOF points for referring patients onto smoking cessation programmes, eight QOF points for obesity referral – and yet zero QOF points for exercise referral.

While the gap between exercise science and exercise professionals is another point for discussion (see *HCM* July 09, p3), the first question in this debate is: does the NHS even recognise sport and exercise science as a credible discipline? The absence of QOF points for exercise referral suggests there may some way to go.

Secondly, should GPs be given some kind of grounding in exercise and sport science so they're equipped to refer patients to exercise scientists – as they do to cardiac specialists, for example? If so, who should provide this?

At present, GPs train for around seven years, and exercise and sport scientists for up to four years, but there's little overlap between the two. It's unrealistic to expect GPs to cover all of this ground, so just what areas of exercise and sport science would they most benefit from knowledge of? And what's the ideal length of a course to ensure it's comprehensive enough, yet succinct? We ask the experts.

SHOULD GPs HAVE TRAINING IN EXERCISE AND SPORT SCIENCE? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

john buckley

chair • exercise for health practitioners interest group, BASES



"Knowledge of sport and exercise is something new to GPs and they should be commended for starting to address the need for training in this area: Bath University offers a diploma in sport and exercise medicine that more GPs are taking, and the Royal College of Physicians has now established a faculty focused on sport and exercise medicine.

Officially the NHS doesn't recognise sport and exercise science, even though it employs people from this field in areas such as secondary prevention programmes. That's why BASES is working to get the Health Professions Council (HPC) to register the discipline as a profession. We hope this will help standardise the currently woolly working conditions, wages and so on for exercise and sport professionals working in the healthcare industry.

As part of the registration process, we've set up an interest group for sport and exercise scientists working in healthcare. We've also created the new BASES Certified Exercise Practitioner qualification for those with a degree in sport science and REPs Level 4 equivalent who want to work in healthcare, while the new BASES Accreditation Scheme – the next step up – will be required to attain HPC status."

professor mark batt

president elect • faculty of exercise and sport medicine (FSEM)



"It's important to make the distinction between sport science and sport and exercise medicine: sport science is a non-medical degree.

The DH formally recognised sport and exercise medicine as one of the 52 medical specialities in 2005, and the FSEM was formed in 2006. The discipline is becoming recognised professionally, but there's still a lot of work to be done to get GPs up to speed on this [and the importance of exercise]. I think adding QOF points to assessment and exercise referral would help. But it's not fair just to dump this [the problem of our sedentary nation] on GPs and the DH, as it's a social issue that sits with every government department.

That said, GPs do need more training in sport and exercise medicine. Although the undergraduate curriculum is incredibly congested, it's also out of date in places. I'd like to see it cover the power of physical activity in maintaining and improving health, along with understanding injury mechanisms – particularly over-use injury mechanisms. The FSEM offers a four-year speciality training post-graduate curriculum, which has been officially running for two years, but I'd also like to see other post-graduate speciality training better reflect this discipline."



If GPs were trained in exercise science, would they be quicker to prescribe exercise over pills, prevention over cure?

dr peter mace

assistant medical director • bupa wellness



"Many of the BUPA Wellness health advisors are sport and exercise scientists, so we certainly recognise the importance of the discipline.

I qualified as a doctor in 1976 and spent 10 years in general practice, but if I'm honest we didn't know that exercise and sport science existed back then.

Today, most GPs know generically that exercise is good for people, but they may not have in-depth knowledge about the benefits of different forms, or how hard individuals should be exercising.

It's hard to say whether there's a gap in training, as existing GPs have enough on their plate just dealing with day-to-day illness needs at the moment. And generally speaking, the role of health promotion in most general practices is devolved to the practice nurse – there's an argument that they would benefit the most from learning about sport science and the advantages of exercise.

However, I think there's an opportunity to inform GPs that sport and exercise scientists might be able to help in exercise referral schemes. There are GP trainee groups which meet regularly for lectures; this would seem the appropriate platform in which to do this."

professor tim cable

director of the school of sport and exercise sciences • liverpool john moores university



"My impression is that GPs don't understand the scale of risk reduction – in terms of coronary heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, depression and mental illness – that's afforded by people becoming physically active and adopting an exercise habit.

I think they would benefit from a grounding in how exercise can help in all of these areas. What they need is a programme – designed by the NHS in collaboration with universities that run exercise and sport science degrees – to outline the impact of exercise on pathology, how this differs from the impact that drugs have, and the benefit of having a combined drug and exercise approach to reduce risk.

Above this, however, I think there's a huge lack of understanding that highly-trained, knowledgeable sport scientists exist in the first place. If the NHS is to get serious about exercise prescription, it's vitally important that they take advantage of well-trained exercise physiologists, employing them in a hospital setting and in a wider PCT context, such that information will eventually feed down to GP referral and local council leisure centres."

Stuart Taylor, director of health club chain FX Leisure, talks to Caroline Wilkinson about cutting costs, changes ahead and Taylor-ing the business to family needs

fx leisure



From left to right: Andy Taylor, Stuart Taylor and Keith Belshaw

Operator FX Leisure may not have international, or even national, expansion plans for its growing health club chain, but this hasn't diminished its directors' ambitions to create a brand influenced by global trends. Frequent visits to the States and the Far East have shaped the way FX Leisure approaches the retention challenge and have resulted in some cutting-edge facilities, epitomised by the newly-opened £4m flagship facility in Leyland, Lancashire.

FX stands for the fitness (e)xperience, which is what Stuart Taylor and fellow shareholders – brother Andy and father Alan – wanted to focus on when they started the company 10 years ago. With both brothers seeing little progression in their careers as professional sportsmen, they used their father's business know-how to create profitable mid-market clubs – with a dash of eccentricity to keep members entertained.

"We did a lot of travelling while researching the industry, but weren't very impressed with what was out there," says Stuart. "We looked at a lot of the big chains in America, such as Gold's and Planet Fitness, as it was a much more mature market and still is. Although there were new clubs opening occasionally, a lot of the older clubs were struggling to compete with each other – it was very, very competitive. Seeing this in the US made us realise where the UK was headed. Some of the philosophies we tried to bring in to our company were born out of wanting to somehow avoid being in that struggling situation."

penetrating populations

FX Leisure positions clubs in suburbs in the north-west of England: "We avoid competition when we pick sites by going into smaller areas – usually with around 50,000 people – where there isn't the demographic for bigger operators."



The fire and ice room is part of the indoor/outdoor wellness area

"The benefit is that we become well-known locally and have a captive audience. On the downside, there's a smaller population, some of whom haven't had a lot of experience with fitness and so require convincing of the benefits." As the community is key to operations, Taylor encourages his managers to work with schools, sports clubs and colleges, and to get involved generally in community activities.

By doing most of the project management and designing himself, Taylor is able to keep build costs down, allowing him to indulge in luxury finishes – such as walnut lockers – without affecting the mid-range membership prices.

Taylor and his brother – who manage the business along with operations director Keith Belshaw – try to create more than fitness clubs. "Members can come and have a coffee, hire a DVD and have a swim in a leisurely environment."



FX Leisure: The fitness (e)xperience



People don't just want functional facilities. They want something that looks attractive to relax in and maybe swim a few lengths, which is why we haven't built a 50m swimming pool."

Instead, the latest club in the seven-strong portfolio offers a dimly-lit 20m indoor pool and an indoor/outdoor wellness pool area, an Oriental-themed steamroom and a fire and ice room, all accented with funky coloured lighting.

Each club offers a separate fitness suite, usually themed, to give members a different environment to work out in. Leyland FX Leisure, which opened in May, is the first club to feature a movie workout room, with a schedule of films for members to watch as they exercise – one of the features Taylor brought back from the States. There's also a jukebox on the gym floor, so members can pick the music played in the gym, and a dedicated cycling studio, which

FX LEISURE LEYLAND

The company's new £4m flagship club in Lancashire spans 1,860sq m (20,000sq ft) and is centred around a 110-station fitness area with Life Fitness cardio and resistance kit, plus a free weights area with Olympic bars and Hammer Strength equipment. Finishing off the vibrantly designed, open-plan gym is a stretch and abs space including a Precor Stretch Trainer and two Vibrogyms.

Separated from the main fitness suite are two exercise studios: an 18-person yoga studio and a 30-person aerobics room. There's also a blacked-out, neon-lit cycling

studio, a workout 'movie room' which shows popular films from the past, and a jukebox so members can line up the gym's communal music. Equipment in the movie room includes Life Fitness recumbent bikes and Precor AMTs.

Other facilities include a 20m indoor swimming pool, an indoor/outdoor wellness pool with a retractable roof, a jasmine-scented steamroom and a menthol-infused fire and ice room. The facility also hosts a rent-paying Scott Charles-branded hair salon, which is also due to offer beauty treatments in the next few months.



The 20m indoor pool at the new Leyland club has funky lighting to create a more exciting environment for members

- feels like a nightclub when the neon lights are switched on.

"Exercising can be pretty boring, having to do the same thing in the same environment. When we phone lapsed members to find out why they left, almost always we find that it isn't that they went to another club or that we did something wrong; they say they don't have the time. This means they're bored; it was important enough for them to join in the first place and somehow they haven't achieved what they wanted to in the club and have drifted off into something else.

"One way we can help them stay is to keep it more exciting. The more you can do to make it stimulating, keep it different, the more members you'll be likely to retain. We've tried to zone things off to give people an opportunity to train in a different environment, with the idea of encouraging them to stay longer. They won't necessarily use all the facilities in one session, but they will do something different every time they come.

"I'm also a massive believer in education and think the general population would use clubs if they were taught about healthy living and why it's important. Educating people is the only way to significantly drive up participation in any form of exercise.

We offer free sessions in the gym which members can book on to, and we use these to try and educate members on various topics such as weight loss and core training. Hopefully, with a more educated membership, we'll also see better retention."

driving profits

With Leyland FX Leisure already halfway towards its 4,500-member capacity, has the company been affected at all by the recession? "Profitability no, memberships yes. Every month [since Christmas], a few less join and a few more cancel, which makes a difference. Across the portfolio, we're close to a 10 per cent decrease in membership compared to this time last year.

"We've managed to stem it financially by putting our prices up, so yield per member has increased and like-for-like sales are identical.

"We also introduced a few flexible membership packages in January, including two-year, one-year and contract-free packages. By giving people the choice of membership contracts, some are choosing a more expensive option as it comes with less of a contract, which increases our yield." FX Leisure has also done away with joining fees, which normally cost £100.

Membership prices are based on the club's local market and are increased, not discounted, as time goes on from a club opening, encouraging potential members to join immediately. The Leyland club currently offers memberships ranging from £37 to £50 a month.

"We're also trying to introduce some family options, as the more people in a family who use the club, the more support there is to keep up your membership," says Taylor.

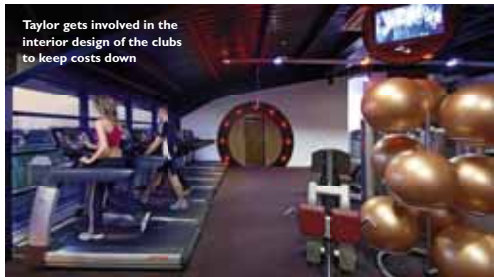
Most FX Leisure clubs offer dedicated kids' swimming, school PE classes and exercise sessions such as kids' yoga, group cycling and street dancing, and the company is aiming to expand this offer.

Although Taylor believes the industry has a challenge ahead with the emergence of increasingly value-driven clientele, he doesn't agree with discounting: "There's no point having a price that's good value for a product and then halving it for just one month. You may sell a lot of memberships that month but, if you can't sustain it, then it's going to kill the whole industry."

So what plans does FX Leisure have to expand? "We have two clubs in the pipeline, in Leeds and Manchester, but they're 18 months from opening, so it's difficult to think too far into the future.

