

health club management

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FOCUS

OCTOBER 2009

INTERVIEW

BRIAN MORRIS

The CEO of Aspria on service, diversification and a penchant for difficult projects



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The official
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of the FIA

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT...

THE PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

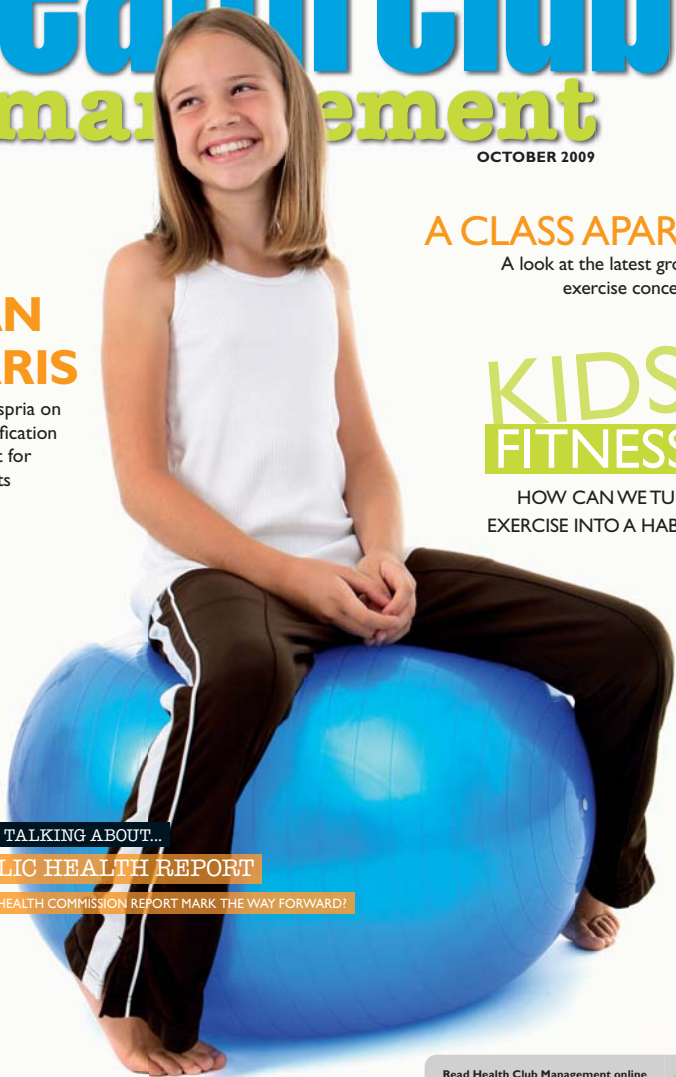
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A CLASS APART

A look at the latest group exercise concepts

KIDS' FITNESS

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children's fitness

My mum retired last year, aged 82, having spent the previous 33 years running the Eastbourne School of Swimming. Over these years she reports that the fitness of children coming to lessons has deteriorated significantly in every way, from flexibility to strength and stamina. She also says they're more regularly absent through sickness. These children range from five to 12 years of age.

Lack of basic fitness in children leads to a myriad of other problems, such as an inability to participate in sport, lower self-esteem, a greater susceptibility to illness and, according to recent research carried out by Dr Kenneth Cooper, less academic success.

Cooper's researchers checked academic grades in school against fitness using a battery of standard tests to determine cardio vascular fitness, body fat percentage, strength and flexibility. More than 77 million children have been tested across the US and researchers found a direct correlation between fitness standards and maths results in school – the only variant found is caused by inadequate diet. Once tested, the results are sent to parents in the form of a Fitnessgram report

which shows the child's fitness scores. A recent push on fitness in Texas – the Texas Youth Evaluation Project – has seen a further 2.65 million children being tested, with the aim of making a case for sport in schools. Those behind the programme are now looking to establish international comparisons, and as a result, The States of Jersey in the Channel Islands, working in partnership with the Wright Foundation, has committed to running 'A month of exercise' in September 2010, with the aim of creating international benchmarks for fitness.

New research from the British Heart

New research from the British Heart Foundation, out this month, found that only one in eight children aged eight to 15 is getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity daily

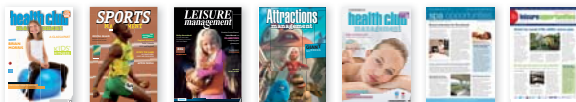
Foundation, out this month, took an online survey of 1,029 children aged eight to 15 and found that only one in eight children in the UK is getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Thirty per cent said they did less than an hour a week, while a further 30 per cent said they 'couldn't be bothered'. Around 20 per cent said they didn't need to exercise, because they weren't overweight. Seventy-eight per cent were unaware of the recommended daily amount of exercise they need to do.

Cooper believes that one in three children born after 2000 will become diabetic through over-eating and lack of exercise and he's focusing his efforts on re-educating these children, saying that he's given up on the adults. Yet results such as those found by the British Heart Foundation show that we are failing to educate children about the importance of exercise and good diet – if we constantly equate exercise with weight loss, children without obesity problems will believe they don't need to exercise.

With so much clear evidence the value of exercise for children, we need to support initiatives which give a clear lead in educating and motivating children and young people to get fitter. In this issue (page 39) Kate Cracknell takes a look at programmes which have been established with the aim of encouraging children to adopt good exercise habits. With so much research pointing to the implications of failure, it's never been more important to think creatively about making these changes and to support programmes which focus on this important work.

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 over 20 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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The official publication of the
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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

culture change required to implement a retention process

Melvyn Hillsdon's article last month (HCM Sept 09) struck a chord with us. Across our six sites, we've been measuring the 'process' for over a year, but it's only recently that the measurement of 'outcomes' has been possible to any great extent.

We would emphasise the importance of setting up the processes and monitoring KPIs: from a management perspective, if a culture of managing retention is to

be established among the fitness team, the goals must be clear, the systems of measurement transparent, and the day-to-day focus of management unwavering.

A major difficulty for operators such as ourselves is that, for a long time, there has been no tangible and accepted measurement device for the performance of fitness instructors (unlike membership sales); the biggest difficulty in the early stages of implementing a retention 'process' is therefore a change of culture among the team.

Our retention programme, Big Rock (see p53), uses a low-cost paper system that instructors understand, find easy to use and doesn't require them to sit behind a PC. Still, it takes considerable management effort and support on a day-to-day basis to ensure that appointments are being booked and followed through as prescribed. In our experience, however, once this culture change was achieved – and results began to become evident – our fitness team became Big Rock's biggest advocates. Measuring the success is, by comparison, an easy task.

sean thornton
managing director, eze fitness



Stage one of Big Rock, the induction appointment, focuses on goal setting



Age and gender: Vital to understanding how likely members are to lapse

data-driven communications for member retention

In response to Melvyn Hillsdon's case study on gym membership retention (HCM July 09), I agree that developing a robust customer retention strategy is key to commercial success. Early identification of customers most likely to lapse enables timely and targeted marketing activities that can prevent lapsing from occurring in the first place.

As Melvyn says, it's important to identify what's happening with members at an individual level. Age, gender and payment history are vital. But there's a wealth of additional information that clubs should consider to identify potential lapsed – for example, demographic and visit data. Interrogation of this additional data can help clubs spot the signals that a member is in danger of lapsing. It's about using the most predictive data and making actionable insight.

It doesn't have to be complex – retention and predictive models can be built that identify what data best identifies potential lapsing behaviour and the percentage chance of lapse for members.

Through effective data analytics, clubs can gain access to actionable insights. Data-driven communications put clubs in a strong position to exploit insight to maximise retention – a truly powerful commercial weapon in today's competitive economic climate.

matt hutchison
general manager, cogent analytics

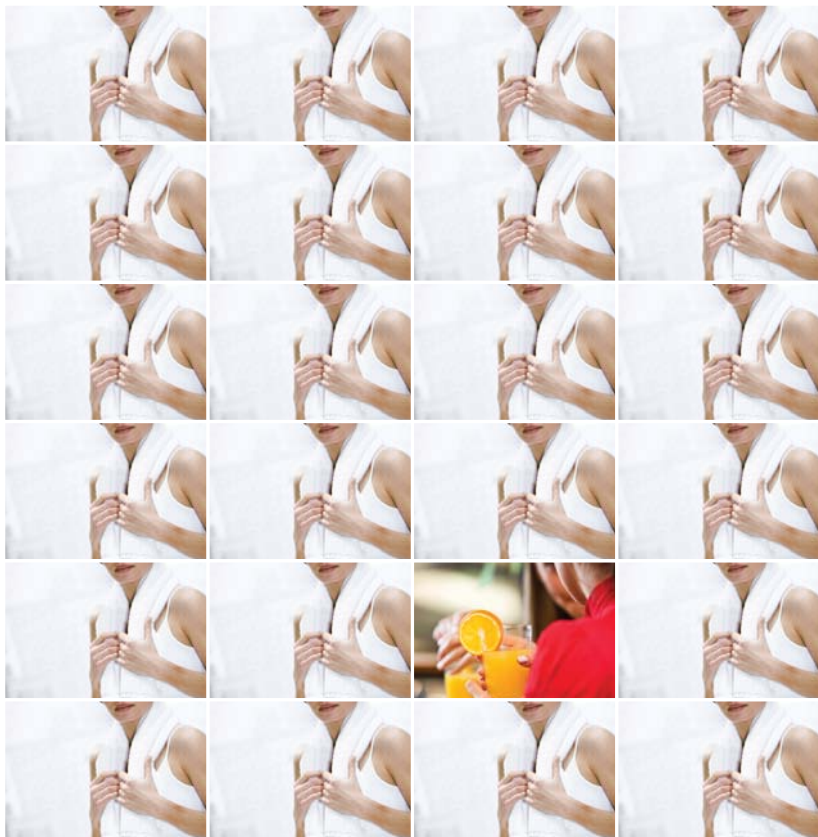
the letter of the law

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

Q I understand that one of our senior employees meets up regularly with a competitor. We pay his expenses for these meetings. I don't feel it's really my job, as FD, to involve myself in such matters, but should I be concerned in case breaches of competition law are taking place (eg price fixing, market sharing etc)?

A All the directors should be concerned. At present, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) only acts against directors who are directly involved in the offences (in addition to taking action against the company). However, it plans to extend its use of company director disqualification orders for breach of competition law to directors who should have known what was going on but failed to take action. The OFT will now expect all directors to have a knowledge of competition law. It also wants to maximise the deterrent effect of Competition Disqualification Orders, thereby encouraging all directors to actively uncover and stop anti-competitive behaviour.

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in brief...

new life fitness gym for thirsk swimming pool

A new gym has opened at Thirsk Swimming Pool following a £600,000 renovation.

Equipped by Life Fitness, the new facility will be complemented by new changing rooms, including an area for people with disabilities, while the former gym will be converted into a studio for activities, meetings and parties.

"The project is coming on at a great pace," says councillor Ralph Andrew, cabinet member for health at Hambleton District Council.

The council's investment was complemented by £214,000 in Sport England funding, plus contributions from local housing developers.

scotch horn leisure centre re-opens in bristol

Scotch Horn Leisure Centre in Bristol has re-opened after a revamp of its fitness facilities.

The upgrade of the centre's gym has involved the installation of 40 new CV stations and a free weights area. The centre's changing rooms have also received a facelift.

Other existing facilities include a four-courts sports hall and two squash courts. The centre is managed by Parkwood Leisure on behalf of North Somerset Council.

membership services survey kicks off

Leisure-net Solutions will include an 'e-enquiry' element for the first time in its annual call-Focus survey.

The survey, which aims to benchmark how the fitness industry replies to telephone enquiries, will also chart how effectively the sector deals with email enquiries.

Mike Hill, managing director of Leisure-net, says the new aspect has been introduced as part of efforts to highlight the problems the industry has with responding efficiently to enquiries.

"The 2009 call-Focus survey will examine whether the industry has improved on last year's disappointing scores," he adds.

dragon to launch fitness chain

A new fitness club chain – nuyuu fitness – is set to launch later this year as the result of a £2m partnership between businessman James Caan and former LA Fitness national sales manager Ben Silcox.