"It's not a great desire for us as a family business to roll out 100 clubs, or even 20 clubs, over the next few years. We're very profitable for a family company, with an annual turnover of £6.5m/£3.2m EBITDA. One reason we're so healthy, even though we're in a recession, is because we've been conservative.

"We've watched some of the bigger players expand aggressively over the last decade, and wondered if we should be doing the same, but now a few of them are in trouble. Our style of club could be built all over the world, but we're going to grow steadily to 10 clubs over the next three years and then review things."



Taylor gets involved in the interior design of the clubs to keep costs down



caroline wilkinson
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

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small spaces BIG RESULTS

A robust pilates offering is still possible with limited space. Daniel Wilson reports

As pilates continues to grow in popularity, more clubs are adding the discipline as both a source of non-dues revenue and a valuable competitive service differentiator. But in tough economic times, when most fitness centres are not increasing floorspace, there's an obvious obstacle to the implementation of an equipment-based pilates programme: where do you put it?

Does your club have enough room to start an effective programme? Five years ago that question might have been hard to answer. However, several space-saving pieces of equipment now make it easy – and, in many cases, more affordable – for even a smaller club to implement a robust pilates programme.

tranquility pilates studio

case study

Nikki Chrysostomou is the owner of the Tranquility Pilates Studio. Formerly located inside Europe's largest fitness club at Canary Wharf, London, last year she moved to a new facility to start a pilates instructor training business.

She says clubs need to understand the importance of pilates as a service offering, even if space is limited: "Pilates is such a good selling point for any club. At my club, non-members were allowed to come and use our facilities. Most of them subsequently became club members and took up other activities at the club. You can't let lack of floorspace be a barrier."

clever storage

Chrysostomou's space measured only 62sq m (670sq ft), with toilets and changing facilities provided by the club. The studio had five Studio Reformers, one Reformer with Tower, a Combo Chair, a Trapeze Table, a Ladder Barrel and a Gyrotonic Pulley Tower. "That's a lot of equipment for the space," she says.

She used the larger pieces of kit as storage containers. "We could easily store props, mats, baby arcs and step barrels under the reformers. The additional space meant I could buy a ladder barrel and a combo chair. The members liked them, plus they're small and easy to move."

One of the key things to think about is how many times the kit will need to be moved to accommodate other types of pilates classes. "I loved the reformers, but they weren't portable, so it was hard to move them out of the way for mat classes," Chrysostomou says. "I was lucky – I ended up renting an empty studio next to mine to hold the mat classes. Looking back, it would probably have been better to buy portable or stackable reformers."

Even with the limited space, Chrysostomou was able to put together a full agenda of classes, including private and semi-private sessions, plus two group classes each day. "As we grew bigger, I hired some great instructors and we were able to effectively conduct two to three

Balanced Body's
EXO Chair – a
full body workout
in a small space



private sessions simultaneously without getting in each other's way," she adds.

keeping it fresh

No matter the size of your space, a pilates programme won't be successful if things stay the same. "We keep the studio alive by putting on different types of classes, like circuit and reformer, or reformer with small props and jump boards. We also hold special workshops, like pilates for skiers and golfers," says Chrysostomou. "We've built up good relationships with our clients and some come three or four times a week."

As mentioned earlier, Chrysostomou recently moved out of the club to a new 102sq m (1100sq ft) studio in the Canary Wharf complex. "We'd outgrown the space and wanted to offer training courses and services like massage, physiotherapy and osteopathy. But I'm proof that, with the right kit and storage planning, a pilates programme can flourish within the footprint of any club." ▶



Ken Endelman

top tips for the smaller studio

Daniel Wilson talks to Ken Endelman

Ken Endelman is the founder and CEO of Balanced Body, one of the world's largest providers of pilates equipment and training programmes. He has designed hundreds of modern alterations to Joseph Pilates' original equipment, many of which have since become industry standards.

"Space used to be a big issue," he says. "A lot of older pilates kit was big and bulky and hard to move around. But now there are innovations that really allow clubs to implement a healthy programme in limited space. The key is portability, storage and smaller-sized yet effective equipment."

"Really it comes down to being smart with the space you have. If you use a little savvy and make sure the studio flows well from one piece of equipment to the next, you should be just fine."

Here are his thoughts on the best pieces of space-saving kit:

1 reformer

"Everyone's familiar with the reformer, as it's the most popular piece of pilates equipment. But reformers are fairly big," says Endelman. "However, most equipment companies today have reformers that can stand on end or be stacked for easier storage. Some also have wheels to help facilitate portability."

2 reformer with tower

This piece of kit combines the reformer and the canopied trapeze table, or 'cadillac', but with the 'cadillac' portion limited to a single tower on one end. "You're basically getting two pieces of equipment in one. And, on some reformers, the tower component can be folded onto the reformer frame, making it much easier to store," says Endelman.

3 pilates chair

Chairs provide a challenging strength pilates workout within a small physical footprint. They resemble a stool with single or split steps at the bottom. "Some manufacturers have now redesigned the pilates chair to include attachments for resistance bands. Users can do many of the exercises formerly possible only on a reformer, but in a fraction of the space," says Endelman. "They're also lightweight and easy to stack and store. It's a great piece of equipment for clubs that may not have the room, or budget, for multiple reformers."

4 springboards

Springboards are an affordable, space-saving piece of pilates kit that provide an invigorating full-body workout. "The springboard bolts to the wall, so it doesn't take up floor space," says Endelman. "Clubs can mount several along a wall. You can also move a reformer next to the springboard to simulate a reformer with tower."

5 pilates arc

Also known as a 'step barrel', arcs are versatile, lightweight and economical. Designed for personal training or group exercise programmes, the pilates arc is effectively three durable, lightweight exercise tools in one.

stott pilates

STOTT PILATES' solution for small spaces is the Group SPX Reformer, a lightweight and cost-effective reformer that's been specially engineered for shared spaces in multi-purpose studios, to accommodate both group and private training. Weighing only 100lbs (approx 45kg), it's stackable up to five units high on a portable trolley and can be easily moved and stored when not in use.

With all the same features as the Pro and Rehab models, the Group SPX Reformer can also be upgraded to include a V2 Max Plus style Vertical Frame and a mat converter to allow more exercise options, including many from the STOTT PILATES Cadillac repertoire, plus specific athletic and sports conditioning programmes.



STOTT PILATES' Group SPX Reformer: Lightweight, stackable, cost-effective and versatile ▶

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Peak Pilates' PPS Deluxe reformer can be folded to a depth of 28" when not in use

peak pilates

Body Control Pilates is the UK distributor for Peak Pilates, which recognised the need for equipment that could easily be moved or stored. It therefore developed the PPS and MVE ranges – top-quality reformers and chairs designed with storage space in mind.

The PPS Reformer is a foldable, multi-use piece of equipment, but is nonetheless designed with quality and ease of use in mind, both for teachers and clients. It has a

carriage height of more than 15" and can be supplied with a tower (PPS Deluxe) and a comprehensive range of accessories. When not in use, it folds to a depth of just 28" and can easily and quickly be folded up and moved around by one person – set-up or breakdown for a reformer group class with eight PPS machines should take one person just five minutes. MVE Reformers, meanwhile, are full-size yet stackable, without removing any parts.

pilates-mad

Pilates-Mad offers a range of Pilates-Effect's equipment, including the space-saving Pro Reformer and 1/2 Cadillac.

Adding a 1/2 Cadillac tower takes up no more studio space than a standard reformer, but enables the teacher to offer most of the cadillac or trapeze table repertoire, as well as the fullest of reformer exercises.

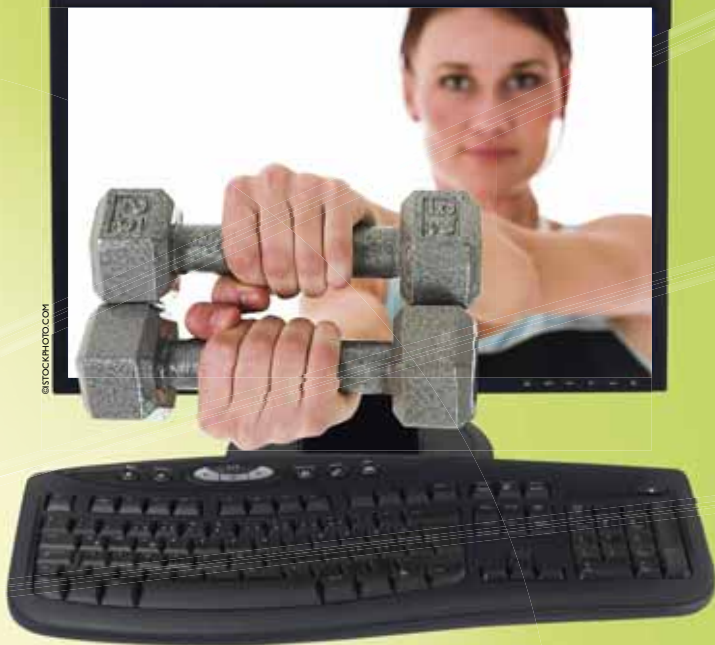
The 1/2 Cadillac set comes complete with a full mattress conversion, so the reformer can be turned into a flat bed. This allows matwork-type exercises to be undertaken on the reformer rather than on the floor, again reducing space requirements.

balanced body

Balanced Body has an online Space Planner to help fitness centres create a customised pilates studio or group exercise room. It allows them to design a studio based on either a pre-built room, or a room yet to be built, and can include irregular-shaped spaces and as much detail as necessary – doors, windows, interior poles and so on. Simply drag equipment, accessories and other furnishings into the space; dotted lines around the equipment help plan the clearance space required. The plan can be saved, emailed to others, or even sent to Balanced Body for assistance.

Balanced Body also has a full range of versatile, space-saving equipment and storage solutions. Equipment includes portable and easy to store reformers, lightweight chairs and foam arcs. Storage solutions include hanging chrome grids and padded benches with storage areas beneath the seat.

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VIRTUAL CLUBS

EXPERIENCED HEALTH CLUB OPERATORS ARE MOVING INTO
THE RAPIDLY EXPANDING WORLD OF WEB AND TV FITNESS
CLUBS – BUT IS THE EVOLVING MARKET A FRIEND OR FOE TO
BRICK AND MORTAR CLUBS? CAROLINE WILKINSON INVESTIGATES

Reaching members through cyberspace isn't a new concept – most clubs have their own websites. But few use the opportunities the internet provides to their full potential. With more than 87 per cent of the population yet to be tempted into a health club, can the industry afford not to embrace the new technologies that could help increase market penetration?

Online-only health clubs are growing in popularity, with more coming

launches planned. From The Times Health Club – created by the national newspaper – to the soon-to-launch fitness TV station on Sky, entrepreneurs are looking at the internet and working out ways to engage consumers.

Rasmus Ingerslev, former CEO of leading Danish health club chain fitnessdk, can't understand why only a small minority of clubs are thinking about the internet: "There's a growing need to help people get fit and stay healthy and, as an industry, we're only

attracting around 13 per cent of the population. This challenge calls for a broader approach if we're to engage a bigger share of the population, and internet offerings are part of this. It's a new way of offering fitness – one I refer to as the next generation of health club."

virtual solutions

Ingerslev says his online platform, Wexer.com (World of Exercise), is "a combination of the best from the web and the best of clubs". Although the site lacks one-to-one focus – a limitation of online and TV-based offerings – it's wrapped around a social network, similar to Facebook, which allows members to join groups, befriend members, post photos and make their fitness goals public, using 'positive peer ▶

► pressure' as a motivational tool. Members can also log activities and track their progress while being in contact with instructors via the site.

The website, which launched in May, has been created to deal with the barriers associated with attracting members to brick and mortar clubs. "The top three reasons why people who want to get fit don't join a health club are time, cost of membership and intimidation of the health club environment. Our services are free, as time-efficient as they can be, and nobody is looking at you while you work out," explains Ingerslev.

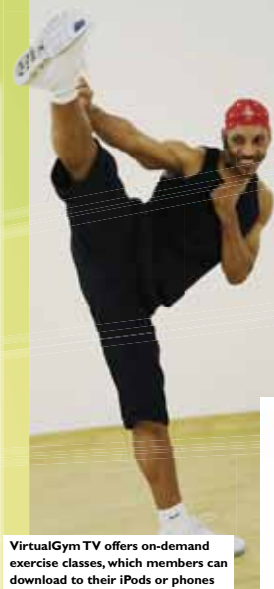
His confidence isn't surprising considering the business is a collaborative effort, with a board of directors featuring some of the most reputable names in the industry: Frank Napolitano, CEO of US-based GlobalFit, GoodLife Fitness' founder David Patchell-Evans, CEO of MidTown Athletic Clubs Steven Schwartz and director of Gold's Gym Paul Kuebler.

tracking activity

feelfit.com, a site focused on tracking daily physical activity, uses a points-based system to motivate members. "If it involves physical activity for more than five minutes, we can apply a points value to it," explains Jason Worthly, feelfit's sales director, who made his move into the online arena after almost a decade working in health clubs.

feelfit.com memberships range from £6.99 a month to £44.99 a year, and enable members to log all their physical activity in one place – whether it's a gym session or playing with the kids, running or cleaning – to accrue points towards weekly personalised target. The website also has a food diary so members can record and plan their daily food intake.

The system behind feelfit.com, which took 20 months and £1.5m to develop, also identifies patterns in a user's physical activity and sends emails suggesting ways to enhance their exercise programme,



VirtualGym TV offers on-demand exercise classes, which members can download to their iPods or phones



thereby recreating interaction with a personal trainer. Members can also email one of the team's 25 fitness professionals for advice and feedback. However, unlike most online platforms, it doesn't offer exercise classes; instead it provides video demonstrations of suggested exercises and how to use equipment safely.

Most online or TV-based platforms do offer 30-minute to one-hour scheduled or on-demand exercise classes. And in the case of VirtualGym TV, which launched in January 2008, members are able to download their personalised workout sessions to their iPods or phones for use while at the gym.

fitness on tv

Fitness TV – a new 24/7 exercise channel due to launch on 1 September for Sky subscribers – will be offering scheduled pre-recorded exercise classes for everyone, from kids to weight lifters, the elderly to the less mobile. Airing between 6.00am and 9.00pm, classes

will be conducted by a team of 18 instructors and interspersed with less mainstream televised sports events such as triathlon and judo competitions. After 9.00pm, the channel will feature motivational programming and possibly Open University-style shows for those working towards their Level 2 and Level 3 fitness qualifications.

Keeping members involved in the offering is key to creating a community feel and is easy via the web, which is why Fitness TV encourages online feedback on their classes and, most importantly, on the instructors' performance – their dynamism is essential for retaining viewers. Classes, which are repeated weekly and which are available on-demand online, are recorded every six weeks in locations such as nightclubs and yoga studios; this is also designed to help with viewer engagement.

market potential

Online offerings usually rely on advertising or memberships, or both, to generate revenue. As Wexer.com is free to use, it offers a service upgrade for US\$3.95 a month to enable users to exercise without the interference of adverts. Most other fitness websites offer memberships which are priced,

**"I DON'T HAVE TO INVEST IN EQUIPMENT OR
FIND MORE STAFF IF I WANT TO ADD 10,000
MEMBERS. I JUST ADD SERVER CAPACITY"**



Fitness TV, a new 24/7 exercise channel, is set to launch on Sky in September, with a supporting website



similarly to a health club's, depending on the length of membership required. Wexer.com also earns commission from the sales of at-home exercise products via its online marketplace area, and will soon also offer add-on services to members, such as one-to-one nutritional counselling and personal training.

In the six weeks since it launched, Wexer.com accumulated 2,500 members from more than 40 countries, and Ingerslev is confident this will increase quickly. "A clear benefit of our online health club is the scalability, which is unlike brick and mortar health clubs – and the risk is much lower," he explains. "I don't have to sign up for a long-term lease, invest in equipment or find more staff if I want to add 10,000 members. I just add server capacity."

However, as online clubs are a volume-driven business, Wexer.com needs a substantial number of members with a behaviour that generates a micro-turnover per member to make a profit, and to reach its target of breaking even within two years. The VirtualGym TV business, on the other hand, has already broken even seven months after launching, with audience figures around 65,000 and a target of circa 300,000 by the end of the year.

Luan Underwood, managing director of Media Fitness, the firm behind Fitness TV, also has ambitious plans to surpass 250,000 viewers a week in the first six months, building up to 600,000 by the end of year one. These figures were benchmarked against pilates-based website and TV channel Body in Balance, as well as UK Food, which attracts 1.2 million viewers a week.

complementary providers

These services may seem to represent competition for health clubs, but most online operators stand firm in saying that fitness websites and TV channels are supplementary to gyms. Wexer.com and feelit.com, for instance, offer white-label versions of their sites to clubs, to help with retention levels by supporting members outside the gym.

Underwood agrees: "Fitness TV will never be a substitute for a health club because it lacks the one-to-one focus you get from a club environment."

"The irony of the channel is that we don't want people to be stuck in front of the TV. We want them to get active within the community, in sports clubs, for example; I firmly believe there's an activity for everyone. Fitness TV should be used when you can't find a babysitter,

or work has screwed up your times to get to the gym – it's a support mechanism that allows you to keep being active."

The Fitness TV channel is supported by an online platform that offers users listings of local sports clubs and gyms, and will also link up with advertising health clubs to offer free day passes to encourage viewers, and their families, to trial their offerings.

Underwood strongly believes it's about partnerships: "Health clubs need to encourage more people to go to the gym, as well as retain their members, and we [virtual fitness clubs] need to encourage that first step. For instance, if exercisers are overweight or nervous about training in public, we try to build their confidence in the privacy of their home until they're ready to take that next step and perhaps join a gym."

Worthy also sees value in offering an online membership as a 'save solution': "If you're going to lose a member at £40 a month, would you not rather keep them at £6 a month, and have some form of interaction with them – as well as generating at least some revenue – than have them go to a cheaper competitor?"



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prevention for life

The Pritikin Longevity Center in Florida has achieved commercial success and scientific repute in its three-decade lifespan. Rhianon Howells talks to president Paul Lehr, the son of the organisation's co-founder, about taking the brand to a new audience, both at home and abroad

Think of an iconic American brand – Coca Cola, McDonalds, Marlboro – and the chances are it won't be associated with health. So it's surprising to learn that, while it's less well-known globally, Pritikin is a household name in the US. Ask anyone Stateside and they'll probably be able to tell you something about the diet-and-exercise programme that claims to be able to prevent and reverse some of Western society's most pervasive health problems, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

The programme was originally developed by Nathan Pritikin, an engineer who became interested in nutrition after being diagnosed with advanced coronary heart disease at 41. At that time, in 1956, the standard advice given to heart disease patients was to not over-exert themselves, to carry on as normal and wait to die.

Unwilling to accept there was nothing more to be done, Pritikin took it upon himself to study world cultures which had a low incidence of heart disease. He used what he discovered to develop a special diet and went on to live for another 28 years, eventually dying from unrelated causes connected to leukaemia.

In 1975, Pritikin set up a centre at his home in Santa Barbara, California, to share his findings with others. But it wasn't until he met Dr David Lehr, a renowned cardiologist, that anyone took him seriously. Convinced Pritikin had caught on to something big, Lehr contacted the producers of the US current affairs TV show *60 Minutes* and persuaded them to investigate.

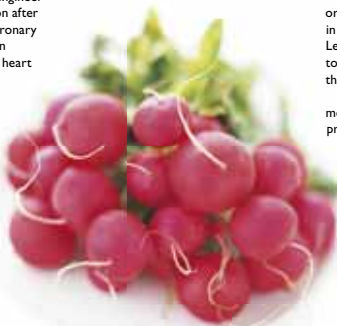
Pritikin and Lehr appeared on the show twice – in 1977 and 1978 – alongside three men with advanced heart disease, who all saw huge improvements in their health by following Pritikin's

diet and lifestyle recommendations. The publicity gave the programme the credibility it needed and, in 1978, Lehr and Pritikin opened the Pritikin Longevity Center in Miami, Florida, where patients could get started on the regime under medical supervision.

Over 30 years later, the Pritikin Longevity Center & Spa is still going strong. Since the Pritikin family sold its stake following Nathan's death, the company has been co-owned by the Lehr family and a silent investor. When David Lehr died in 1996, his son Paul, a lawyer, took over stewardship of the company.

In 1999, the centre moved from its original home to its current 85-room site in the City of Aventura. To meet demand, Lehr is now planning to move the centre to a larger, even more luxurious site in the Miami area before 2010.

As well as continuing to develop the mothership, Lehr is working to take the programme to a new audience through a raft of initiatives and deals. A significant source of revenue for Pritikin is its publishing arm, and its latest book – *The Pritikin Edge: 10 Essential Ingredients for a Long and Delicious Life*, co-authored by Lehr and Dr Robert Vogel, a cardiologist and weight consultant for the National Football League and National Institutes of Health – is currently being promoted.





Guests are assessed by trained professionals, including doctors and dieticians

Also launched is a web-based scheme – MyPritikin – which enables members worldwide to get daily coaching from the doctors, nutritionists and other experts at the Florida centre. The company also has a supplements line and a Pritikin packaged food brand, which was bought by Quaker Oats in the 1980s before being sold to another company and recently bought back by Pritikin.

Elsewhere, Lehr has confirmed a licensing deal with the major Indian health and beauty operator VLCC, which already has about 180 health centres in India, to roll out 12–15 Pritikin day centres in India within three years. Further deals with operators in the UAE, Singapore and Costa Rica, among others, are under discussion.

Meanwhile, the US government has passed legislation which, from 2010, will allow participation in the Pritikin Program for heart disease patients to be covered by Medicare – its public health insurance scheme – thereby greatly increasing the potential for a domestic rollout.

Here, Lehr explains what makes the Pritikin approach unique and shares his vision for the brand in the 21st century.

How would you sum up the Pritikin philosophy?

It's essentially one of prevention and reversal. We believe that, if you learn and practice a healthy lifestyle, you can

We believe that, if you lead a healthier lifestyle, you can either avoid or reverse most of the diseases that kill most people

either avoid or reverse the diseases that kill most people in the world, such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Our goal is to give to people the tools they need to change the way they live. We prefer prevention to reversal: we have a family programme where people bring their kids from the age of seven, and I love that. But some people wait until they have a health issue before they come to us – they want to reverse the problem or avoid surgery – and we're successful there too. In one study, 80 per cent of people who came after being told they needed heart bypass surgery didn't need it after five years of follow-up.

Who do you compete with?

That's hard to answer because Pritikin does so many different things. Pritikin has sold more than 10 million books, so in a sense we compete with diet and lifestyle books. In terms of our one- or two-day executive physicals programme, we compete with facilities that offer those.

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Preventative courses are offered to families with kids aged seven and over

► But in terms of our one- and two-week residential lifestyle change programme, I don't really think there's another facility that competes with us directly, because our programme is more medical and results-orientated. The dramatic health improvements and weight loss results achieved by our guests are not marketing claims: they've been published in more than 110 studies in the top peer-reviewed scientific journals, like *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Archives of Internal Medicine*. It's these results that set us apart from others, and are in part why we have such devotion from our guests.

How important is the scientific research to Pritikin's credibility?

Vitaly important. Our money doesn't go into marketing. If you look in all of the magazines where you see the top spas advertising, you won't see us. All our money goes into science, because we're trying to change the way America and the world looks at nutrition and exercise so they, rather than drugs and surgery, become the first line of defence in healthcare.