The new chain has already acquired three LA Fitness gyms – in Slough, Berkshire, Livingston in Scotland and East Grinstead in East Sussex – with a further three sites to be announced within the next six months.

Caan – one of the stars of the BBC programme *Dragons' Den* – is backing the nuyuu venture through private equity company Hamilton Bradshaw.

nuyuu fitness clubs will offer customers modern facilities, with a range of CV and resistance equipment supplied by Precor as well as Vibroform systems, which are designed to accelerate weight loss.

The company, which aims to achieve significant growth in its first two years, will provide customers with the option of monthly memberships costing £19.99 based on a 12-month contract, or £24.99 a month for members who choose to sign-up on a non-contract basis.

Caan says: "We are talking about giving people what they want, at a price they want, without sacrificing quality."

"The sector is ripe for a heavyweight investor to come on board and the

nuyuu proposition is compelling. That, plus the fact there are some great deals to be made on properties at the moment, places nuyuu in the ideal position to spearhead growth.

"We have to make sure that the sites, the locations and the demographics are right. The location has to work to be accessible and affordable."

Silcox, who is set to be managing director of the venture, adds: "With nuyuu, we believe we have the formula right and that we will be a force to be reckoned with in the gym industry."



Dragon's Den star James Caan aims to grow the chain aggressively

authorities wield sunbed axe

Sunbeds are coming off the menu

Wiltshire Council has become the latest UK local authority to remove sunbeds from public leisure centres, following recent research by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

A report by the IARC, the World Health Organisation's (WHO) agency for research into cancer, has established a "clear link" between sunbeds and skin cancer, which has increased pressure on councils to withdraw sunbeds for health reasons. Sunbeds at Pewsey Sports Centre, Bradford On Avon, and The Activity Zone in Malmesbury will now be withdrawn from public use in a move that has been supported by DC Leisure – operator of the Bradford and Malmesbury sites.

Other councils that have recently pulled the plug on sunbeds include the Vale of Glamorgan Council in Wales.



The centre is scheduled to open to the public in time for the new year

trust to run bletchley centre

Hertsmere Leisure has been appointed to operate the new £21m Bletchley Leisure Centre near Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, which is scheduled to open on 3 January 2010.

The facility will replace the town's existing leisure centre and will feature a 780sq m (8,396sq ft), 100-station fitness suite supplied by Matrix Fitness Systems, which will incorporate aerobics and group cycling activities.

Milton Keynes Council (MKC) is hoping to gain Inclusive Fitness Initiative accreditation for the complex, which will also offer a 25m, eight-lane swimming pool; a sauna and steamroom; four squash courts; a six-court sports hall; a

seven-rink bowls facility; a gymnastics hall; a multi-purpose hall; and a café.

MKC leisure spokesperson Paul Sanders says: "With the transfer from the old leisure centre to the new one straddling Christmas, a traditional time when leisure centres often close for maintenance works, this opening couldn't be better timed.

"This will constitute a great New Year start, when many people want to make those resolutions to get fitter and more active and healthy."

The new centre, which has been developed by Bedford-based contractor SDC, will be handed over to the council on 21 December 2009.

weston-super-mare centre set for revamp

Hutton Moor Leisure Centre in Weston-super-Mare is set to benefit from a £370,000 redevelopment.

Operator Parkwood Leisure will invest the loan from North Somerset Council to expand the existing gym and build a new studio, steamroom, spa and sauna.

Centre manager Dave Somers told *Weston & Somerset Mercury*: "It's excellent news for members and hopefully it will encourage new users to come to the centre. It brings the

whole building together as a complete centre and will enable people to exercise and relax afterwards."

Executive member for leisure, councillor Felicity Baker, told the local paper: "The company will have least 200 more members, which means they will pay the council more money for running the centre.

"There are so many people who want to use our leisure centres at the moment – increasing capacity is a good thing for everybody."

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in brief...

second edinburgh curves for musselburgh leisure

Women-only health club chain Curves has opened a new 186sq m (2,000sq ft club) in Musselburgh, near Edinburgh, Scotland.

The club will be operated on a franchise deal by Musselburgh Leisure, which has secured a 10-year lease at the Harbour Point mixed-use development.

Musselburgh Leisure's Gary Eaton, who already operates another Curves gym in Gorgie, Edinburgh, says: "We have been unsuccessfully trying for premises in Musselburgh for the last year and are delighted to have at last secured these premises, which are in an ideal location."

The US-based Curves chain currently encompasses 10,000 sites in 60 countries – most of which are operated by franchisees.

bridgend pool opens

Bridgend Recreation Centre in Wales has re-opened following a £300,000 refurbishment of the site's swimming pool.

A new changing village has been added, while existing pool facilities have also received a facelift.

The centre's health and fitness amenities have also been upgraded, including a new suite supplied by Technogym. The work was funded in part by a £185,000 grant from the Sports Council of Wales.

winsford life centre runs into trouble

The swimming and health suite facilities at the new Winsford Lifestyle Centre in Cheshire have been closed to the public while urgent maintenance work is carried out.

Defective pool floors at the sports and leisure complex – opened in March by Cheshire West and Chester Council at a cost of £10.8m – will be repaired under warranty by the original contractors.

Members will be compensated for the inconvenience until a normal service resumes.



Work on the first phase is complete

splash revamp moving ahead

Tees Active has unveiled the first phase of its £2.4m redevelopment of the Splash centre in Stockton-on-Tees.

The centre now offers a new two-storey, 72-station Technogym fitness suite and a multi-use activity space, including two badminton courts and ZigZag interactive stations, as well as new changing rooms.

Also due for completion by the end of the year are an extended foyer, a new café and a relocated reception area. The former fitness suite will be converted into two further multi-activity areas.

The ZigZag Academy will provide training for the interactive zone, which includes two giant computerised Sportwalls and eight five-step wireless Xer-Dance platforms. The kit was chosen following feedback from a local school, which took part in a taster day at another Tees Active site.

Sports trust Tees Active manages seven leisure venues on behalf of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

nintendo's new fitness game

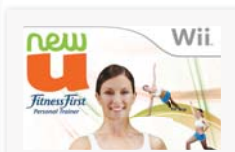
Nintendo has launched a new fitness video game which has been created in collaboration with Fitness First.

The games company is hoping that the NewU Fitness First Personal Trainer will top the Christmas wish list this year, on the back of the success of its WiiFit concept. According to Nintendo, advance orders from UK retailers have "exceeded all expectations".

Due for release in mid-September, the product offers goal-based training, with the option to work out with one of four different personal trainers.

It's said to be the first product of its kind to feature a video throughout, which provides interactive training sessions. The video game also includes nutritional advice, which the designers have developed in conjunction with the people behind the TV programme *You Are What You Eat*.

There are now 24 million gaming consoles in the UK – the same number as there are UK households.



The new game hits shops this month

mbodies site opens in witney

Fitness entrepreneur Chris Onslow has opened his first health and fitness facility in Witney, Oxfordshire.

The 558sq m (6,000sq ft) Mbodies centre is one of the largest purpose-built pilates centres in the UK. The club has been divided into three exercise studios and two treatment rooms.

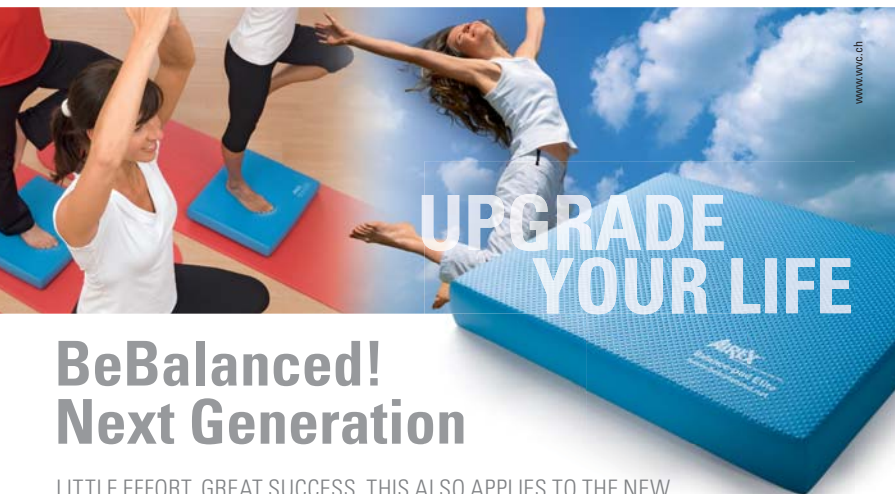
The pilates equipment has been supplied by STOTT PILATES, with the remainder of the therapy equipment and functional fitness accessories supplied by ProActive Health, PowerBlock and GoFit.

Onslow, who also owns and operates distribution companies ProActive Health and Pilates Solutions,

has invested around £200,000 in the design and build of the facility.

Onslow says: "A key to the success of Mbodies is going to be our effectiveness in getting interested prospects to understand that the pilates we teach is miles apart from most people's perception of pilates – a sedentary group of ladies lying on mats in a room performing yoga-style exercises."

There are no memberships at Mbodies, with customers paying for each session separately. The club's total capacity is for 1,200 class-based clients. Onslow has set a target of attracting 250 regular class-based customers in the first year.



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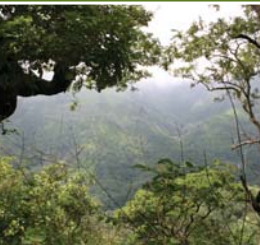
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Two of Britain's leading medical men are putting on their hiking boots again for the 4th Hike for Hope challenge. Hikers have raised more than £1.2 million to stop prostate and gynaecological cancers ruining lives by taking part in Hike for Hope treks in Jordan, Kenya and the Sinai Desert in Egypt.

Be part of the next Hike for Hope challenge – an amazing five-day trek in one of India's most stunning locations. Leading the way again will be top urologist Professor Roger Kirby, Chairman of Prostate UK, and leading obstetrician and gynaecologist Marcus Setchell, a trustee of Wellbeing of Women.

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One of the studios has been equipped with 13 Star Trac NXT Spinning Bikes

star trac nets evesham contract

Star Trac has secured an agreement to supply Spinning equipment to the new £11m Evesham Leisure Centre in Worcestershire, which opened to the public on 7 September.

Facilities at the 4,500sq m (48,438sq ft) complex include a four-court sports hall and two exercise studios, one of which has been equipped with 13 Star Trac NXT Spinning Bikes to offer group cycling classes.

The new centre also offers a fitness suite – the Rivers Fitness Room – with more than 100 workstations, as well as a 25m, five-lane swimming pool and a studio pool with moveable floor

to change the depth of the water to accommodate aqua aerobics.

Facilities also include a spa pool, a sauna and steamroom, and a beauty salon offering a range of treatments. The leisure centre will be operated by Wychavon Leisure on behalf of Wychavon District Council.

Lee Oliver, assistant manager, says: "As a local authority trust facility, the aim of Evesham Leisure Centre is to provide a wide range of activities and facilities to appeal to all age groups, ensuring the entire community has the opportunity to stay active." The centre currently has more than 1,400 members.

club 2.0 from technogym

Technogym is to introduce its new CLUB 2.0 system as part of efforts to help "clubs to better understand their members". The focus of CLUB 2.0 is to establish people's aspirations and understand the way in which this determines how they use the gym.

The new package uses an online questionnaire to tell the club what exactly motivates their customer, and divides the club population on the basis of six core aspirations: Shape, Power, Fun, Move, Balance and Sport.

cybex adds to ifi range

Cybex has added to its range of Stage 2 Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI)-accredited equipment with four new pieces of CV equipment.

The new CV equipment includes the 750AT IFI Total Body Arc Cross Trainer, 750C IFI Upright Cycle, 750T IFI Treadmill and 750R IFI Recumbent Cycle.

Cybex was the first company to offer an extensive range of Stage 2 IFI-accredited equipment.

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After a reasonable summer, it seems a shame to think about the challenges of the forthcoming winter months. However, the days are getting shorter and the temperatures lower so we need to start. Brace yourself!