Most of the studies are done at UCLA, some at Washington University in St Louis and some are going to be done at the University of Miami. They're funded by outside resources or our non-profit Pritikin Research Foundation. And when there's an important study we wish to do that exceeds the funding raised, then the Pritikin Longevity Center will fund it. It's that important.



People don't realise there can be more sodium in bread than in crisps



Pritikin's exercise programme: Designed to be simple to follow wherever people are

So how does the programme work?

Put simply, people go through the programme and they get results. In one recent study, for example, 74 per cent of all diabetics, and 44 per cent of those on insulin, came off and stayed off their medications. In another study, 83 per cent of people on hypertension medication came off those medications. These are medications that doctors have told them they'll be on for the rest of their lives.

What happens is this. You go to the doctor and get diagnosed with high blood pressure. The doctor tells you to cut salt out of your diet and come back in 60 days. Sixty days later, you go back and you're still hypertensive, so the doctor says 'salt clearly isn't the problem' and prescribes medication instead, telling you you'll be on it for the rest of your life.

So what's the magic pill we offer at Pritikin that allows these people to get off their medication? It's not magic: it's a healthy diet and lifestyle and the education to sustain it. Doctors don't learn about nutrition in medical school so they don't know to tell people, for example, that stopping using salt-shakers will only cut 11 per cent of the sodium from their diet. People don't realise the rest of it's in the processed food they're eating – that there's more sodium in cornflakes and bread than in crisps and pretzels. We teach them about this, so they know how to avoid it in everyday life.

We have our daily cooking school for those who like to cook, we take people to the supermarket and teach them to read labels, we show them how to read menus at their favourite restaurant. With the kids, we take them to the food court at the shopping mall. We teach them to make better choices – and the fact is that

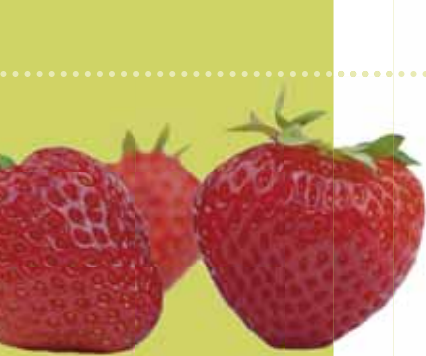
when you cut out salt, you can lower your blood pressure, and when you eat a better diet and do moderate exercise, you can control diabetes and heart disease. It's that simple.

How does your programme address obesity?

We've been enormously successful in controlling and reversing obesity because we've never taken the easy way out with 'magic pill' or 'quick fix' cures that are really just marketing hype with no proven science. Our doctors, dieticians, exercise experts and psychologists address all facets of healthy lifestyle change – food choices, fitness, stress management, behavioural education, cooking classes, restaurant eating, supermarket savvy, individual weight-loss counselling, goal-setting and so on.

So our guests not only lose weight – studies by UCLA have shown the average to be 11 pounds in three weeks – but also change their lives. They discover how do-able and delicious healthy living can be, which is the key motivator for long-term success: in two long-term studies, more than 85 per cent of Pritikin graduates claimed a 50 per cent or greater adherence to the Pritikin Program after five years, and the majority continued to lose weight after leaving the Center. As Tim Gannon, the founder of Outback Steakhouse Restaurants, says: "The food at Pritikin tastes great and you can follow the programme in the real world – and that's saying something for a steakhouse guy like me."

Often, what's most compelling are the personal stories. People like Jim Manns, who lost 145 pounds after coming to Pritikin and was able to free himself of his 28-year dependence on insulin shots.



The Pritikin programme gives people the information they need to make healthy food choices, even after they leave the centre

And people like Andrea Coogle, mother of three young children, who lost 75 pounds and has kept the weight off for years – she calls Pritikin “a lifetime journey of health and wellbeing” and adds: “Pritikin’s not about ‘Can I get this weight off in 30 days before I go on vacation?’ It’s about feeling a lot better every day – and for all the days to come. Pritikin involves the whole person, and that’s what I love about it.”

What part does exercise play in the programme?

Regular exercise is a vital component of Pritikin. Our exercise programme is based on state-of-the-art science for losing weight, getting fit and achieving optimal health. Every facet is designed to be easy to follow wherever guests find themselves, from home to airports to hotels. The programme includes cardio, strength training and stretching, and we accommodate all levels of fitness: people who haven’t exercised in years right up to athletes wishing to ‘super-train’.

Our doctors and exercise physiologists also use the results of comprehensive cardiometabolic stress testing and biomechanical and musculoskeletal evaluations, all conducted at Pritikin, to create a highly personalised exercise plan for each guest, which means they shed fat and build muscle quicker and more effectively than they ever thought possible. And each day, they discover the fun, the thrill, of being fit.

You’ve launched a less rigid version of Pritikin. Why?

The new version, the Pritikin First Step Program, has been in development and beta testing for years. It’s similar to the programmes we’ve developed for use

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with kids, but we’ve never had an official programme like this for adults before.

It has slightly looser guidelines for sodium and animal protein, and includes more foods that are acceptable in limited quantities. This may make it easier for some to follow. It’s suitable for those in reasonable health who want to stay that way, and allows us to cast the net wider for a younger, healthier clientele. But if you come to us with severe diabetes or a heart disease, we’ll still strongly recommend the traditional Pritikin Program.

How’s the deal in India going?

We’ve granted VLCC a master licence. We’re providing the know-how, programme and recipes, and VLCC will be running the centres. They’re sending key people to us for training, and we’re helping with hiring. The centres will offer non-residential programmes similar to something we offer here, called the PM Program, where people sign up for a 12- or 16-week course and come in two or three times a week for an exercise session, a lecture and a meal. We’re doing field research to see what’ll work in India in terms of schedules.



Will you expand into any other countries?

We’re speaking with potential partners in Singapore and the UAE, but they’re not confirmed. We’re particular about who we do business with to ensure our guests get consistent results.

What’s next on the agenda?

Our relocation in Florida to accommodate expansion and the Medicare rollout. From January 2010, Medicare will cover certain people to undergo the programme in 72 one-hour sessions. This will be non-residential, and Medicare will pay for doctors, exercise classes and nutrition lectures.

Medicare realises it’s worth investing a few thousand dollars for someone to do our programme if it means they can avoid surgery or get off their medication. And where Medicare goes, private insurance companies follow.

We’ll also be setting up non-residential centres in local communities offering 12- or 16-week programmes, enabling us to expand across the US.



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MAKING YOUR GYM STRONG

Sarah Owen looks at the importance of strength training, and asks if operators are doing enough to encourage their members to incorporate it into their workouts

As an industry, we're well aware of the health benefits of resistance training – but are our clients?

Although members are given a strength training programme as part of their induction, the common sight of busy CV area versus quiet strength area demonstrates the reality of clients' exercise habits.

Stefan Gibberd, manager at the Eric Liddell Sports Centre in London, states: "Despite giving complete training programmes to our members, people naturally gravitate towards CV workouts and we've had to limit use of each piece of cardio equipment to just 15 minutes at peak times."

Personal trainer Toby Giles agrees: "My clients are often wary of using weights or resistance machines. There seems to be a preconception about strength training, both in terms of the effect it might have on their body and how tricky it will be to do. Once they overcome that hesitation and see the results, however, strength work quickly becomes part of their normal routine."

Encouraging clients to make strength training a regular part of their workout can reap massive retention benefits for gym managers and decrease waiting times for CV stations at peak periods by encouraging an even flow of people across the gym floor and, perhaps even more importantly, producing the physical benefits members need to stay motivated.

"The perception of strength training is gradually shifting, with instructors and PTs positioning it for wellness and life tasks rather than just a bodybuilding goal," says Sarah Morelli, education and development manager for Star Trac, who believes that cable-based training has helped alter the public's perception of strength training and proved invaluable in increasing member usage of the strength training area. "By educating members in topics such as stability, mobility and exercise for function, users will not only become more comfortable with strength workouts, but also drive demand for equipment to meet their needs."

public perception

Dave Clark, head of strength and conditioning at the Scottish Institute of Sport, agrees: "A combination of strength training and cardiovascular work is needed to maintain good health, body shape and weight. By raising the body's basal metabolic rate, strength training makes the heart work harder, functional capacity is improved, and clients will look and feel better."

However, Clark believes many people fall into the trap of doing too many reps at low weights and thus become frustrated at their lack of progress. "The biggest mistake people make is working with inappropriate loads, most commonly too light," he says. "Changes to muscle function are a product of time under tension and, to make change, people should do fewer reps but at a higher load. In this way, they prevent bulking out. Clients need to know they must stick with this programme. Their weight might not change, but their measurements should – the waist for men and the hips for women. The benefits will last for longer and will greatly improve their general health."

If the benefits are so obvious, why does cardio appear to be more popular than strength training? And what is the industry doing to help educate and change public perception?

Clark believes the way people exercise is a historical thing. He explains: "As a relatively young industry, we're still largely guided by the trend set in the 70s, which was centred around research by the Cooper Institute on the benefits of cardiovascular exercise. This dictated the popularity of cardio-based exercise in the field of sports science. Although most instructors are aware of the physical benefits of strength training, it's still often viewed as an add-on to cardio work."

"It sounds obvious, but a confident, knowledgeable fitness team will go along way towards encouraging members to use the equipment," adds Jon Johnston, MD of Matrix Fitness Systems.

Think again Cable-based kit, such as Star Trac's HumanSport (left), is changing people's perceptions of strength training





Focal point Pulse's new free weights are designed to encourage integration with the rest of the gym

"Instructors need to help users visualise how the exercise will help them in all areas of their sporting and everyday lives.

"Members have long been aware that CV equipment burns calories – the equipment even calculates it for them – but there's a general lack of awareness about the important contribution resistance training plays burning calories too."

manufacturers' role

Making strength training more inviting, meanwhile, is something manufacturers take very seriously, whether by applying the latest scientific findings to their designs, providing specialist training courses or studying customer feedback.

Tim Colston, MD of Keiser UK, says: "We supply gym managers and instructors with the knowledge they need to educate members about how strength training can help them meet their personal goals. Our one-day, REPs-accredited courses are constantly evolving to meet operator and industry needs and include everything from Level 1–3 Resistance Training Pathway Courses for basic resistance and advanced resistance training, to Advanced Functional Trainer Modules focusing on sports-specific, rehabilitation and strength and power training."

And just as new innovations in design and technology have helped change the face of cardiovascular workouts – who could imagine a gym today without a cross-trainer or a stepper? –

Easy does it Precor aims for proper function coupled with ease of use in all its strength kit



► so strength training is evolving into a sleek, modern way of exercising with the introduction of new types of equipment.

Hoist's innovative Roc-It line moves with the user to simulate a free weights workout and, according to Graham Bertrand – MD of the PTE Group, which distributes the equipment in the UK – has proven popular with experienced members and novices alike, bridging the gap between free weights and traditional resistance machines.

Fitness instructor Jo Devereux agrees: "Induction-wise it's excellent, as it's very easy to use. It's very smooth with little room for technical error, so you don't see people using momentum to lift the weights. It also pleasantly surprises people who've exercised before. We've had some great results, with members losing weight, toning up and reducing body fat."

"Normally, members get bored with resistance equipment as they progress with their programme, but with Roc-It, people are getting a lot more out of their programmes. I believe this is where the future lies. It makes our job a whole lot easier."

Meanwhile, Precor's design team carefully studied people's exercise habits before developing its new resistance range. These findings, divided into beginners and advanced, show that light users in particular can feel awkward and embarrassed about using strength equipment – the fear of not using it properly, getting in a muddle with weights and seat adjustments, feeling self-conscious and so on.

Advanced users tended to have a clearer appreciation of the importance of exercise and strength work to their physical and mental wellbeing, but also said they wanted equipment that was simple, effective, easy to use, safe and comfortable. However, they were more likely to use strength training for a particular reason, such as toning a specific body part, or as part of training for other activities like karate or running.

Doug Durnford, senior product manager for Precor, says: "Our number one objective for strength equipment is proper function coupled with ease of use" – this ensures that novices can easily understand how to use them, but also that more advanced users get an effective workout.

He continues: "We're mindful of the fact that a club owner must accommodate first-time users, novice users, periodic or casual users, and various levels of experienced users. A well-researched and designed strength machine should allow any type of user to work out effectively. In addition, the weight stacks assigned to each machine should allow users to progress as their strength and fitness levels improve."



Hoist's Roc-It Easy to use and non-intimidating

breaking barriers

Using strength training in a class format is another way to break down perceived barriers and bring weight training to the masses. BODY PUMP, for example, took the industry by storm when it was launched in the 90s and is still seen as one of the most innovative strength training concepts to date. Using traditional moves such as squats, presses, lifts and curls – but under the expert eye of a specially trained instructor and set to up-tempo music – the Les Mills programme challenges stereotypical views of free weight strength training and is now a firm fixture on many gym timetables.

Gym layout can also help, and suppliers such as Pulse are working with operators to devise ideas that position strength and CV workouts together to encourage flow between the two areas. Darren Clowes, head of design for Pulse, explains: "Trying to entice gym users to use free weights has always been an issue for operators. Traditionally, free weight areas are tucked away or in a separate environment from the machines."

"In designing our new range of free weights, we deliberately wanted to create a product that would entice members to use them and also encourage operators to bring them to the fore due to their stylish looks and synergies with the cardio and strength ranges. We now see gym layouts with free weights featured, rather than hidden away, and more users working with weights, especially female members."

get stronger

So if you want to make your gym stronger, maybe it's time to rethink your focus on resistance training to see if it can provide a boost to the health of both your members and your business.

Clark concludes: "It's our job as an industry to make sure what we know from science is understandable at all levels, and to make sure what we preach is the same across the board. We need to help our clients understand the first principles of strength training and help debunk the myths surrounding it."

"In short, well-trained instructors who understand the physical benefits of weight training as a discipline in its own right, well-placed equipment, and a desire to help members reach their full potential will not only help our clients but could also help a gym's retention levels."



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Pump it up Les Mills' BODY PUMP programme challenges stereotypical views of free weight strength training



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Precor's industry-leading cardiovascular products, including the award-winning Adaptive Motion Trainer (AMT), are now complemented by the new, intuitively designed Experience Strength C and S-Line ranges.

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Make way The
CYCLEwell adaptor
allows pregnant
women to use the
Matrix Tomahawk bike

What are the options when it comes to group cycling products? Kate Cracknell takes a look at an ever-growing market

Confused about which group cycling product to buy? That's hardly surprising: the category has exploded in recent years, with a raft of increasingly differentiated new products launched to the market offering a wide array of features and functionalities. Where once a few key players dominated, now pretty much every supplier has a presence. Here we round up, by theme, some of the products in the category.

traditional group cycling

- Keiser's M3 bike is well-known for its aesthetics and quiet operation, as well as its maintenance-free design. But an additional bonus is its computer console, which offers information including power output (displayed in watts and kcals), heart rate information (the M3 is Polar-compatible) and RPM. These parameters can be set, making the bike suitable for use on the gym floor as well as in a studio environment, offering operators a dual purpose bike.
- Pulse's durable bike is designed to cope with the daily rigour of multiple, intense classes and is built with tough yet stylish materials. Also included in the package are accredited training for instructors and marketing tools for operators to promote their classes.
- Star Trac is the exclusive equipment provider for the Spinning programme developed by Mad Dogg Athletics; the two companies jointly market and distribute Spinning bikes, programming and education worldwide. Star Trac currently has five Spinner bikes on the market. Top of the range is the Spinner NXT, with its heavy-duty all-aluminium frame. Other models include the Spinner Elite and value model, the Spinner Velo, which is nonetheless designed with durability in mind.



Keep on moving
RealRyder's 'unstable bike' pivots on its axes

'real feel'

- Star Trac's other two models are the Spinner Pro, designed to have the feel of a road bike, and the Spinner V, which has been developed with specific bicycle geometry parameters to ensure an authentic cycling experience, with micro-adjustments to give riders a personalised fit.
- The Wattbike, which offers similar parameters and adjustments, is also the first bike to be endorsed by British Cycling. It can be used for a range of purposes, from rehab to elite training to group cycling. It offers accurate performance data that can be compared across bikes and across sites, with data sampled 100 times every second and 25 different measures monitored in real time. Participants of group cycling classes can, therefore, track their progress.

The Wattbike's performance computer also provides technique feedback – an analysis of the performance of each leg throughout the revolution of the pedal, which means users can be taught to cycle more efficiently.

- RealRyder's ABF8 'unstationary bike' was designed to replicate and support the real biking experience when cold weather discouraged road cycling. It encourages and rewards good form, proper pedal stroke and position on the bike – the skills that time cycling out on the road can develop – and allows users to tilt, turn and bank. Pivoting on multiple axes, it enhances studio training by engaging the upper body and the core, as well as giving training in balance, working the legs and providing a cardio workout.
- The Schwinn AC (Authentic Cycling) Series is the latest group exercise bike from Nautilus. Designed to closely replicate the experience of cycling a



Thumbs up The Wattbike is the first bike to be endorsed by British Cycling, with technique feedback and accurate data

real bike, the AC Series comprises three models: Classic and Sport, both of which have a zinc-coated steel frame; and Performance, with its aluminium frame. All feature a chain rather than a belt and come with a virtual braking system. This uses electro-magnetic force, rather than any contact on the wheel, to provide a perfect linear application of resistance. An optional console offers feedback such as RPM, heart rate and wattage output, designed to help instructors better structure their group cycling classes. Two models of console are available: Sport and Performance.

- Precor's Teambike 800 has been designed to mimic outdoor cycling, with even resistance throughout the entire

turn of the wheel. This is said to provide a more challenging workout, as well as helping to minimise the risk of knee injuries. The bike also features a multi-grip handlebar that can be adjusted without dismounting, dual option Shimano pedals and an ergonomic, padded, unisex saddle.

- Distributed in the UK by Paligap, with installations and instructor training delivered by NSCR, the CycleOps Indoor Cycle is new to the UK – the first installation was at RAF Naphill. Said to mimic the custom fit and feel of your own bike out on the road, but in an indoor setting, the CycleOps Pro 300 PT provides real-time feedback on training intensity – speed, cadence, watts and torque. It can also display current heart rate when used in conjunction with a

► heart rate monitor, and specific courses are available based on heart rate zone training. The handlebar-mounted console and software also allows users to download their rides to a computer and track progress over time.

- Technogym's Studio Bike is an indoor evolution of the classic Italian professional road bikes, with an aluminium frame, easy adjustments and non-slip handles. The reduced crank distance and ergonomics of the bike enable riders ranging from 140–210cm in height to achieve the correct positioning, posture and performance in their workout, while the multi-grip handlebar offers three traditional training positions plus a new 'chronotriathlon' position. The bike is available to order now, for delivery in November.

interactivity

- Trixter's X-Bike has 'X-Bar' handlebars with a pumping action that offers seven levels of resistance; it's claimed that the bike burns 55 per cent more calories than standard indoor cycling.

VR X-Biking classes involve real video footage and computer-generated scenes – everything from races along mountain tracks to a cycle courier navigating busy city streets – which are projected onto a big screen at the front of the studio. With participants motivated by the on-screen action, the instructor is able to spend more time moving among the class, correcting, encouraging and ensuring that each rider is achieving optimum physiological results.

Meanwhile, Trixter's X-dream has a personal screen; users can choose which course to cycle, with an on-screen avatar mirroring the effort they put in on the



Design-led Star Trac's self-service eSpinner (above left) and Keiser's 'maintenance-free' M3 (above right)

bike. The bikes can also be set up to race against each other, providing a very motivating group cycling session: you see your own avatar and those of your competitors racing against each other on your personal screen. A selection of Virgin Active gyms, for example, have Trixter Challenge classes for six people.

- Espresso's interactive bikes, distributed by Physique and ZigZag in the UK, offer a similar option, with members able to race against each other in more than 30 different on-screen tours; up to 16 bikes can be linked on each router. The bikes also offer a 'power assist' option, much like a handicap in golf, meaning that all abilities can compete against each other in a fair competition.

- Star Trac's eSpinner is a Spin bike for the gym floor, with an embedded 15" touch-screen offering thousands of combinations of instructor-led rides. Users simply jump on in their own time and are guided through a workout by an instructor offering tips on technique and hydration, as well as providing motivation throughout. It's designed to cater for all markets: experienced Spinners can select a workout pitched exactly at their level, and without waiting for a scheduled class, while those who have never tried group

cycling before can use it to familiarise themselves with the bike outside what could otherwise, for the first-time, be an intimidating class environment.

- Instyle's webracing aerobike, available in spring 2010, will offer full studio racing in the virtual world. Participants will not only see their avatars on the screen, but will also feel the effects of real racing: when you ride behind

someone on-screen, for example, you will have 2 per cent less resistance, as per the drafting effect in the real world; when

you ride clear of the other riders, the resistance will go back on to reflect wind resistance. It's also possible to link up with other clubs anywhere in the world via an internet connection.

- The MyRide system can be used with any make of bike, delivering more than 100 workout variations through a console: users follow the instructions of an on-screen instructor through headphones. By offering instructor-led workouts at all times, clubs can ensure group cycling studios aren't simply dead space when classes aren't running.

special populations

- Cycling is recognised as an excellent form of cardio exercise for pre- and post-natal women, but there are limitations associated with the normal riding position. These include postural problems which can lead to perineal, back, shoulder and wrist pain – plus the fact that the developing 'bump' can impede the cycling action.

CYCLEwell education and the adaptive technology on the Matrix Tomahawk indoor bike have been designed to help address these barriers to participation. The CYCLEwell adaptor turns an ordinary bike into a much more accessible, comfortable bike to ride while still offering all the benefits associated with indoor cycling.

By altering the handlebar position to allow for a more upright and natural position, it allows cycling to continue further into the pregnancy and, equally importantly, allows cycling to begin early on return to exercise post-birth.



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Virtual racing Trixter's X-dream allows users to race each other via avatars on their personal screens

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Rhianon Howells talks to Nick Coutts, CEO of Holmes Place Iberia, about the company's spa membership business model

committed to spa

Guaranteed revenue. That's music to the ear of any business, and it lies at the heart of the monthly membership model of private health clubs. But what's now standard practice for the fitness industry – pay a monthly fee and, in return, use the facilities at any time – is new thinking for the spa industry, which has remained largely reliant on ad hoc business.

This is also the case for health club spas which, although benefiting from the opportunity to cross-promote spa services to fitness members, nonetheless tend to rely on people dropping in for the occasional treatment.

However, with spa increasingly being seen as a lifestyle choice rather than an occasional treat, a handful of operators are starting to explore the option of offering spa memberships to guests who are willing to make a serious commitment to their health and/or beauty regimes.

The advantages of a membership-based business model versus pay and play are clear: it delivers a predictable revenue stream, encourages usage and secondary spend, and makes it easier to track customers' needs and preferences and deliver value.

But there are issues to overcome: the willingness of consumers to make the commitment needed for a membership pricing structure to work, for example, and the need to balance the spa's commitment to members with the needs of ad hoc bookers.

You'll also need to decide how much to charge for membership, and what benefits to include, to ensure it offers sufficient added value to members while also being of maximum benefit to your bottom line.

Operators such as Holmes Place Iberia are proof this model can work for health clubs, as CEO Nick Coutts explains.



Q How many spas does Holmes Place Iberia have?