Clearly, there is an element of 'tongue in cheek' about my winter comments as it simply means we either overcome different challenges or return to the gym and spend more time exercising indoors. However, we can't ignore that many may go into 'hibernation' as their motivation dwindles during the cold, dark months.

In reality, although general exercise habits may change, the principles of good training, preparation and eating well don't. However, despite this it is incredible how many people assume that, because it is colder they don't sweat as much, hydration is not as important. The trap is real and many suffer for it.

The amount people sweat is still high and the impact of replacing the fluid and key salts, lost through perspiration, on well-being and performance remain true. So, we all need to ensure that the cold doesn't get the better of us and we still pursue a complete balanced training program that includes good nutrition throughout the colder months. In other words, don't forget what you achieved during the summer and keep up the good work!

Nick Morgan

Applied Sport Science Manager,
Lucozade Sport Science Academy

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

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training

outdoors academy launches

The National Skills Academy (NSA) for the Outdoors launched in Penrith, Cumbria, last month following the success of a pilot scheme in north-west England earlier this year.

The new academy will deliver outdoor skills training through a network of providers, which already includes educational charity Outward Bound and activity holiday company PGL Travel.

To date, a total of 76 people have received industry-recognised skills training as a result of the pilot scheme, since it launched in January through the NSA for Sport and Active Leisure. A further 400 are set to benefit from funding that will enable more people to receive training through the NSA.

Funding opportunities are also available to employers wanting to put their staff through NSA for the Outdoor qualifications. These include



The new academy will deliver a range of outdoor leisure skills

a range of bursary schemes that could save organisations up to 60 per cent on national governing body awards and new qualifications, such as the Outdoor Introductory Award.

Lucy Harrison, North West business development manager for the outdoors, says: "The skills academy has been launched to help meet employers' needs."

marnoch responds to *daily mail* criticism

Jean-Ann Marnoch, registrar at the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs), has written an open letter in response to a recent *Daily Mail* article which questioned the way personal trainers are regulated in the UK.

Marnoch said she welcomed the article as it "raises key issues and illustrates just how important it is to ensure all personal trainers and fitness instructors are members of REPs". View the full draft at exerciseregister.org



Marnoch welcomed the article, saying it "highlighted key issues"

gll pilots exchange programme



Gareth Kirk and Gregg Holland were the first to take part in the scheme

Greenwich Leisure (GLL) has piloted an employee exchange programme with Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre, as part of its efforts to deliver training facilities for elite athletes in 2012.

The scheme has already seen GLL managers travel to Australia for two months to experience the operation of Olympic facilities first-hand, at the venue used for swimming and diving at the Sydney 2000 Games. At The Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, the managers also toured elite training facilities for a range of sporting disciplines.

GLL plans to run the exchange scheme on an annual basis.



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The countdown has started to the
next fitness training revolution

in brief...

nestlé-les mills promotion

Nestlé Fitness breakfast cereals and LES MILLS have joined forces in a global promotion.

The campaign started earlier this year with limited edition complimentary DVDs of either BODYCOMBAT™ – the martial arts-based workout – or the dance-inspired BODYJAM™ attached to Nestlé Fitness cereal packets, available in over 48 countries.

Delivered in 11 languages, the 20-minute DVDs take viewers through an effective mini-workout. They are expected to reach more than eight million consumers.

Free LES MILLS class passes are also offered on the cereal box in a number of countries.

Arya Badiyan, marketing manager for Nestlé Fitness, says: "We believe in a long-term sustainable approach to weight management. In addition to providing consumers with a healthy breakfast, we are constantly seeking out the best in fitness and wellness to provide our consumers with a holistic solution."

star trac for holmes place

Star Trac has won a €700,000 tender to supply CV equipment to 13 Holmes Place Iberia clubs.

Star Trac already supplies Spinning bikes and HumanSport dual cable resistance products to a number of the clubs. The new tender started last month, with two clubs receiving a range of E-Series CV equipment. Spinning bikes in five clubs will also be updated to the Spinner NXT model, while three clubs have already installed the newest bike from Star Trac: the eSpinner.

kettlebells' german success

The Optimal Life Fitness Group will be installing Extreme Kettlebells in 13 more Fitness First clubs across Germany, taking the total to over 20 clubs. As part of the package, to ensure quick adoption of the kettlebells, Optimal not only trains the trainers but also launches kettlebells to the members via a members' experience session.

refurb for balthus vitacura

The Balthus club in the Vitacura district of Santiago de Chile re-opened in August following a US\$0.5m refurbishment project.

Originally opened in 2003, this is the second refurb for the club – a high-end offering catering for the whole family.



Club re-opened in August following a US\$0.5m refurbishment

Facilities at the 8,000sq m site, which is owned by Wellness Holding, include a 600sq m, Technogym-equipped fitness suite. This is complemented by a range of group exercise programming including group cycling and pilates. Fitness classes are also available in the swimming pool.

A spa area encompasses a range of heat experiences including steam, sauna, hydrotherapy and relaxation areas with infra-red lighting. Additional services such as nutrition, rehabilitation and kinesiology therapy are also available.

Meanwhile, an outdoor park area offers tennis courts and an outdoor pool. Members can also make use of the club's bar/restaurant.

There are now plans to open a new Balthus flagship in Lima, capital city of Peru, in mid-2010.

tuff academy launches in ibiza

In Ibiza, a new club – The Ultimate Fight and Fitness (TUFF) Academy – has been opened by UK-born Michael Coe.

Coe opened the club this summer after noticing a gap in the martial arts market on the island. The TUFF Academy specialises in combat camp-style holidays for enthusiasts, alongside a fully-equipped gym for local members.

The club is split across two levels. The ground floor focuses on general fitness training, with a range of CV and resistance kit including three Versaclimbers and kettlebells. The upper level is a dedicated martial arts and boxing zone, with a 200sq m matted area, punch/kick bags, a boxing ring and a training cage.



First floor of new club is a dedicated martial arts and boxing zone

fitness first opens 91st australian club

Fitness First has opened the doors of its 91st Australian club in the Sydney suburb of Five Dock.

The 2,826sq m facility is spread over two levels, with a fully-equipped gym and a number of group exercise studios, including a group cycling studio and a weights and resistance studio. There is also a 20m swimming pool and a spa area with aromatherapy steam room, sauna and relaxation zone.

The club also offers a 'Playzone' for kids, as well as running Fitness First's

FFIT programme. This encompasses two initiatives for high school aged students: high school classes can access the club for free as part of their PE curriculum, and students aged 14 to 18 can use club facilities during the school holidays to keep active.

"Our aim is to make Australia a fitter place by providing the latest in equipment, expert advice and guidance and by creating a welcoming, friendly atmosphere," says Andy Mallinson, Fitness First's marketing director.



Graphics on the new interactive wall respond accurately to kids' movements

virtual child's play in las vegas

The Child's Play family activity centre in Las Vegas, which opened earlier this year, has now unveiled its latest innovation – a new GestureTek WallFX interactive display system.

The centre, which has more than 500 members, has been designed to cater for everyone in the family without breaking anyone's budget. A monthly fee covers both informal play time and formalised, age-appropriate activities.

There are activities for kids aged nine months to 10 years, with more than 30 different classes – from music, art and drama to gymnastics, yoga, karate and tumbling. There are even classes to teach kids foreign languages or baby

sign language. Parents can participate in some of the classes, or socialise with other parents in a communal area.

The new interactive wall has been introduced to add another fun, engaging option to get the kids active. Using patented video gesture control software, along with a camera and projector fixed to the ceiling, the system tracks the children's movement and responds accurately to the subtlest gestures, allowing for real-time interaction.

For older kids, it's possible to project their own image onto the screen in real-time, so they see themselves as they participate in virtual adventures such as skydiving and swimming with sharks.

exhale opens first florida spa

New York-based spa company exhale recently opened its first site in Florida, in Palm Beach's Omphoy Ocean Resort.

"The developer invited us to be part of The Omphoy, and because so many of our clients in the New York area have homes in Palm Beach, it seemed like a natural place for us to open," says Elisabeth Halfpapp, one of exhale's founders and executive vice president of mind-body programming.

The 230sq m spa, with a staff of five instructors, offers one-hour group and private Core Fusion classes. Developed by

Halfpapp and her husband Fred DeVito, this combines elements of pilates, yoga, Lotte Berk ballet-bar resistance training and some aerobic exercises.

The spa menu includes massage, beauty treatments, acupuncture and nutrition consultations. Retreats are also being introduced at the Palm Beach location, which opens onto a meditation garden.

The exhale programmes are available to guests and to local residents.

Exhale also has locations in California, Texas, Illinois, Massachusetts and Turks and Caicos in the Caribbean.


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from the board



fit for the future

scott lloyd • managing
director • david lloyd
leisure limited

I joined the FIA board in 2007, just as Fred Turok became chair. In that time we have witnessed the world around us spin on its axis – the recession and soaring unemployment have been a uniform cause of concern. However, I believe that the industry has managed to weather this latest storm and has set its course for an even more successful future.

Throughout my time on the board, the FIA has continued to drive forward the delivery of its strategic plan. We have seen this first-hand at David Lloyd Leisure (DLL), where we have played a major role in delivering the Fit for the Future programme in partnership with the Department of Health. The programme has enabled us to build real and meaningful partnerships with the government at both a national and a local level.

DLL is proud to be able to play a role in helping people to become more active, and this scheme is one of the reasons why I'm optimistic for the future of our industry.

I'm currently involved in the process of reviewing the FIA's existing strategy, which comes to an end in 2010. The next phase of its development will be exciting for the whole industry as we continue to prove we have a role to play in improving the health of the nation.

fia appoints first cmo

The FIA has appointed John Searle to the newly created post of Chief Medical Officer (CMO). Searle will spearhead the industry's healthcare sector engagement campaign and is tasked with raising the medical community's awareness of the role the health and fitness sector can play in both prevention and remedial strategies.

Searle's enthusiasm for the benefits of exercise comes from personal experience: seven years ago he was struck by acute rheumatoid arthritis. A former consultant anaesthetist and director of intensive care at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (RD&E), he had already been forced to retire in 1998 for medical reasons.

"The arthritis affected all my joints. Rheumatoid arthritis makes you very tired and I was not sleeping well – at times I had less than four hours of uninterrupted sleep," he says.

Searle was aware of the growing body of evidence about the role of exercise in the management of rheumatoid arthritis and, working with a personal trainer, he "totally transformed" his life.

"Within about eight weeks of my first session with Colin [Kirkman, a personal trainer], I was completely symptom-free. I had no joint pain and stiffness and my energy levels had improved enormously.

"I now enjoy uninterrupted sleep and bounce out of bed every morning."

But that was just the start. With his new lease of life, Searle set himself the ultimate challenge: to begin a career in personal training at the age of 63.

In 2005, he qualified as an advanced instructor with a "fantastic bunch" of students – all 20 to 30 years his junior – and celebrated his new life by climbing Mount Kilimanjaro with his wife in July of the same year.

The former medical practitioner and sometime personal trainer was awarded the OBE in 1998, for services to medicine. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Anaesthetists.



Searle took up his new role as the FIA's CMO last month

smart marketing tips for fia members

Imagine having access to your own marketing expert, 24/7. Now imagine having 24/7 access to a team of marketing experts with tips and information about marketing strategy, online marketing, sales, advertising, PR and all the major marketing disciplines. Well, that access is now available.

The FIA launched a new member service at LIW last month. Called Marketing Donut, the scheme is a groundbreaking online resource developed to help all FIA members improve their marketing. It combines the advice and wisdom of over 100 marketing, sales and PR experts and is designed to provide high quality, free advice covering all aspects of marketing. The new service allows FIA members

to access hundreds of pages of practical information, dozens of videos and a host of online tools and resources – absolutely free. Members can also post questions and contact experts directly.

In addition, every FIA member will receive £30 in Google AdWords for free when they register on the site.

"Marketing is such a fast-moving discipline that keeping up with new developments is difficult," says David Stalker, FIA operations director.