We launched our first spa in Cascais, near Lisbon, in 2006 and now have 17 Zensations spas in our clubs in Spain and Portugal. We'll have three more by the end of this year. With the exception of our flagship site in Cascais, which offers seven treatment rooms and a relaxation area, all our spas have four or five treatment rooms.

Q When and why did you launch spa memberships?

Before we launched the spa in Cascais, we had spas in our health clubs but the management was outsourced. We didn't really expect too much from them – we'd just get a fixed rate for the space, and we'd hope the spa operator could offer a reasonable service.

When we decided to have a go ourselves, we started with one spa and used that to learn from our mistakes. And we learned quickly. A spa has all the challenges of a club, but on a smaller scale, and it's the scale that was the main issue: we were over-optimistic about the margins we could achieve. It's hard in Spain and Portugal, as stringent employment laws make it expensive to replace under-performing staff; if your margins are quite small in the first place, this can kill your business pretty quickly.

We realised early on that the spa business was unforgiving – you can't afford to make too many mistakes.

It wasn't until a year after launching Zensations that we decided to introduce a direct debit membership scheme for the spas. In looking for ways to improve our spa model, we decided to leverage some

of the know-how from our personal training (PT) business, which is an area we've very strong in. We'd started selling PT in packages of 10 or 20 sessions, but later moved to a direct debit model, whereby clients commit to one, two or three sessions a week and we debit them once a month. It was challenging at first, but now 80–95 per cent of the PT we sell is by direct debit. We realised that we knew very little about spas, but applying this PT model to the spa business seemed a real opportunity.

Q How is your spa membership structured?

Our Zen Client spa membership is open to both club members and non-members. For €50 a month, they get a 15 per cent discount on treatments, additional offers on special occasions such as Mother's Day, and priority booking.

Q What are the benefits for the business?

Spa membership works not only because the revenue builds predictability and forecasting into the business, but also because it gets psychological and financial commitment from the guest: it stimulates them to come to the spa regularly, and gives therapists and managers the

Successful model: Three more Zensations spas are planned for 2009





Holmes Place Iberia
launched the Zensations
spa brand at its flagship
spa in Cascais, near
Lisbon, in 2006

opportunity to cross-sell and up-sell products and services. It also lets us track behaviour and spending patterns, which enables us to apply the principles of customer relationship management and market specifically to them.

Our most successful spas are those that are most effective at building their direct debit membership. Why? Because our revenue targets are €15,000–€40,000 a month, with a 20–25 per cent margin – depending on the size of the spa and time of year – and spas that do well at driving

direct debit start the month with over 50 per cent of these targets already achieved.

Q What's the secret of making it work?

A strategy is only as good as the people executing it; I'd rather take on a manager with a sales background, who has a passion for spas, than take on someone from the spa industry who needs to be taught about sales.

Motivating therapists to sell memberships can be challenging, as

sales doesn't come naturally to them and a direct debit contract is harder to sell than a one-off service. My number one recommendation is to integrate membership sales into your commission structure, so staff have to achieve a set percentage of their sales targets through memberships in order to start earning. If you make something as fundamental as this optional, you won't get anywhere.



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new club and spa for chester

The city of Chester will soon be home to a new £8m, 14 treatment room spa and gym, which is due to open on the outskirts of the city this November.

The Club and Spa at Hoole Hall will be built in the grounds of the former 18th century Hoole Hall manor house, which is now the Doubletree by Hilton Chester hotel and restaurant.

Currently under construction, facilities will include a spacious Technogym-equipped gym, including Visio software, a high impact group exercise studio and a yoga room.

Located within a 25,000sq m area in the hotel's walled garden, the spa will offer a couple's suite, Rasul chamber, teuco bath room, hammam, meditation room, pedicure and manicure room and relaxation lounge. A specially crafted range of natural treatments will be available in the 14 treatment rooms.



The £8m spa and gym is due to open in Chester in November

This is complemented by steamroom, thermal rooms, sauna, spa pool. There is also an indoor pool, a hydrotherapy pool and a Watsu part indoor part outdoor pool. Pevonia and Anne Semonin Paris will supply the products used in the spa.

The club and spa will be operated by Sanguine Hospitality Ltd, as is the hotel.

re-opening of bath priory spa

The Bath Priory's Garden Spa will be re-opening this September following a complete refurbishment.

The spa will offer two reception areas, four treatment rooms, an indoor swimming pool, sauna, elliptical steam pod and changing facilities.

There will also be a brand new gym, consisting of two rooms offering resistance and cardio equipment, as well as Technogym's Kinesis cable system.

The Garden Spa, as the name suggests, has been transformed to showcase the hotel's beautiful landscaped gardens, which can be viewed through the large windows by guests working out in the gym or relaxing in the pool.

The spa will offer a full range of beauty and massage treatments, using Decléor, Li'Tya and Jessica Nails products.

fitness first and bannatyne's launch non-invasive treatments

Health club operator Fitness First has extended its spa and beauty offering through a new partnership with cosmetic procedure specialist Hylagen.

The non-invasive treatments, offered via Hylagen concessions in 17 clubs, will include teeth whitening, dermal fillers and hyperhidrosis treatments (for excessive sweating). The services will be available to members and non-members.

The Bannatyne Group will also be introducing non-surgical aesthetic treatments thanks to its new partnership with cosmetic giant Collagenics. The services – which will include skincare procedures such as peels and injectable treatments – will initially be available in nine of the group's spas.



Fitness First's offer will include teeth whitening

bannatyne opens latest spa in edinburgh



Facilities at the new spa include a dual treatment room for couples

The Bannatyne Group officially opened its latest health and wellbeing spa in Edinburgh on 16 June.

Based at Bannatyne's Queen Street health club, facilities at the £60,000 spa include two treatment rooms and a dual treatment room for couples or friends to enjoy a treatment simultaneously, a spray tan room, pedicure and manicure thrones, and a relaxation room with heated tiled loungers.

Employing six therapists, the spa offers a range of treatments including complementary therapies and specialist massage, plus beauty treatments such as waxing, nail care and make-up.

The Edinburgh spa is the 30th Bannatyne Spa to be opened in the UK and is part of a £16m investment made by the group in the last eight months. This has included a £2.5m hotel and spa development in Hastings, and a new £500,000 spa and extension to the flagship health club in Darlington.

Duncan Bannatyne says: "We're operating in a competitive marketplace, but health and wellbeing remain top of the agenda for many people and our spas and health clubs continue to trade well. The recession will not be affecting our ongoing investment plans, as we aim for further growth and expansion."

HEALTH
CLUB SPA



amazing space

Julie Fisher takes a look at how Huntingdon Leisure Centre redeveloped its sports hall to provide a new spa offering and fun for all the family

Fun Zone Kitted out by House of Play, the new soft play facility has beaten its targets two times over

As a traditional dual-use site, Huntingdon Leisure Centre had the usual mix of dated amenities, including a sports hall, a gym, changing facilities, a bar and soft play equipment. However, to improve its financial base, it was imperative that the site was remodelled to offer a mix of family-orientated facilities not currently available to the local community.

meeting local needs

Huntingdon District Council, in consultation with project management company Alliance Leisure, took a long look at how it could expand and redevelop the current site to meet the needs of the local community and to encourage wider participation.

From the outset, communication with all parties was fundamental to the success of the redevelopment: the entire £1.5m redesign, funded by Huntingdon District Council, was heavily influenced by customer feedback. Members felt the existing gym was too small, that there was nothing on offer for younger children and that the changing facilities were poor. An independent feasibility study commissioned by Alliance Leisure established that the centre needed to redefine itself and improve its image if it was to attract a wider customer base.

One of the priorities was to create maximum space within the existing floorplan, to provide the local community with outstanding family



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club
overhaul

old facilities

- Five-court sports hall
- 150sq m fitness suite
- Changing facilities
- Bar
- Mobile soft play equipment
- 100sq m studio

new facilities

- 240sq m Impressions fitness suite
- 170sq m soft play area
- ZigZag interactive zone
- 75sq m general activities room
- Heat experience spa offering
 - floral steam
 - crystal steam
 - herb sauna
- Treatment rooms offering holistic therapies
- Relaxation zone and massage bed
- Café
- New reception area
- New changing rooms including a team changing area

facilities and, in turn, to increase revenue. Sarah Watts, MD of Alliance Leisure, explains: "A four-court sports hall will generate £60,000–£70,000 of revenue a year, due to the nature of the activities that can take place: 10 people playing five-a-side football, for example, or eight people playing badminton.

"We wanted to create a site with a wider mix of activities across fitness, play and spa, as this can accommodate a great deal more people and, dependent on the mix of facilities, generate more than four times the revenue each year."

open all hours

Working with design and build experts Createability, a plan was devised to redevelop two of the courts and create a mezzanine floor to maximise space.

Simon Bell, general manager of Huntingdon District Council Leisure Centres, says: "One of our main challenges was to convince our Cabinet that the changes would be worthwhile and that we could manage the

redevelopment without closure or financial inconvenience." A two-phase plan was implemented, starting on-site in April 2008 with provision to ensure that the facilities remained open at all times.

Careful planning and project management of the two phases was vital to ensuring no revenue was lost. Ian Cotgrave, Createability MD, observes: "Apart from a few technical hitches that were overcome on-site, the only issue that needed addressing on a longer-term basis was the loss of male changing rooms [while the redevelopment work was underway], which was solved with portable changing cabins. The centre remained open throughout and, despite the complexity of the equipment move, the only area that had to close for one day was the fitness studio."

While the public continued to use the existing fitness suite, a new 72-station, 240 sq m (2,583sq ft) Impressions fitness suite was built in the area created by the mezzanine floor. Existing Technogym fitness equipment was moved into this gym, along with new equipment from the Technogym Excite line, new strength kit, a BalanceMaster lower limb exerciser, five Concept2 rowers, two Trixter X-dream bikes and a Galileo vibration plate.

The first phase of the project, which included the fitness studio, a state-of-the-art ZigZag family interactive zone and a 170 sq m (1,830sq ft), 83-child-capacity 'Fun Zone' soft play facility was fully operational by November 2008.



Wellbeing The old gym has been converted into a relaxation zone



Tel: 01256 818915

www.createability.co.uk



Working out Existing Technogym equipment has been combined with new kit in the new 72-station gym

The i-zone interactive ZigZag area, for older kids, offers three giant computerised Sportwall panels and 12 Xer-Dance arcade-style dance platforms. A café was built adjacent to the Fun Zone so parents and carers can relax while the children work off some energy.

Meanwhile, when a privately-owned local play centre closed down during the planning stages, the council took the opportunity to reassess local requirements and redesigned the Fun Zone, resulting in a larger soft play area. With no local competition, this section – kitted out by House of Play – has been one of the main successes of the redevelopment to date, with usage exceeding target two-fold.

relax and enjoy

Relaxation and wellness formed part of the second phase, which saw Createability convert the old gym into a Pure Health and Wellbeing relaxation zone. This new area, equipped by HELO, incorporates a heat experience featuring crystal steam, floral steam, herb sauna and therapeutic water massage, as well as new changing facilities and treatment rooms.

The spa, which offers a range of holistic therapies and male grooming treatments, opened for business in April this year. "Huntingdon Leisure



Centre is the first to offer this type of spa in the area and the response has been exceptionally positive," says Bell.

He continues: "Not only have we seen increased visits, but we've also experienced a more even distribution of custom throughout the day. A major boost has been the injection of secondary spend in the café, as well as through treatments and the heat experience, which are offered at an additional cost. The spa reached target in the first week of opening.

"Huntingdon Leisure Centre had nowhere to go in terms of external expansion, so this was a more complex scheme than it might have been," Bell adds. "However, everyone involved has played a part in making this project a resounding and instant success. Public appreciation has been virtually unanimous and the increase in admissions reflects a job well done."

Watts believes this type of overhaul will continue at outdated sites: "It's imperative that local authorities offer the right mix of facilities to encourage more people through the door and make their centres financially viable. Assets can be made to work harder and facilities redesigned to meet local requirements."



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HEALTH
CLUB SPA



dalesauna's sales director talks to kath hudson about changes in the spa industry, and calls for health club operators to make spa a more affordable experience

when was dalesauna formed?

Around 30 years ago by Stephen Hipps, who's still the MD, and his friend John Gascoigne. John was married to a Finnish lady who, with a culture of saunas in Finland, wanted to have one at home. They couldn't get one, so they commissioned a local joiner to make one. Word got around and they tentatively set up the business. Initially they sold sauna suites to local authorities, but a few years later it became more sophisticated, with plastic steamrooms.

what's dalesauna's usp?

We made saunas, which was rocket science in the UK 30-odd years ago! Now we have a wide range of products and a comprehensive service network: we employ 12 engineers who are all qualified electricians and do nothing but service and maintain the products once they're in place. Nobody else offers that kind of after-sales support.

which countries do you work in?

The UK predominantly, but we've also worked in the Middle East, Maldives, St Lucia and we're currently doing some work in Zanzibar. Not so much mainland Europe, because that's a bit coals to

Newcastle: we stay away from there and concentrate on markets further afield. The bubble has really burst in the Middle East in the last six to nine months though. Some companies opened offices over there and now they don't have two dirhams to rub together.

what's your most popular product?

Saunas and steamrooms are the staples of everyone's diet in the heat experience market, but then you add on other options, like feature showers, aromatherapy rooms and ice features.

what's the most recent innovation in the market?

Salt inhalation: salt water infused into steam. Salt water's good for bronchial complaints and generates negative ions, which help alleviate headaches.

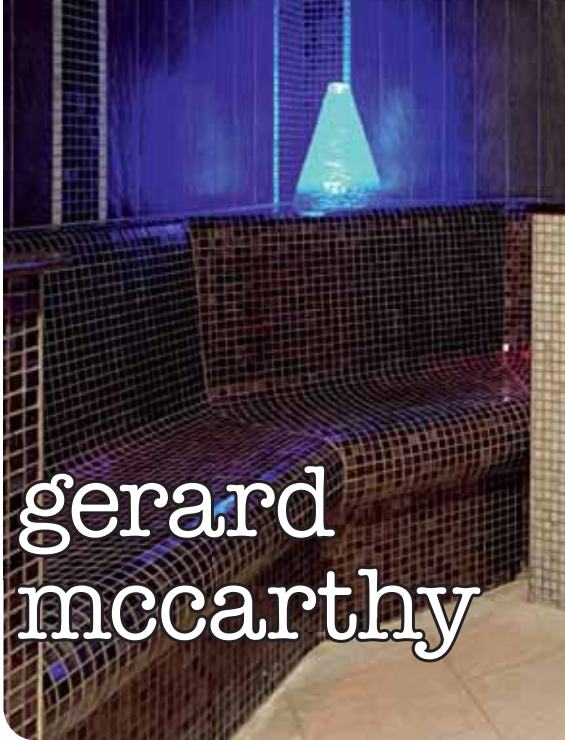
Heat experiences have been around for thousands of years in pretty much the same format – you take a room, you heat it up – but now the aesthetics have

also become more important, like the tiles and the lighting used. It's a bit like a Formula One car: you have a basic car and every year you give it a little tweak.

Design's become almost the number one element: everyone wants to look different and have the wow factor. About two years ago, we employed a designer and she's made a significant difference to what we can offer in terms of finishes. The good news is that design is becoming less themed: a few years ago, if you went into a spa, you couldn't walk five paces without tripping over a Balinese head. Thank goodness we've got away from that – we're more comfortable with our own spa culture now.

which sectors are most buoyant at present?

The market tends to go in eight- to 10-year cycles. About eight years ago, nearly all our business came from private health clubs. They've been quiet for a few years, but are now starting to come back again with new developments.



gerard
mccarthy



High-end hotels are still investing: we've just kitted out Sofitel's new flagship hotel at St James's in London. And we've just done a nice job at Whitley Bay, where the local authority has spent about £4m refurbishing a leisure centre. We've created a suite which includes almost everything we do: sauna, saunarium, salt inhalation, steam, foot-spas, feature showers, spa pool, heated loungers and hydrotherapy baths.

Also, we've recently kitted out six colleges with sauna, steamroom, dry flotation and hamman massage. They're diversifying to offer spa therapy courses, so need the right kind of equipment.

what development have you been most excited about?

Whitley Bay. It's a real turnaround in what you might expect from the typical local authority. They've spent a reasonable amount of money and their new centre is very like a private sector offering, with an incredibly high standard of finish throughout. It looks fantastic.

Heat treatment Women prefer lower temperatures, with softer heat and maybe steam

It's exciting to see how the private sector approach to spa areas has rubbed off on the public sector. There's a realisation that people's expectations are higher and they can't get away with a second-best offering at public health facilities any more. The first thing we did that constituted a real step away from the norm of plastic steamroom and pine spa was at Wavelengths at Pendle. They put in treatment rooms, a new gym and a comprehensive wet area/heat experience. The standard of finish was spectacular. It looked like a five-star spa. Whitley Bay has followed on from that.

what trends have you noticed?

Over the last five years, the market's gone away from the basic sauna and steam and moved towards offering smaller heat experiences and more of them. Instead of a 15-man sauna and



High quality Local authority spas such as Whitley Bay (above) are starting to look like private spas



Full range Whitley Bay has almost all Dalesauna's products, from salt inhalation to a spa pool (above)



Design focus Oriental themes are less apparent now, with our own spa culture emerging

15-man steamroom, it's down to a six- or seven-person sauna, but also adding an aromatherapy room, a salt inhalation room, an ice fountain and feature saunas. It's less of an endurance and more of an experience now. You can go on a spa journey from room to room, slowly warming the body up from 35 degrees to 85 degrees.

with all these new experiences, are people still interested in saunas?

I think they are. I think it still forms the fundamental heart of the heat

Icy touch Crushed ice can be used for body scrubbing after a heat room treatment

► experience, but the number of saunas we sell has been diluted by the range of products we now offer. And we tailor the offering to the end user. Females seem to prefer lower temperatures, softer heat, maybe steam. They like the aromatherapy rooms because they don't feel harsh and prickly on your skin, they smell amazing and they're not too hot.

what can health club spas do to raise their game?

Staff training is vital. It's one of things we certainly recognised and have tried to drive forward. If you join a health club, you have an induction before you do anything, and we're trying to suggest the same for the wet facilities, because there's such a variety of experiences now which all do different things.

Nothing beats the staff using the facilities themselves, otherwise it's impossible for them to recommend anything with enthusiasm. It always surprises me how often the staff don't bother to try out the facilities in advance.

what can suppliers do to progress the industry?

Education. We need to keep pushing the idea that we're not a one-off treat or a luxury, which is how it still tends to be viewed in the UK. Seventy per cent of visits to GPs are because of stress-related complaints, so we need to do more to get the message across that sitting in a steamroom isn't a waste of time – it's vital relaxation.

We're a long way away from the attitude they have in continental Europe. Our neighbours in Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia all have long histories of thermal spas and regard it as an everyday part of life. They see relaxation and wellbeing as one of the things they do. The

centres in Germany and Austria are unbelievable: beautifully built and fantastically provisioned, but also affordable. They may have 20 different heat experiences, as well as indoor and outdoor pools, but it only costs €10 to use it. They're heavily subsidised because their governments realise the benefits of relaxation.

We're a long way away from that kind of facility. Whitley Bay is making it accessible and moving it away from being an elitist experience, but more operators need to look at ways of making it affordable. It's the expense that reinforces the attitude that this is a treat.

how can it be made more affordable?

We need the government to realise that it's as important as fitness. This was discussed at SIBEC: the fitness bodies are getting funding to support their campaigns for fitness so, if we had a sufficiently strong lobby to stress the benefits of relaxation, perhaps it might be taken seriously, with funding to make it more affordable. We need to get away from this idea of it being a treat. Spa for all as well as sport for all!



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THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Katie Start summarises this year's SIBEC UK keynote presentation, and asks delegates for their thoughts on its 'partnership' theme

Speaking at SIBEC UK in May, Roger Pontefract, consultant and non-executive director of NHS Sefton, shared his thoughts on how a change in central government attitude to tackling the problem of an increasingly inactive nation has created a significant growth opportunity for our sector.

The financial implications of the nation's inactivity, identified in the Wanless Report of 2006, jolted the government into developing an 'invest to save' strategy based on the principle that prevention is better than cure.

The scale of the problem we face is being matched by the industrial-scale resource needed to tackle it. In launching the Change4Life campaign, the government has highlighted the need for a lifestyle revolution, encouraging us all to 'eat well, move more, live longer'.

The campaign calls for a coalition of the health and education sectors, the third sector, industry, the media and, of course, the fitness industry, represented by both buyers and suppliers.

So, if this presents our sector with a great opportunity, and if physical activity and health are now huge priorities at a national and local level, how can we best exploit this in the context of changes taking place in the public sector? In recent years, there has been a major shift from a silo mentality towards partnership working, not just between public sector organisations but also between public and private sectors.

eyeing the opportunity

What we're now seeing are Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) made up of key stakeholders from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors

all working together to achieve joint outcomes. For example, a Primary Care Trust (PCT), the local authority and the private fitness sector could all work together through the LSP to achieve agreed targets for increasing the level of physical activity of the local population.

These organised groups work together to produce Sustainable Community Strategies (SCSs) which define the economic, social, environmental and health needs of the area. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) then set targets for meeting priority needs, and the new method of assessing performance from 2009 will be the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which will judge how well all partners work together to meet the needs of a community.

The current economic crisis means budgets are likely to be squeezed hard from 2010/2011; outcome-based accountability will become increasingly important in a climate which demands that every pound of expenditure is justified. Public sector resources will increasingly be directed into areas that can demonstrate value for money, and/or achieve strategic outcomes.

promoting the benefits

Evidence supporting the health benefit of physical activity is clear. Promoting the benefits of physical activity and delivering services that encourage, advise and deliver leisure in the community will be key to the improvement of health and the narrowing of health inequalities. This is before we even start to explore the equally attractive social and economic opportunities.

The door is now open for the fitness industry to make its case and play its part in the delivery of the government's health agenda. We ask SIBEC delegates for their thoughts on how to go about this.



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Getting active Industry bodies must work together to get the nation out from behind the computer

JOHN OXLEY, md

cls

"Strategic thinking in our sector needs to shift more towards how we can impact the public health agenda. Instead of focusing on serving niche populations, we need to focus on engagement with other local partners to encourage participation from whole communities. Only by doing this can we hope to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the government agenda.

"In our Chorley contract, we've worked closely with the police on an activity initiative which has led to a reduction in local youth crime and disorder. We're also working with the local PCT to deliver cardiac rehabilitation programmes.

"Another initiative brings together local partners to stage the first Active Nation Kids Triathlon. Based on a successful model in New Zealand, this programme is designed to engage young people in a participative and non-competitive way. If we can get young people enjoying sport, they're more likely to remain active into adulthood."

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SARAH WATTS, md
alliance leisure

ROGER ELDERGILL, head of sales north **matrix fitness systems**

"If our industry is to become a significant, credible partner in the delivery of the government's physical activity and health agenda, we need to ensure that we have the expertise and the resource to make a significant difference. We must also think beyond the physical walls of our facilities and start to explore more widely how we can help to deliver and implement community initiatives that influence behavioural change in large populations.

"In my experience, working with government agencies can mean fighting your way through many layers of red tape, often without a satisfactory outcome.

"Operators and suppliers need organisations such as the FIA, sports and CLOA to lead the way. Events like SIBEC also create excellent opportunities to network, compare notes and discuss how to get involved with fellow industry advocates."