"Our job at the FIA is to make life easier for our members so, because it's sometimes hard for them to find time to go and talk to an expert, we decided to bring the expert to them."

Visit www.fia.org.uk and log in to the members' area and business resources.

fia employee profile alex smith

WHAT'S YOUR POSITION AT THE FIA?

Programmes co-ordinator: I'm part of the Community Engagement team working on programmes such as go and MoreActive4Life.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT WHAT YOU DO?

Our job is to help those who would not normally exercise – school kids and the over-50's, for example – by running programmes for them. It's great to hear the stories that come back from both consumers and our members, to realise that we make a difference. Plus we help our members strengthen their community links and increase their membership.

HOW HEALTHY ARE YOU?

I'm a mixed bag; during the week I tend to be careful with what I eat, but then I have a blow-out at the weekend. I think I'm reasonably healthy, as I regularly go to the gym – but I do enjoy a few beers at the weekend!



Smith works as part of the FIA's Community Engagement team

HOW DO YOU RELAX?

I read a lot, mostly factual travel books or novels; I'm reading a book about Brazil at the moment. I love classic American literature like William Faulkner or Ernest Hemingway. My favourite book of all time has to be *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac.

ANY GUILTY SECRETS?

I enjoy donuts – perhaps a bit too much.

ANY HEALTH AND FITNESS ADVICE?

Eat less junk food and exercise more. It really is that simple.

diary dates

9TH ANNUAL IHRSA EUROPEAN CONGRESS

22-25 October 2009, The Burlington Hotel, Dublin, Ireland
The 2009 Congress will feature keynote presentations delivered by executives from both inside and outside the health club industry, providing thought-provoking commentary on trends shaping business and the fitness industry.

Networking icebreakers, special activities for first-time attendees, focus group discussions and evening/lunch receptions will give you the opportunity to build relationships with industry colleagues from across Europe.

For details, visit <http://cms.ihrsa.org/>

EXERCISE & NUTRITION SEMINARS

The first of the FIA's autumn series of seminars, The Fundamentals of Nutrition and Compound Movements, will be held on the following dates:

KNOW YOUR LIMITS LOGO

Following the success of the recent joint Know Your Limits alcohol campaign, the Department of Health (DH) is once again keen to partner with FIA members on a pre-Christmas consumer awareness campaign.

Planned to run from mid-November to mid-December, participating FIA members will be provided with free branded on- and off-line campaign collateral, as well as tips, ideas and copy for newsletters, and copies of the DH advertisement. These are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

- London – 27 October 2009
- Sheffield – 1 December 2009

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all change at number 10?

Steven Ward, the FIA's public affairs and policy manager, looks at the possible implications for the fitness industry of a change in government



The next election has the potential to bring about the most dramatic period of political change since 1997. In such times, it's necessary to take a moment to review the direction of policy and establish where this change may leave the health and fitness sector.

driving forward

In September's *HCM*, I covered the speech made by Secretary of State for Health, Andy Burnham. The lasting legacy of that speech will be the statement that physical activity is now "core business of the NHS".

The speech reinforced the commitment to Change4Life. Officials within the Department of Health (DH) are delighted at the impact that the campaign is having. Plans are afoot to develop the campaign into its second year, with a wider remit beyond children

and families to focus on men over the age of 50. It's up to our sector to continue to prove that we are able to take the high public awareness rates that the campaign is generating and turn it into action on the ground by helping people into active lifestyles.

The importance of physical activity as part of a preventative health strategy is wholeheartedly embraced by the Labour Party. The health and fitness sector has a willing partner in the current government, provided we can show how we can help meet its ambitions for a more active nation in a measured and outcomes-focused fashion.

new kids on the block

Given the context, you could certainly be forgiven for looking to the Conservative Party, galloping towards power, with a certain degree of fear.

The Labour Party is doing its best to re-attach the words "Conservative" and "cuts" in a way that masks the fact that the dire state of public finances will require a drastic reduction in public spending whichever party forms the government at the next election.

The UK has undergone a severe financial crisis which escalated into a deep recession. The government confirmed a projection of £1,370bn of

Public Sector Net Debt (PSND) for 2013/2014; by comparison, the PSND in 2007/08 was £527bn. Both major parties have accepted that cuts in spending are needed. Forget the current talk of "no-go" areas – after the election, all areas of spending will be under the spotlight.

Despite this situation, under a Conservative government the commitment to public health, and physical activity's role within it, will be maintained. Conservative plans include ring-fencing the NHS budget to treat the causes of ill health.

In the past year, David Cameron has consistently committed himself and his party to focusing on preventative care, stating in the document *Public Health: Our Priority* that: "We regard public health as a fundamental part of our social responsibility".

Over the summer, in a speech on the future of the NHS to counter the Labour-backed "WeLoveTheNHS" Twitter campaign, Cameron stated categorically: "We need to do all we can to reduce the demand for healthcare – and that means a much more effective approach to public health."

With the recently published Public Health Commission report as its foundation stone (see p28), the basis of a Conservative public health strategy is now in place.

no turning back

Regardless of who wins the next election, the direction of travel has already been set by the work that's being carried out by local authorities across the country, the majority of which are already under Conservative control following the recent elections.

Local authorities have a duty to select a number of National Indicators against which they are monitored – a number of which relate to health, wellbeing and physical activity. The performance of local authorities and Primary Care Trusts against the National Indicators selected is being closely monitored.

Out of a possible 189 indicators, FIA research shows that those relating to physical activity have been highly selected,



PICTURE: WWW.WISTOCK.COM/QUAN TEZAK

Local authority focus Physical activity is an area being targeted for improvement

leisureopportunities is the official recruitment magazine of the fia



Wider reach Change4Life may be extended to target men over the age of 50

indicating a consistent commitment across local authorities to engage with preventative health and physical wellbeing. A national election will not change what is happening on the ground any time soon.

Finally, perhaps the most important indicators of future development in this area are the views held within the country's most powerful institution: Her Majesty's Civil Service.

The FIA was disappointed to hear that Will Cavendish, director of Health and Wellbeing at DH, has taken a new role as director general of International Climate Change at the Department for Energy and Climate Change. We will wait to see whether his successor is able to build on his success. Liz Woodeson, current director of Health Protection, is tipped to take the post and be handed the responsibility of sustaining momentum.

The best intentions of key figures within the DH are often thwarted by their superiors at HM Treasury or elsewhere. However, public health and physical activity is sufficiently high on

the radar to address even this most challenging of barriers. In July, the head of the Civil Service Sir Gus O'Donnell explained that the current spending climate was a greater incentive to invest in prevention issues across the board, from obesity to climate change. He said government would be looking to spend on a cross-departmental basis where it was more efficient to do so.

starting blocks

The issue of public health and physical inactivity is not going away: this will remain the same regardless of the economic climate or governing party.

Burnham will be remembered for saying that physical activity is now "core business of the NHS" – but the fact is, for fitness operators in the local authority field, the NHS is already core business of fitness. It remains to be seen whether other sectors of the industry will join their colleagues in this space and increase the level of integration between the health and fitness sectors at the local level.





Woodford to lead support division

woodford joins alliance leisure

Sales and marketing consultant Paul Woodford has joined leisure services company Alliance Leisure.

Woodford will merge his own sales and marketing consultancy with Alliance, bringing his knowledge of the public and trust sectors in-house at the company.

Woodford's new role will see him lead Alliance's support division. He will be working closely with national partnership manager John Leaver to offer sales, marketing and retention solutions to more than 150 sites throughout the UK.

Woodford comments: "This is an excellent opportunity for me to bring my expertise to a leading company – one that continues to go from strength to strength."

in brief...

atlas to carry shokk on his shoulders

Youth fitness specialist SHOKK has appointed Sam Bond, better known as Atlas in the Sky One TV show *The Gladiators*, as its new national trainer.

Bond will be tasked with developing the strength conditioning aspects of the SHOKK training catalogue, including new military-style circuit sessions and a new product range.

Bond says: "Weight training is a fantastic way for young people to stay healthy and increase their interest in a positive lifestyle. Effective training can help them develop through life."

énergie names middle east chief

Nad Miyan has been appointed to head the operations of the énergie Group team in the Middle East.

The appointment follows an announcement earlier this year that The énergie Group has expanded its operations into the Middle East, with a master franchise granted to Ghanim Bin Saad Al Saad & Sons Holding Group. The first énergie-branded site is due to open in Doha this November.

Miyan began his career in Canada, after completing his education in the UK and the US. He has opened and operated clubs in Canada, the UK, Lebanon, Egypt, Qatar, UAE, Jordan and Bahrain, and has been based in the Middle East for the past 13 years.

He also ran his own consultancy business across the Middle East and North Africa for six years, with clients that included: The Nautilus Clubs in



Miyan: Industry passion and integrity

Beirut, Lebanon; Gold's Gym, Qatar and KSA; Intercontinental Hotels, Mena; Apple Fitness, KSA; and Accor Hotels.

A spokesperson for énergie says: "Nad's industry passion, integrity and goal-oriented approach has achieved seamless synergy with the core values of the énergie Group."

icaa appoints patrick hald

The International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) has appointed Patrick Hald as the association's president of business development.

In this role, Hald will be responsible for the ICAA 100 membership, the preferred vendors programme, sponsorships, advertising and future business development.

Hald joins ICAA from US-based FreeMotion Fitness, where he held the position of president and chief operating officer, overseeing marketing,

sales and education while leading the organisation's strategic development.

"I am excited to join the ICAA and its mission to unite the efforts of all the organisations focused on older adults, to benefit both the people they serve and the organisations themselves," says Hald.

Following the appointment, ICAA's chief executive and founder, Colin Milner, will focus his energies on the ICAA 2020 initiative to create a vision for the active-ageing industry.

assessor role for dc lifeguard

Jo Talbot, DC Leisure's group lifeguard manager, has qualified as a Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS) national trainer assessor, and is now able to deliver courses and train assessors.

In order to become a trainer assessor, Talbot completed an AI Assessor's qualification and a Certificate in Teaching Sport to demonstrate her ability.

Talbot joined DC Leisure when it began managing the Parish Wharf facility on behalf of North Somerset Council in 2004, and was promoted to her current senior group role in 2007.

first recruit for barnsley's employment programme

Tom Heeley, 18, from Hoyland in Barnsley, is celebrating his new full-time position as a lifeguard at the Metrodome Leisure Centre, after completing a 21-week work placement designed to give him a taste of the leisure industry.

Heeley is just one of 20 teenagers from across South Yorkshire who is currently enrolled on the Entry to Employment programme with Barnsley Premier Leisure, which gives school leavers the chance to gain recognised qualifications in the leisure industry.

PEOPLE PROFILE



steven bowcutt

The owner and operator of Mi Gym, an independent health club on Kite Beach Cabarete in the Dominican Republic, has worked in the industry for over 26 years

What initially sparked your interest in the fitness sector?

I was an injured US marine and needed to rehabilitate myself after a military accident. I found a job in the fitness industry reviving the bankrupt Concept 90, a specialist fitness organisation that later purchased Biodyne Fitness, then Carolina Fitness. The group was called Home Fitness studio (HFS).

How has your career progressed?

At HFS I worked my way up to VP of operations. We acquired several companies from the auction block and grew the company until the CEO and CFO decided to take it public. I left and moved to a smaller company formed by Jeff Bernier, another industry veteran.

I then decided to start my own company, Your Health and Fitness Source (now Island Fitness). After a few years of that I was exhausted and needed a significant change. My wife and I sold the company and our homes and, after making a few trips to my wife's homeland, the Dominican Republic, we decided that Cabarete was for us. We now live just off of the beach in the kitesurfing capital of the world, Kite Beach.

Why did you set up Mi Gym?

We simply got fed up with the rat race, and with all the costs of living

that continued to rise – insurance, health care costs for the small business and our family, and so on.

What does your typical day entail?

Mi Gym is a small but diverse facility located directly on Kite Beach. We now have members from all over the world, many of whom – just like us – are watersports enthusiasts.

I open the gym most mornings, then at around 10.00am I get in a full workout, go home for lunch, come back around 4.00pm and then close the gym around 8.00pm, normally after a full class of group cycling, plyometrics, yoga and/or extreme body.

Is there anything you would do differently if you started again?

There are always things that any good business person thinks they should have done differently. This being said, we're flexible and adapt where necessary, and we try to keep on the edge of our ever-changing market.

What are your objectives for Mi Gym – any plans for expansion?

We are pretty happy with the size and offerings of the gym/studio. What we need now is to maximise each hour of every day!

What are your personal plans?

My ambitions now surround my family, where in the past they have revolved around the business and our income.

What's your favourite quote?

It's a quote by Brian Tracy, the self-help Christian author: "All successful people, men and women, are big dreamers. They imagine what their future could be, ideal in every respect, and then they work every day towards their vision, goal or purpose."

HEALTH CLUB
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HANDBOOK

2010



The 6th edition of the Health Club Management Handbook will be published in January 2010. The handbook is a comprehensive guide and reference tool that is distributed to industry operators, suppliers, FIA members and to industry buyers at events such as LIW, SIBEC and IHRSA.

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BOOKING DEADLINE:
27 NOVEMBER 2009



Kite Beach Cabarete: Kitesurf capital

competitive edge

15 & 29 NOVEMBER 09

a chance to dance

Marie Curie Cancer Care has taken inspiration from TV show *Strictly Come Dancing* to launch this sponsored dance event. First you'll be challenged to complete three workshops – one ballroom, one Latin and one modern – taught by top dance professionals. The climax of the day is a choreographed group dance routine. The events take place in Manchester on 15 November and Cardiff on 29 November. Registration is £15 and the minimum sponsorship is £100. Details: www.mariecurie.org.uk

Three workshops will be taught by top dance professionals



4-7 MARCH 10

white peaks ski marathon: italy

Ski or board 24 peaks in 48 hours in this marathon for cerebral palsy charity Scope. The challenge takes place on the Italian slopes of the Milky Way, the country's largest ski area, with world-class Olympic runs. Registration costs £100 and at least £1,500 must be raised. The event, now in its 12th year, has attracted over 1,000 people who have raised £1.75m. Details: www.scope.org.uk



Ski or board 24 peaks in 48 hours

15 MAY 10

three peaks bike & hike

This new team event sees participants hike three peaks in the Yorkshire Dales and bike the distances in between them. The peaks include Pen y Gen (694m), Whernside (736m) and Ingleborough (724m). The total distance covered is around 80km and the average team is likely to finish in eight to nine hours. The challenge is open to teams of four, with the group registration and sponsorship set at £195 and £1,600. Funds will help Action Medical Research explore areas such as meningitis, premature birth, cot death, osteoporosis and asthma. Details: www.actionforcharity.co.uk



Hike and bike in the Yorkshire Dales

© BROCKHOTO.COM/GEORGE GREEN



240-mile route ends in Paris

1-4 JULY 10

care london to paris cycle

This challenge involves individuals or teams cycling from London to Paris – a total of 240 miles – in three days. Leaving the bustle of the London behind, you will bike through tranquil rural England to Portsmouth, crossing the channel by ferry to Ouistreham. The route then winds through idyllic vineyards and quaint villages to Paris. The minimum sponsorship is £1,300 per person. Money will fund CARE's poverty-fighting programmes overseas. Details: www.carechallenge.org.uk



This year's BISL Conference will take place at Lord's Cricket Ground in London

OCTOBER

22-24 | IHRSA/Fitness Brasil Latin America Conference & Trade Show

Venue Transamerica Expo Center, São Paulo, Brazil
Summary

The largest fitness trade show in Latin America, with an education programme.
 Tel +1 617 951 0055
 Web www.ihrsa.org

27 | The Fundamentals of Nutrition and Compound Movements – FIA seminar

Venue Esportiva 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

28-30 | FSB

Venue Cologne, Germany
Summary
 An international trade fair for amenity areas, sports and pool facilities.
 Tel +49 221 821 2495
 Web www.fsb-cologne.com

NOVEMBER

4-7 | SIBEC UK & Europe

Venue Split, Croatia
Summary
 A one-to-one meeting forum for operators from the private, local authority and trust markets in health, fitness and leisure, and leading suppliers, with more than 200 delegates from across Europe.
 Tel +44 (0)20 8547 9830
 Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

10-13 | IHRSA Asia-Pacific

Venue Tokyo, Japan
Summary
 Speakers provide commentary on trends shaping the industry in the Pacific Rim.
 Tel +1 617 951 0055
 Web www.ihrsa.org

12 | BISL Conference 2009

Venue Lord's Cricket Ground, St John's Wood, London
Summary
 Aimed at the leisure, gaming, sport and hospitality sectors. Keynote speakers will include Minister for Sport Gerry Sutcliffe MP and Magnus Scheving, creator of kids' TV programme Lazy Town. *Leisure Management* is the official magazine.
 Tel +44 (0)20 8255 3782
 Web www.bisl.org

12 & 26 | Inclusive Connections

Venue Danes Camp Leisure Centre, Northampton (12 Nov). Venue to be confirmed for 26 Nov
Summary
 Delivered by the IFI, this event will help operators explore how they can develop links within the community. All accredited IFI facilities are entitled to two free places.
 Tel +44 (0)114 257 2061
 Web www.inclusivefitness.org

DECEMBER

1 | The Fundamentals of Nutrition and Compound Movements – FIA seminar

Venue English Institute of Sport, Sheffield,
Summary
 A repeat of October's London seminar.
 Tel +44 (0)20 7420 8578
 Web www.fia.org.uk

HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

2010

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BOOKING DEADLINE:
27 NOVEMBER 2009

everyone's talking about . . .

public health report

The Conservative Party's Public Health Commission released details of its public health strategy in July. How does the fitness industry factor in this and what do key industry bodies think about it?

Last year, the Conservative Party formed a Public Health Commission (PHC) comprising industry, academic and charitable sector representatives, including Fred Turok, chair of the FIA. Its aim was to develop a public health strategy to tackle the challenges of diet, physical activity and alcohol consumption in the UK. The final report of the PHC, *We're All In This Together*, was published in July.

In a previous HCM issue (see August 09, p20) the FIA public affairs and policy manager, Steven Ward, observed that the report makes 48 specific recommendations. These include a

call for government to match-fund evidence-based corporate wellness programmes implemented by small and medium-sized enterprises.

Other suggestions were to ring-fence Primary Care Trust budgets at a local level, so funding is not absorbed by the NHS in general, and to review the Quality of Outcomes Framework (QOF) – the system that monitors GP practices and that awards 73 QOF points for referring patients onto smoking cessation programmes, but zero QOF points for exercise referral.

The recommendation that received the most attention, however, was the call to re-position physical activity as a

healthcare provision. As part of this, the PHC suggests VAT on physical activity should be reduced to 5 per cent.

"An individual should not be penalised... if they're doing something to benefit their health through improved levels of physical activity," said Ward. "It's time to shift the balance of debate away from 'energy in' [the food sector] and focus resources on encouraging 'energy out' [the fitness industry]."

So, is the strategy outlined by the Conservative Party's PHC the best way to tackle the issues of our sedentary nation, or is it fundamentally flawed? Are there any considerations the report has failed to identify?

DOES THE PHC REPRESENT THE RIGHT APPROACH TO PUBLIC HEALTH? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

john bell

honorary secretary • chief cultural & leisure officers association



"It's unfortunate the PHC didn't include a single person from local government. Indeed, local government isn't mentioned in the report at all – surprising given the massive importance of its services and facilities in promoting health and exercise. Neither is sport mentioned – again, a real omission given the boost the London 2012

Olympic Games will give to sport and physical activity.

The report emphasises the importance of partnership working, which CLOA endorses. However, it fails to mention existing good practice, such as the work of chief leisure officers, which has led to significant investment by PCTs into physical activity, GP referral schemes and health screening.

A single vehicle is proposed to deliver the recommendations, yet as currently built, this vehicle has a wheel missing: local government and PCTs. Consider the importance of parks and recreation grounds owned and managed by local authorities. The value of these spaces for informal and formal recreation – walking, cycling and outdoor sport – is immeasurable. CLOA is keen to work with the PHC and add value to the important debate on healthy lifestyle and physical activity."

fred turok

chair • fitness industry association



"After 20 years of lobbying politicians, civil servants, the healthcare community and all of its advisors on the importance of physical activity in health and wellbeing, it suddenly seems as though they 'get it'.

What is so special about the PHC recommendations is the desire to incentivise and reward consumers and

operators by reducing VAT on gym membership and removing employers' tax liability for gym membership provision. Will this tackle the nation's public health time-bomb? The answer is a qualified yes. If we reduce the barriers to exercise and employers are not penalised for promoting activity-led staff wellbeing programmes, then we will have made a huge start.

However, the fitness industry still needs a sustained high-profile health education programme – similar to Change4Life – and we still need to stretch our imaginative and innovative skills, possibly delivering our services outside of our facilities and working more effectively with food manufacturers.

In addition, the healthcare sector also has to play its role, whether it's incentivised to do so via QOF points, or because it 'gets it' and the Hippocratic oath dictates it."



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Physically active consumers would benefit financially from the PHC's proposals to cut VAT on gym memberships

sue sutton

chief executive • institute for sport, parks and leisure



This report promises all the right things: a simple strategy with a clear and consistent message delivered in partnership across business and government. Although we often hear the expression 'joined-up thinking', the report should still be welcomed.

Physical activity has for too long wandered the corridors of power as a poor relation, not quite belonging to anyone. There is a logical link between physical activity, eating habits and health, and our sector has been championing this message for some time and showing some fantastic results, albeit in pockets. If physical activity is re-positioned as a healthcare provision, then at last it will have a home. At last someone, somewhere will be accountable – and with accountability comes results.

The three-pillar approach – that of diet and exercise, responsible drinking and workplace health – delivers a simple message that's very difficult to misunderstand. The only real area the report doesn't touch on, however, is the cultural drive and the difficulty of influencing people to make lifestyle changes. Also, if public health is truly a time-bomb in the making, should it not be a cross-party working opportunity??

ralph riley

chief executive • institute of sport and recreation management



I think it's great if physical activity is becoming recognised as something that can save the NHS money. If that's what this report is intended to do, the ISRM would back it. But unless you can make significant changes to what drives our health service – where funding only targets those with ill health, rather than prevention – then this is all just rhetoric.

I think it's important to point out that, while physical activity has been mentioned in the document, the vast majority of it still focuses on issues concerning the food and drink industry.

The other two major elements that are missing are sport and local authorities. Sport is a super way of conducting physical activity, and it could be argued that the team effort and social element means people are far more likely to stick to it. There was a representative from the FIA in the PHC, but no-one from the sports sector. Local authorities play a huge role in providing sport, recreational and physical activity opportunities and spaces where the majority of the public exercise – yet they weren't even represented around the table either and, apart from local area agreements, there's nothing that touches on helping, support or encouraging local authorities.??

BRIAN MORRIS



Diversification The Berlin club (both photos shown here) is now being extended to include a hotel

The CEO of Aspria talks to Kate Cracknell about the challenges of operating in Europe, a penchant for difficult projects, and a focus on service that permeates the whole business

For all that Aspria owns six large, top-end clubs in Belgium and Germany, CEO Brian Morris is categorical in his view that the company is not a health and fitness operation.

"We're a service business first," he states. "We have a brilliant fitness offering, but to say we're a fitness business would be a misrepresentation of what we're about – it accounts for well under 20 per cent of our entire floor space. What we have are lots of elements that we put together in one place – spa, childcare, restaurants and bars, conference facilities, fitness. A kind of conglomeration of my background."

Coming out of university into a job at Whitbread, that background is in real estate: "I found I enjoyed doing real estate for a reason, rather than real estate for itself," Morris explains.