"Partnerships enable local authorities and trusts to work alongside established companies, such as ours, which help them assess their offering, put together a solid business strategy and react to meet government requirements – all of which result in better facilities and services for the local community. "It's crucial that both the community and the facility benefit, and that any development offers commercial viability and a lasting solution. Investing in, and building, long-term partnerships is key."

arie van winkelhof

The MD of gym80 International talks to Kate Cracknell about quality over quantity, going against the flow, and developing innovative products through strategic partnerships



Good vibrations The enforbike, launched at FIBO this year, is said to be the world's first impulse training bike

Q When was the company founded?

The company was set up in 1980 in Essen, Germany, by Walter Herden and Peter Förster. In 1976, Herden had started to build strength equipment for his own personal use – he was a passionate strength trainer and knew bodybuilder Ralph Moeller, who was friends with Arnold Schwarzenegger. Both men thought Herden's kit was fantastic, and encouraged him to develop the business.

In 1990, Herden sold the company to Wolfgang Tillmann. Tillmann's daughter, Sonja Stromberg, became owner of the company in 1997, although Tillmann kept running the company until Sonja took over in 2003. When I joined in January 2005, I'd been in the industry for 30 years, most recently 14 years with Life Fitness. I'd known Tillmann for a long time and I got to know Sonja better: we're now a family with a three-year-old son. I also work for her – she's my boss and owner of the company – and I manage the company together with Simal Yilmaz, who's in charge of production.

Q How has the company evolved over the years?

It started out as a strength training equipment company, very body building and muscle-orientated, and that's still one area of our product offering. However, Sonja started to look at the company in a more holistic way. When I joined, we started working on

COMPANY BY NUMBERS

Head office – Gelsenkirchen, Germany
Other offices – UK (wholly owned), plus distributors in 42 other countries including Europe, Middle East, Korea, Japan and New Zealand
Number of employees – More than 100 directly employed by gym80

strategic partnership concepts with companies that shared our values and vision – small, family-owned businesses, so short lines of communication, able to move fast. By combining the expert knowledge of a number of companies in this way, we're able to put a very broad product offering on the table – our strength products, but also cardio and technology, for example – which can be tailored to customers' needs.

We made an active decision to continue as a family-run business, manufacturing in Germany. We know we won't be the biggest in the world, but we want to be the best at what we do. We already have an excellent reputation in strength equipment and, through our partnerships, we want to develop new equipment that will allow us to become a leader in other areas too.

At the moment, for example, we work with partners like SCIFIT to

provide equipment that nobody else can offer. But ultimately the goal is to have a gym80-designed and built cardio line with SCIFIT cardio know-how incorporated – the 'Intel Inside' sort of approach. In fact, we already have the frame construction for the first product, so that may even be launched by the end of this year.

We're not going to say that all of a sudden we're the experts in cardiovascular equipment, but we are the experts in manufacturing. The gym80 cardio line will be a premium product, and should be different from what's already out in the market, because we won't get into a quantitative business.

Q What's the company philosophy?

Our business, as I say, is about quality, not quantity. We don't try and sell customers as much as we can: we sell them what's right for them. And the quality of our equipment means it lasts for years and barely needs servicing. And a lot of customers agree that, if you blindfold somebody, there's a good chance they'll recognise a piece of gym80 equipment. It's the feel – it's like driving a Porsche.

One of our main missions is to grow the pie, even as a small company like gym80. I think that's what everybody in this industry should do – not necessarily try to take away business from others but try and generate additional business, so the whole industry grows and attracts new people.

Q Which sectors do you operate in?

We categorise our markets as fitness, medical and high performance.



Partnership The enforbike with its inventor Dieter Quarz – gym80 works with inventors to develop new products



WHO'S WHO?

Sonja Stromberg – owner
Arie van Winkelhof – group MD
Simal Yilmaz – production
 managing director
Colin Carter – UK MD

I think fitness speaks for itself. For the medical market, we have a qualified physiotherapist who works for us, as well as a number of other external consultants. And we've reached a stage where all of our medical products are MPG certifiable – a certification standard here in Germany for all medical equipment.

High performance is new for us, with specialist pieces of equipment to train

Strong heritage (above) gym80's background is in strength training; its SYGNUM range includes medically-accredited products (right)

long jumpers, footballers and so on, which we've developed in conjunction with the inventors/professional trainers. We can also sell sports clubs other relevant pieces from our product range.

Which countries do you operate in?

Our business is 50 per cent in Germany at the moment, 30 per cent in the rest of the EU – especially Scandinavia, Switzerland, Austria, Benelux – and 20 per cent outside the EU, such as Russia, India, Korea, the Middle East, occasionally China.



In your element BodySense is a new product concept based on the use of the natural elements to optimise muscle performance

Q What are your plans for the UK?

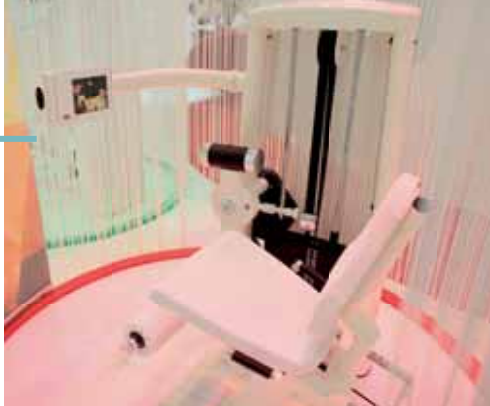
I see good potential for gym80 in the UK, especially in the private sector, in clubs looking for a high quality alternative, the public sector and higher education. I know the UK market, and we've been able to hire a very qualified professional in the form of Colin Carter as UK MD. We're geographically close to London. We have the strategic partnership with SCIFIT in the UK, who also provide the after-sales service for us – although, as I say, our equipment really doesn't need much in the way of servicing. We know what the market's asking for through Colin, and he really believes in our products. There's great chemistry.

Q What will be your USP in the UK?

I think we want to be the alternative. There are the obvious players that try and beat each other every day; we'd like to remain outside that main battlefield, coming in with fresh ideas and unique products, as well as offering a business relationship where the customer can put in some of their individual requirements. That's where I think we're uniquely positioned. We're a company with people, with faces – we're touchable. We're not necessarily driven by stock market pricing or shareholder value, but by customer value. We don't have a sale at the end of each month or each quarter. We don't go where everybody else goes, with all the discounting that entails – why have a list price if you can give an 80 per cent discount on it? With us, what you see is what you get.

Q What's the focus of your R&D?

We'll continue to improve our strength offering, always being alert to new product possibilities. On the cardio side, our job is to do the design and frame structure work here in Gelsenkirchen. And on the software side, our job is to continually provide feedback to the group of developers working on the next modules.



Q What are your most recent product innovations?

One of the biggest things for me is BodySense®, which I think is a product that will eventually allow us to appeal to a population that's never ever entered a fitness club.

Jürgen Woldt is the scientist who's developed the concept and he's been working on it since 1981. He observed people working out and was interested by the fact that one day you're able to lift 50 kilos, the next only 30. Why was that? He became interested in the way muscles behaved during movement, and what kind of effects could be applied to the muscle to make it move smoothly.

a screen in the pod projecting the right sounds and visuals to encourage optimum performance on that piece of kit. The concept could also be used without equipment, for example creating a room where you do a BodySense programme – a series of movements that replace weight equipment – or even yoga, with the right elements projected onto the screen at the right time.

We have a system with five pieces of equipment, based on the five elements, and another system of twelve pieces, which also takes into account the meridians as a way of linking to the organs as well as the muscle groups.

The medical market has responded very well to this in Germany, and it's a product I treat with a lot of respect. It's not something I want to sell to everyone – just to customers who understand it, who respect the knowledge that's been gathered, and who appreciate its ability to draw in non-gym goers.

ARIE VAN WINKELHOF FAVOURITES

Book – *The Firm*, by John Grisham
Film – *The Firm*
Music – Blues, techno, rock
Workout – boxing
Place – The beach
Food – Indonesian
Best piece of advice – Believe in yourself

This concept sounds incredible but, once you look into the science, you see it's sound. Woldt combined traditional Chinese medicine, allocating visuals, sounds and smells of the five natural elements to different muscle groups. He found out, for example, that the colour red or the element fire has an effect on the quads, while the colour yellow has an effect on the pectorals. He works with you with a colour – with the element – and you feel the difference in the performance of relevant muscle groups.

BodySense is based on this concept. We have a series of pods with a piece of resistance equipment in each, and

Q What are your plans now?

We have a strategic plan mapped out to 2015, but it's not in the drawer. It's on the table and we adjust it daily. We have priorities – optimisation of what we have in terms of product, market segments and so on, plus growth and risk management – but in the end, we know where we do and don't want to go. We know what we can and can't do. And it's about being an interesting, different, fun team of people who make good equipment and offer functional solutions.

 **kate cracknell**
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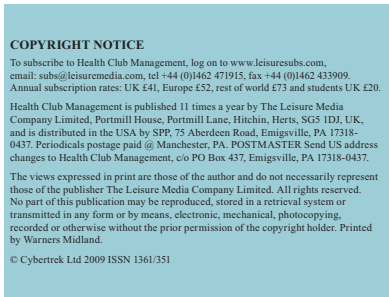
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PINT-SIZED PAMPERING FOR PUB CHAIN

The UK-based Merchant Inns pub company has announced details of a new spa concept called Pint-Sized Pampering.

Based around the launch of The Spa Treatment Rooms at the group's The Lambert Arms pub in the Chilterns near Oxford, spa treatments will be offered as part of an overnight break. Therapies will use the French Ella Baché professional skincare

range, which has recently relaunched in the UK. An extensive line of spa treatments will be offered, including an Organic Radiance Facial, a Full Body Hot Stone Massage, a Men's Muscle Manipulator, and a Radiance Eye Treatment.

The pub, originally a coaching inn, dates back to Victorian times. Food is overseen by Michelin-starred chef Rob Clayton.

COFFEE-INSPIRED SPA OPENS IN COSTA RICA

A new spa called Kuò has opened in a Marriott property in Costa Rica, Central America.

The property is surrounded by coffee plantations and the signature spa treatment incorporates the Costa Rica Coffee Scrub. Other therapies on offer will use mineral waters, mud, algae, herbal extracts and essential oils.

When absorbed into the skin, coffee is said to help speed up the metabolism, while it's also claimed that caffeine can be used in the treatment of cellulite. Coffee also contains anti-oxidants and can be used to help with alertness.

GETTY/PHOTO.COM



curries help beat stress in the uk

UK spas wanting to add a touch of calm to their food offering may want to add curry to their menus.

Research carried out by UK online takeaway portal, Just-Eat.co.uk, found that 92 per cent of Britons say they feel 'happier' after eating a takeaway. The poll focused on 1,185 people.

Takeaways such as vindaloo, madras and Thai curry are believed to relieve stress as they incorporate

endorphin-releasing red chilli peppers and serotonin-rich vegetables such as tomatoes. Eighty-four per cent of study participants said the fact that they didn't have to cook the food was a major factor in improving their mood.

Just-Eat meal experts said the top-five mood-improving curries (based on cooking methods and ingredients) are chicken/beef madras, vindaloo, Thai red curry, pasanda and jalfrezi.



SPARKLING STEAMROOM IN SWITZERLAND

The Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, a thermal spa retreat in Switzerland, has injected a shot of glamour to the standard steamroom offering: a touch of frosting that might have been enough to tempt Audrey away from Tiffany's.

For the first time, the glittering gems from iconic crystal-makers Swarovski adorn a steamroom – a new thermal facility located within the To B Wellbeing & Spa, a recently refurbished pampering spa at Bad Ragaz. More than 300 individual crystals have been added to the walls, where they twinkle under lights which gradually change colour throughout the day to create different therapeutic atmospheres.

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