"I was in the non-pub division at Whitbread – restaurants, hotels, country clubs – which was people-focused more than anything. That's what I most enjoyed about the job, and why I eventually migrated from the physical construction and development of buildings to the operational side."

a third place

That migration resulted in Morris, along with Peter Beckwith, setting up a health club business in the 1980s – the top-end Riverside and Espree health clubs. Fast-forward to the mid-1990s when, having sold this business, Morris and Beckwith were faced with a four-year non-compete clause barring them from re-entering the UK with a new fitness offering. By this point, the two men had "developed a passion for the club business" so, with the out-of-bounds UK market in any case increasingly saturated,

they turned their eyes to the Continent in search of more immediate opportunities.

Perhaps surprisingly, at least at face value given the size of the market, their first club opened in Belgium; launched under the Aspria umbrella, the high-end facility opened in Brussels in 2001. Why did they choose this location?

"It's an incredibly international place and that suited our business model – support for the family is key to our offering," says Morris. "We were looking for international families who understood what we were offering and who took childcare seriously – often because they had to, because they were ex-pats or had relocated and hadn't yet formed their social circle."

"What we were doing was creating the third place that everyone talks about: work, home and club. An oasis where members could come and interact and where language wasn't quite so important; we have 70 nationalities represented in our membership in Brussels alone."

"We then moved to Germany, because it's the biggest market in Europe in



People focus Aspria has "a brilliant fitness offering" but is "a service business first" says Morris (far left)

terms of volume of people and buying power. It's not the easiest market by a long way though. There are a lot of very conservative people, although that varies by city, and even within one club, different members display quite different characteristics in the way they use the club and the way they react to membership. It's taken us nine long years to get that, and for our offering to be understood, and I think anyone coming in to the market ought to do so with their eyes open, or alternatively have an extremely simple product – which is why budget operator McFit has done so well."

meeting the challenge

Fair to say, though, that Morris and Aspria chair Beckwith relish this sort of challenge. "Our projects tend to have a level of complexity that most operators would find daunting, but it's something we enjoy. I think that's partly what makes us different – we like taking on difficult things. Listed buildings, complicated sites, horrible planning consents. It's what we've been good at for 20 years.

"For example, we have a club under development at the moment in Germany which I expect to open in 2012. I've been working on it for 10 years, since before we even founded Aspria, and it's horribly, horribly political. But we finally cut through all of that and it will be, I believe, unique in Germany – the first time a development has involved a three-way partnership between operator, sports club and local government."

Aspria is – partly as a result of this complexity – "a collection of clubs". Morris explains: "We don't enforce the brand image every time because it's not appropriate. For example, as with most of our clubs, Royal La Rasante in Brussels was a new build, but it's on the site of a famous sports club that's over 100 years old. We wouldn't want to stick our brand on it and potentially destroy that heritage, as it's important to the club and relevant to the membership – there's a sense of belonging."

meeting local needs

Once you appreciate the complexity of each and every Aspria project, you begin▶

ASPRIA SNAPSHOT

KEY DATES:

2001: First club opens in Brussels
2002: Launch of Aspria in Germany
2005: Opening of Royal La Rasante, Aspria's largest club at 13,000sq m
2009: The Aspria portfolio reaches six clubs with the opening of the Hannover site

CLUB LOCATIONS:

Belgium: Aspria Club Brussels, Royal La Rasante, Avenue Louise
Germany: Hamburg, Berlin, Hannover

FINANCIALS:

Ownership: Privately owned by Brian Morris, Peter Beckwith and private investment company Apollo
Investment to date: "Well over €120m in the six clubs"
Turnover: Approaching €40m

▶ to understand why there are still only six clubs in the portfolio. Are there plans for more? "I'm always ambitious for the company. I think it's right to grow – although, with the size of the projects we undertake, it will only be at a rate of one or two clubs a year. Equally important is to continually evolve the offering, both in our new developments and at existing sites."

With the non-compete clause now long expired, would Aspria consider entering the UK as part of this growth plan? "I wouldn't rule it out if there were something really special, but I'm not particularly looking for it. One of the reasons we went to continental Europe was that they didn't really have anything like our clubs out there. Companies will always be able to compete with pieces of our jigsaw, but if people want the full package, there's nothing that really compares."

growth potential

So how about expansion into other European, or even global, markets? There's an enigmatic smile that implies 'yes, but I'm not willing to talk details yet' and Morris' actual response is pragmatic: "We're not restricted in any market, so we're able to take on opportunities wherever it makes sense to do so. But we have plenty to do where we already are, and development in foreign countries is a lot less straightforward than it looks. The last nine years have been very hard work."

"Sometimes what we thought would work wasn't actually what the market wanted, and we had to adapt very quickly. Hannover, which opened earlier this year, is a case in point with its 3,000sq m day spa – our first. We've never wanted to go into the area of pay and play, with the unpredictable revenue that entails. But at Hannover, it isn't just a day spa – it's a hybrid, as members of the club are all members of the spa too."

"We've also built a 20-room lodge at Hannover, which was something our members asked for – especially our corporate partners who use the conference facilities. The club's very central, but feels like a destination – it has the spa, but it's also situated on a lake with a beach, which we run, and feels a bit like being in Hyde Park."

"Our club in Berlin, meanwhile, is in the heart of the city, and demand for the hotel we're opening there this month – a

conversion of a former office block – is as much about Berlin being a tourist and business destination as anything else."

"Staying in our accommodation is like staying in a club rather than a hotel. It's a lot friendlier and there's more engagement – a large number of our guests will use the club facilities and feel like members of the extended family. You can also bring your kids; if you want a night out, our highly qualified nannies and carers will baby-sit them for you."

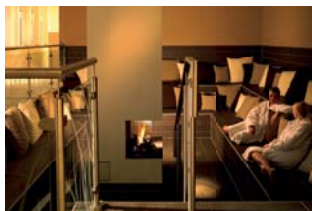
"The way we run our hotels makes it less about price and location and more about the experience. That makes it harder for you to leave us; in Hannover, we're already experiencing huge repeat business after just four months."

"One of the things we're mindful of is creating fluidity around the package, bringing it all together in such a way that people will use us for one reason one day and a totally different reason the next. We offer spa. We have 110 classes for children and around 140 for adults. There's always going to be something for you within the breadth of our offering, and whatever you come to us for, you should leave us happier, healthier and more together than when you arrived."

So does this mark a change of direction for Aspria – will the company develop hotels and spas in new clubs going forward? "Probably," says Morris. "I think my background in hotels and country clubs at Whitbread meant it was something I was perhaps destined to do at some point. We're also looking at other avenues for diversification – there are more innovations to come."

"However, we also have to keep our feet on the ground, doing the basics consistently right. And I think we do as a general rule. People stay a long time, both in the clubs and as members, and

Destination Hannover Aspria's newest club is set within extensive grounds that encompass a lake with a beach. There is also a day spa (below)



70 or 80 per cent of our membership has come from member referral. There's a sense of belonging that's reinforced by the family nature of the clubs – you grow through the club as your children get older and you develop friends there."

"Ultimately, though, it's about motivated, service-led staff who welcome and care for our members."

"Our clubs are big, complex and capital-intensive – perhaps for that reason they're slower to break even and make profits. But we create special places and, in the long run, it's a ship that's difficult to stop."



kate cracknell
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GETTING FIT 4 LESS

Mike Hill, MD of Leisure-net Solutions, pays a mystery shopper visit to the first énergie Fit4less site in Swindon, and gives his verdict on the budget club's offering

before the visit

Budget clubs are, in addition to the low prices, all about making it easy to use and join a club – right? So the starting point should be an easy to use website with a clear proposition and the opportunity to join online. Well, I found the new Fit4less site easily enough, and first impressions were of a well put-together, clean, fresh-looking site. A nice introduction from the general manager on the front page got me so motivated that I registered straight away for a Free One Day Pass to try the gym – but two weeks later I'd had no response.

I then thought perhaps I'd join straight away, rather than simply trialling the club, using their simple, four-stage online membership joining system. However, I couldn't get past the first stage – I don't think it was actually live yet, in spite of the club already being open for a month and a half.

Add to this some confusing messages about "money back guarantees" and "try before you buy" – with no way to sign up for this and no call to action – combined with no mention of the key selling point – i.e. the low monthly fees – and overall the website experience left a lot to be desired.

I therefore found the telephone number and rang them on a Monday



The reception area is spacious and welcoming, with good marketing messages

morning. The phone call was answered within three rings, better than most clubs, with a nice friendly greeting including the person's name and the name of the club. I said I was interested in joining a gym and asked how much membership cost. Straight away I was given the price, joining fee and a long detailed explanation about how the first direct debit would be worked out.

I waited to see if she would ask anything about me... but no, that was it. So I asked if I could pop in to see the place. The response: "Oh yes, any time." I realised I would need to take the initiative, so said I would come in that afternoon around 2 o'clock.

I was then asked for my name and telephone number and told who to ask for when I came in.

location

The club was easy to find using the map on the website, and its distinctive bright lime green exterior stood out in the semi-industrial/semi-residential area on the outskirts of Swindon. The car park was fairly empty, clean and tidy. Access was easy and wheelchair-friendly, although a couple of car park barrier poles lay loose across the entrance.

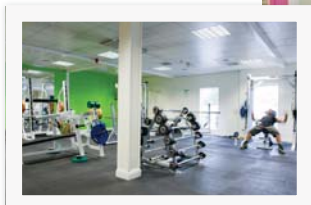
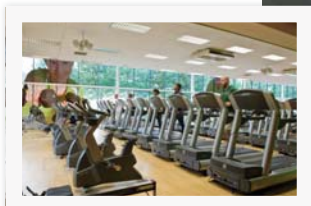
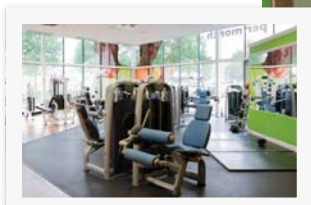
first impressions

The club has a very unusual design, as it was originally a converted car



Glass windows form the entire frontage of the recently rebranded club





There's a "good range of facilities in a spacious environment", including two floors of CV and strength kit and studios for PT

showroom, so has large glass windows across the whole frontage. The reception area was spacious and welcoming, with some good marketing messages hitting you as soon as you walked in. Although obviously a refurb, the recent rebrand from a Fitness First club generally worked.

the experience

I introduced myself at reception to the young woman on duty, who gave me her name and seemed to be expecting me, asking if I would like a look around. The tour was friendly but quite museum-like, concentrating on the facilities and equipment; she asked me a couple of questions about what I like to use equipment-wise, and if I had been a member of a gym before, but it was all very casual and over within five minutes.

facilities

The club was pretty quiet, with about a dozen people in at the most – it was a

Monday afternoon. However, the whole place was clean and tidy and the equipment looked in good order, with nothing out of action.

The key facilities were: two floors of CV and strength equipment; studios, which were only being used for personal training; a good free weights area; rooms for therapy and hairdressing, leased out to external operators; and a small vending and relaxation area.

The changing rooms were of a reasonable standard, and toilets and shower areas all well kept and stocked up with shower gel and so on. However, one member did joke with me about "not bothering to use the showers", which led me to wonder if there was a problem with them.

The club had a feeling of being refurbished, with some of the areas and equipment looking older than the parts that had been rebranded and painted over, and generally I felt it had a bit of a budget feel to it.



I only saw one member of staff on duty while I was there, although there was apparently a "manager in the office". Either way, staffing was light.



For a regular, self-motivated gym-goer, the club offers great value for money

▶ aftercare

At the end of the tour, I waited to see if the staff member would ask if I wanted to join, but she didn't. I therefore asked her to go through the membership details again, which she did verbally – £16.95 a month, £29 joining fee and no tie-in. However, she didn't write it down or give me any information.

I also had a friend with me, but we weren't asked at any stage if she would be interested in joining with me.

I then said thank you and that I would think about it, and she asked if she could give me a ring in a couple of days to see if I was still interested. She only had my name and mobile number – no address.

conclusion

If I lived or worked in or around Swindon and didn't want to swim, then this would be a great, no nonsense, value for money membership for someone like me. I don't need a good induction, a regularly reviewed programme or a lot of support/encouragement.

Although it was quiet on the day, the club had some nice touches in terms of customer engagement: a "You said... We did" board similar to those seen in Asda, for example, and a great board with the top 10 regular attenders for the month,

all of who could pick up a prize from reception – 'name and praise' at its best.

However, the club has no group exercise programming at the moment, although the staff member said this was currently being considered. The studios were lying unused much of the time, and this seemed to be a missed opportunity, especially given the young professional types that I think the club will attract. I appreciate that it's difficult to factor inclusive class programming into a £16.99 monthly membership, but I think it needs to be there as an optional add-on.

The biggest issue was the sales process, which was poor from start to finish. The website needs to be finished off, not put live with missing functionality and poorly explained offers and propositions. Also, with such a low price point, it should be fairly easy to have a high tour-to-sale conversion rate – but not if you don't ask people if they want to join!

scores

Environment: 6/10

It does what it says on the tin... budget and feels like it

Experience: 5/10

Poor sales process starting with the website, little atmosphere and no excitement – although it was a quiet sunny weekday in August...

Facilities: 8/10

Considering price, there was a good range of facilities in a spacious environment

Value for money: 8/10

For a regular, self-motivated gym user like me, £16.99 a month represents great value for money



mike hill

healthclub@leisuremedia.com

Welcome to

Fit4less
by énergie

Swindon

right to reply

"I'm pleased that Mike felt the énergie Group's Fit4less Swindon club offers '... a great, no nonsense, value for money membership'. Superb facilities, along with the very best value for money, are signatures of énergie's Fit4less offer and Mike's observations reinforce that.

"At énergie, we're incredibly proud of the Fit4less model as we feel it has set a new standard in the affordable fitness market. The feedback from members has been incredible, confirming our belief that we've created the best value for money offer available.

"At énergie, we're continually improving on our systems of operation; converting the Swindon site into the first Fit4less club has enabled us to fine-tune the operation before the first franchised Fit4less businesses open later this year.

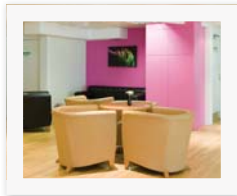
"Our highly successful online joining process, already in place within the group, wasn't activated at the time of Mike's visit, but is now. This allows joining and membership activation from home, the office or on the move, as well as from the Join Zone we've created within the club.

"We've maintained some aspects of the traditional membership sales process, but want to give the consumer plenty of choice and flexibility in their decision around joining – the price point and no membership contract are examples of this. That said, Mike's tour experience was disappointing and an area for us to work on with the team. Even with over 220 membership sales in the month, asking for the business is still vital!

"Overall, we're pleased that Mike reported back on a well presented, great value for money club that champions the cause of the consumer. We would like to thank him for his comments."

david beattie

brand & marketing director, énergie



research round-up

A study has found that men who swim regularly are half as likely to die prematurely as those who walk or jog. We find out more

stroke of genius

Swimming has always been a popular activity in the UK: a recent study by Sport England shows it's one of the nation's favourite types of exercise (see below).

Now research has also shown just how good it is for you. A study which followed more than 40,000 men has found that swimming can help you live longer than either walking or jogging.

gathering data

The study, which was carried out by the University of South Carolina in Columbia, US, took place over a period of more than 30 years, from 1971 to 2003. It focused on 40,547 men aged between 20 and 90 years, a large majority of whom were white and from the middle or upper socio-economic demographic.

Each participant underwent a health examination. Their physical activity status was then categorised into four groups according to the type of physical activity they did during the three months before each examination.

Sedentary participants were those who said they didn't take part in any exercise. Walkers were those who reported taking part in a run/walk/jog programme with an average pace of



Swimmers have a 49 per cent lower all-cause mortality risk than runners

15 minutes a mile or slower, and who agreed that they walked for 75 per cent of the programme. Runners participated in a run/walk/jog programme with an average pace of under 15 minutes a mile and said they walked for less than 25 per cent of the programme. Swimmers

were those who were exclusively engaged in swimming for exercise.

The split between groups was: 15,883 sedentary people, 3,746 walkers, 20,536 runners and 562 swimmers.

the results

There were 3,386 deaths during the study, all of whom – compared with the survivors – were older with lower fitness levels and a higher prevalence of major cardiovascular disease risk factors. A larger number (52 per cent) of those who died were sedentary, followed by runners (39 per cent) and walkers (9 per cent). The swimming group had the least number of deaths (only 0.003 per cent).

After adjustment for age, BMI, smoking status, alcohol intake and family history of cardiovascular disease, swimmers had a lower all-cause mortality risk than the men who were sedentary, walkers or runners (53 per cent, 50 per cent and 49 per cent respectively).

happy swimmers

New research shows a high level of satisfaction among people who swim. Overall, 79.1 per cent of swimmers questioned in a Sport England survey said they were happy with their sport – a higher satisfaction level than those who take part in football, hockey and netball.

In the report, regular participants from over 40 sports, including swimming, gave an overall satisfaction rating for their sport. To calculate

this, participants were asked to rate their sport across 10 areas including coaching, exertion and fitness, facilities and value for money.

However, the sport with the highest levels of satisfaction was Taekwondo (85.9 per cent), followed by orienteering, judo and golf.

The survey was conducted among 44,390 people across England – general participants in sports as well as affiliated club members.



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falling into GOOD HABITS

Kate Cracknell takes a look at a selection of children's physical activity initiatives, and asks how these programmes can help develop an exercise habit in today's young people

We've all seen the dizzying figures on childhood obesity. We know how important it is to develop an exercise habit at any early age. And yet we've all experienced how tough it can be to engage some children in any form of physical activity. So just how do we go about shaping their behaviour so that physical activity becomes second nature? How can we create in them that all-important exercise habit? We take a look at a selection of children's physical activity programmes to see what elements can be introduced to encourage lifelong participation.



Mentors Instructors lead 'mat chats' at the end of every Harpers Strike session

HARPERS STRIKE

leisure connection

Harpers Strike is a programme aimed at 4- to 16-year-olds. Designed to teach the art of performance martial arts, it also positions the instructors as mentors who gain the respect of the young people participating. These instructors then have the credibility to lead brief 'mat chats' at the end of each session. These can cover anything from teamwork to modesty and respect, and from perseverance to the importance of confidence and posture – walking tall and proud to deter bullies, for example.

They also cover healthy eating – the importance of fuelling your body with the right things – and regular physical activity. The mat chat for nutrition talks about 'five a day' and explains how what we put in our bodies determines what type of person we will be. The kids are

told about research showing that, if a child consumes five servings of fruits or vegetables a day, they receive the vitamins, minerals and fibre needed to increase their chances of good health and staying disease-free.

They're then given examples to bring this to life: a serving of fruit juice at breakfast, grapes or raisins for a mid-

morning snack, a serving of carrots and a banana at lunch, an apple with peanut butter for an after-school snack, and then eating whatever vegetables your parents prepare at dinner. This is all made more appealing and realistic by saying: "Then, after dinner, you could feel good about rewarding yourself with a sweet treat!"

They kids are also given relevant role models to make this sort of healthy lifestyle more attractive: "Imagine you're a professional athlete – they only eat the best and healthiest food to ensure their physical performance. Or think of your body as a finely-tuned sports car – you only put the highest performance fuel in a machine like that to ensure it out-performs all the other cars. By eating healthily, you will stay strong, perform better in your sports, and keep your mind sharp and alert for school."



Harpers Strike Teaches kids about the importance of being physically active

► MEND GRADUATE SCHEME

● jubilee hall clubs (jhc)

JHC has successfully been running the MEND programme (the nutrition and weight loss scheme for obese kids) for some time, but was concerned that those completing the course might not have the necessary guidance, or indeed the opportunity, to keep up their newfound good habits. The trust therefore created its MEND graduate programme – a follow-up scheme open to all those who have 'graduated' from the MEND programme run at its clubs.

The scheme is organised in two phases. The first phase covers the first three months after graduation. During this time, the children are invited to return to the school premises with which they have become familiar during MEND, also meeting with the same exercise leader as before – familiarity with both staff and premises is key.

They are offered one exercise class a week for three months, with a reward card to motivate attendance. Each child receives a star on their card every time they attend a class; when they've collected eight stars, they're entitled to a reward event with their friends from the group. This is normally a fun activity

that may well also be a new physical experience for them, such as ice skating, bowling or a dance class.

At the end of the first phase, JHC interviews each family to find out if they enjoyed the experience and if they have any suggestion for activities/reward days.

If a child attends at least eight classes, they are entitled to access phase two of the scheme. This normally marks the moment at which a family has gained enough confidence to use the facilities available at a community level, so these classes move from the school environment into a community sports centre. The instructor and class type also change, adding variety to the training.

As a way of incentivising participation, parents are also offered the opportunity to use the gym/sports centre facilities free of charge – parents are ideally encouraged to attend at the same time as their children, as this is found to further promote participation. The reward scheme is also extended to families at this stage.

JHC is now looking at introducing some parents' classes during phase one of the scheme.



Variety is the spice of life
SLM's FUNDamentals introduces kids to a range of activities, hoping they will find something they love

SPORTING FUNDAMENTALS

● slm

Designed for kids under the age of 11, FUNDamentals sessions are well structured through the use of resource cards and pick up on different sports – such as tri-golf, indoor curling, badminton, basketball, athletics and tennis – to develop physical capabilities and provide activity skills that will set kids up for life.

All the children are given an activity diary to log activities done in the scheduled sessions, as well as in their own time. This diary is a key element

Y ACTIVE

● central ymca

Y Active is the children's health and fitness programme devised, run, managed and delivered by a dedicated team of Central YMCA staff. It aims to inspire 2- to 14-year-olds to make fitness and health a real and significant part of their lives – and a choice, not a chore.

With a focus on fun, it offers a range of activities, from trampolining, football, gymnastics, Aikido and swimming to street dance, drama and the creative arts. It's designed to help children learn how to lead a generally healthier life, for example through healthy eating initiatives, and is underlined by a strong 'making healthy living accessible to all' ethos.



MEND Teaching children and their families about nutrition and healthy living



in the FUNdamentals approach to developing a lifelong habit. It sets a target: "Keep a note of what activities you do every day and add up the time you spend doing them at the end of the week. Can you reach the target of 300 minutes a week? (That's about 45 minutes a day). Go for it!" and makes this seem achievable by explaining how everyday activities such as "walking the dog, playing in the park, PE at school or simply running to the shops" count.

There are also pages for stickers to log participation in each organised session, which gives the kids something to show for their efforts and keeps them engaged. And crucially, the diary challenges them to think about what they're enjoying in the programme, identifying activities they may then want to continue with: "What did you enjoy about this week's sessions? Did you have a favourite activity you enjoyed the most? Write down everything you loved!"

The programme is largely run from the site of the Central YMCA Club in central London. However, Y Active is increasingly involved in outreach work, with the team asked to develop and deliver programmes in schools.

In 2005, for example, Y Active developed a programme to improve the health and fitness levels of pupils aged 4 to 11 at Soho Parish School in Soho, central London. This rapidly grew to encompass a wide range of fitness and physical activity sessions in the lunch hour and after school – there are now 23 activity classes a week, throughout the school term,

offering a wide range of physical and more specialist activities to cater for all interests and therefore engage all kids. All pupils must attend at least one lunchtime class each week.

Meanwhile a breakfast club, open to all pupils, offers a healthy breakfast and the opportunity to participate in a fitness/sporting/physical activity session before the start of normal school classes.

An after-school Play Club also offers nutritious food and provides a base for kids that focuses on care through play and activity. It also acts as a hub for all after school activities, in which 95 per cent of pupils now take part.

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OTHER HABIT-FORMING INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

HOUNSLOW DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

● supported by fusion

Hounslow's CSPAN (Community Sports and Physical Activity Network) identified that participation in sport and leisure by local women and girls was low, and that investment was required to support and sustain development in female-specific pathways into sport. Its solution was for a specialist post to be created, and it put in a successful CIF Bid to Sport England to recruit a women and girls development officer.

Programmes now overseen by the new officer include the GO Urban Project, which allows girls to try new sports in a female-friendly environment and without

male peer pressure. This is an opportunity to build their confidence, hopefully allowing them to go on and exercise in other, mixed-sex environments in the future.

Meanwhile, dance mats have been used to engage the 14–19 age group into being physically active. The idea is to slowly increase their confidence and self-esteem, also gradually introducing new sports into the scheme to improve their ability and their fitness levels. It's hoped the girls will, as a result, be more likely to appreciate success and remain participants in activities and sport.

FITTER KIDS PROGRAMME

● bulmershe secondary school

Woodley Town Council worked in partnership with Bulmershe School and Fit For Sport to create a Fitter Kids initiative. Around 60 young people aged 13–16 were invited to an open day, with 24 disengaged youths selected – none of whom were initially interested in getting active.

The 12-week programme involved a weekly two-hour club: an hour's activity followed by 20 minutes of theory – logging food diary, goal setting and so on – to encourage the young people to think about leading a healthier lifestyle on a long-term basis.

The remainder of the session involved a surprise activity, which ranged from volleyball to street dance and judo. In addition to the instructors taking these sessions, people from the local community also got involved to encourage the young people to sustain their activity.

And it's worked: since the end of the programme, one participant has got into a swim squad and another is cycling to school every day.



Driving attendance Barrow is running a member competition to win a Wii Fit

ATTENDANCE REWARD SCHEME

● the park leisure centre, barrow (pulse)

Points collection schemes are often used as a way of developing an exercise habit in children and young people (see HCM Oct 08, p35).

At Barrow, each user of the Club MAX junior gym – all aged eight to 14 – currently has an Attendance Reward Card. Every time they attend a session, they get one square on their sheet stamped with the Club MAX logo. They

get an extra stamp if they pre-booked their session – this is encouraged as it means they're more likely to turn up – and a third stamp if they're wearing their Club MAX wristband, which are provided free to the kids and generate good word of mouth for the club. The scheme is effectively a competition and will run until Christmas – at that point, the two members (one girl and one boy) with the most stamps will win a Wii Fit.

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● CUPCAKE MUMS

Cupcake Mums in south-west London – a members' club for mums, mums-to-be and their families – is based on the idea that learning to live a healthy lifestyle begins during the early years of life. The clubs therefore provide a whole host of activity classes for kids that combine different aspects of development and learning with physical activity.

They also believe that the psyche of the parents is important in forming a child's outlook on exercise and

what 'healthy lifestyle' means, and that this really starts from day one. Parents attending the centre aim to model the lifestyles they want their child/ren to follow, which they achieve through participation with their little ones in activity-based classes, healthy cooking classes (Little Chefs) and so on. The centre also offers parents high-quality educational seminars on subjects such as family nutrition and avoiding food allergies, as well as providing exercise classes and training just for parents.



Get them young A healthy lifestyle starts during the early years of life



kate cracknell
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

the uncommon touch

Can fitness instructors be trained in people skills, or is it better to pick staff with the right soft skills and then train them in the technical skillset of health and fitness? Kate Cracknell investigates

My own experience of using a health club hasn't always been a positive one. Instructors nowhere to be seen on the gym floor, or at best chatting only to the hard-core regulars. Sometimes not even a hello when I first arrive. I have no doubt they all know their stuff, but what use is that to me if they're not going to pass their knowledge on in a way that helps me? Or if they lack the people skills to make me feel welcome? Or if all the best customer-facing instructors are siphoned off into personal training? Am I really going to develop an emotional attachment to my gym if there's no connection with the people who work there? In short: no, I'm not.

To generate loyalty, clubs need good, member-focused instructors on the gym floor who have both the desire and the skillset to talk to, and help, all members.

However, the fact remains that a lot of instructors seem to lack the interpersonal skills required to provide an excellent customer experience. As Graham McPherson,

GM of Bannatyne's Health Club in Ayr, said in his letter (*HCM* June 09, p8):

"The fact is, our industry offers low pay rates and attracts a young workforce. The majority are enthusiastic about fitness and wellness, but are inexperienced in the workplace... If we employ a young workforce, we have a responsibility to develop their customer care skills and attitude...."

But is this even feasible, or are such skills innate rather than learned? Martin Long, CEO of LA Fitness, explained in his recent interview (*HCM* Sept 09, p32) how the chain is putting people back at the heart of the business, focusing on employing those with good people skills: "A technical skillset doesn't necessarily mean great customer service. I can teach people technical knowledge. I can't teach them to want to talk to people. So how we recruit, where we recruit – that's all changing."

So what's the answer? Should we employ instructors for their soft skills and train them in the technicalities of fitness, or is it possible to teach people skills? Our panel of experts give their thoughts.

dave wright

owner
feelgood fitness health clubs



With the growing number of NLP practitioners, life coaches, business coaches and consultants, there's been an increased focus on teaching the processes of communication, rather than teaching the skills of the specific job at hand. However, while I believe you can teach communication skills to some degree, you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear – people need some level of innate communication skills to be a really good instructor in an industry that relies so heavily on serving and engaging with its members.

In my independent health clubs, I prefer to hire for attitude and then train for skill. A few of our instructors, for example, have come from working

in our juice and coffee bars. They had displayed fantastic communication skills, plus they had an interest in working in the fitness industry and, most importantly, they also worked out themselves – I'd never employ anyone who didn't work out, because ultimately you need a passion for fitness as well as people skills.

But having a passion for fitness isn't the same as already having the necessary expertise in fitness instructing: you can teach the latter. If people are genuinely passionate about the product of fitness, and if they're able to strike up a conversation with anyone, it's easier to train them in the human biomechanics of fitness than it is to train them in communication skills and then try and convince them to love the product that they hope to forge their future in.



© STOCKPHOTO.COM

Good communication relies on establishing a rapport with someone, whatever their gender, age or background

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lesley aitken

international fitpro trainer



Absolutely you can teach people skills.

Common sense says that hiring people with soft skills is a great place to start. But communication will go wrong at some point. Even those with good people skills, when under pressure, can execute badly or feel misunderstood – and when communication skills fall apart, you may experience inappropriate and unhelpful behaviour.

Alternatively, your ethos may be to transfer and thereby retain your staff. If retraining an individual for another role becomes a viable proposition, they may need some soft skills training on effective communication for that role.

Bespoke, regular bite-sized training, like the modules in Fitpro's 'BEE – the people programme', can enhance people skills or boost the confidence your staff require. It supports organisations by

training their people who demonstrate good soft skills to be coaches, ensuring the volume, frequency and consistency of training needed to hone and practise communication skills.

BEE works on the basis that customer satisfaction, and in particular loyalty, is directly related to the ability of staff to communicate on a personal basis, engage with customers, and build rapport and relationships. It coaches staff using simple tools to do precisely this, with a wide range of modules covering topics such as how verbal and non-verbal communication impacts the customer experience, building trust and rapport with customers, handling customer complaints and exceeding customer expectations.

Effective communication takes real skill, and training people in people skills pays dividends. Programmes like BEE provide a hassle-free and easy route to develop people as a way of improving customer interaction.

kevin yates

harpers health & fitness manager
leisure connection



We always hire the attitude and train the skill, investing heavily in training and developing our teams. If people have the right approach to customer service and member interaction – a passion for helping them improve their health, fitness and wellbeing – we'll teach them the skills they need to help our members achieve those goals.

We believe it's important to recruit staff who can relate to, and connect with, our customers and members, and this is something we consciously do. Our experience shows that our customers achieve the best results when they're able to relate to their instructor, and our fullest classes are those with trainers who are memorable, motivational and friendly, and who connect with the class. They're not thought of as a fitness instructor but as a mentor, a coach and a friend.

Over the past 12 months, we've also made a concerted effort to take people on who, unemployed through redundancy as a result of the credit crunch, are looking for a change of direction. Again, we look for personality rather than previous experience. We invest heavily in their training and development and offer them a job at the end of it. It's a win-win situation for all.

**"YOU CAN'T MAKE A SILK PURSE OUT OF A
SOW'S EAR. INNATE COMMUNICATION SKILLS
ARE NEEDED TO BE A GOOD INSTRUCTOR"**



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▶ **matt punsheon**

ceff centre manager
lifetime



Our industry primarily involves dealing with the public, often with very sensitive issues regarding health, appearance, psychological state of mind and self-image. The nature of these topics means that, at the very core of an instructor's personality, there must be a genuine sense of empathy, understanding and appropriate communication. These qualities must be integral to personality if trust is to be achieved.

Each of us has specific natural personality traits that determine how we handle various situations. For example, some of us thrive in a group environment and are not fazed by public speaking, while others break out in a cold sweat at the thought of addressing an audience and produce better results when working alone.

This is also true in the fitness arena. An individual may demonstrate outstanding fitness knowledge, but this isn't worth much if they're unable to get information across in a way that's easily understood; the knowledge required for a gym instructor or personal trainer can be easily taught, but this doesn't mean that everyone who passes a course will become a fantastic instructor.

When we recruit individuals onto our apprenticeships, we don't simply assess academic ability. We also look for personality traits that we believe will create excellent gym instructors and personal trainers.

Saying all that, it is possible to develop someone in the area of soft skills if they're open to new ideas. We offer a one-day training module that focuses on how to interact and communicate effectively. How can we go outside our comfort zone and interact with people we don't normally talk to? What questions and phrasing can we use to gather as much information as possible about someone, to establish a genuine rapport with them? Are we listening in the right way? It's all about developing the tools to establish a rapport with as many people as possible, irrespective of their gender, background, age and so on. We also put the theory into practice, including re-enacting situations where participants have struggled in the past, looking at how better communication could have improved the outcome.

We're now introducing part of this interaction training module into our Level 3 diploma. This gives personal trainers the chance to develop their innate soft skills, ensuring they have full confidence in their ability to go out and succeed.

linda plowright

ceo
sports leaders uk



Soft skills are born within the individual, although they can be further developed, while technical skills can be taught. I'm unequivocally on the side of recruiting the right person for the job and training them in fitness, or whichever customer-centred field it happens to be.

Of course, I believe in training and developing technical skills, and recognising those skills when making appointments. However, the soft skills are what provide customer empathy and repeat business, including leadership, communication, team management and motivation.

The issue of staff turnover is key here. In such a highly people-centred sector, where relationships with clients are key to motivating their commitment to training and therefore their commitment to renewing memberships, how can the health and fitness industry afford to let those 'right people' – staff with the soft skills to drive this member commitment – slip through their fingers? It can't make financial sense or drive service quality.



kate cracknell

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ATTENTION GRABBERS

Ceri Hannan looks at some of the recent innovations in group exercise

As the world battles the pandemic that is swine flu, the health and fitness industry continues to search for a solution to its own long-standing illness: membership attrition rates.

Group exercise can play a vital role in this. IHRSA studies have shown that 85–90 per cent of people prefer to exercise in a group, while research by Massie & Shephard found that 52.6 per cent of people dropped out of an individual workout programme compared with only 18.2 per cent who dropped out of a group exercise programme.

A great group exercise programme engages a large membership demographic into one area of your facility at the same time. Not only does this promote adherence among this group of members, but it simultaneously

streamlines busy gym floors and opens up more options for gym floor activity and improved member service. In some cases, group exercise can even contribute more immediately to a club's bottom line, with participation fees providing a valuable secondary revenue stream.

Surely, then, any facility that's serious about the commercial viability of its product needs to seriously look at building its group exercise participation percentage and, indeed, its group exercise offering?

As an industry we must strive to widen and deepen the market to keep our members; continually bringing innovation to our group exercise timetable can help us to do this.

We take a look at some of the newer concepts and packages now available.

CASE STUDY I

INDOOR WALKING



Indoor Walking: A group exercise programme using small footprint cross-trainers

Distributed by Anytime Leisure, Indoor Walking is a new concept to the UK – a group exercise programme, complete with support package, using small footprint cross-trainers.

Developed in Spain five years ago, the programme is already a success in Spain, the US, Italy, Germany, France, Portugal and Scandinavia – there are currently more than 250 clubs running the programme across 10 countries, with more than 920 fully-certified instructors.

FEATURES / ADVANTAGES / BENEFITS:

Indoor Walking was designed to offer an alternative CV group exercise option for those who find classes such as group cycling too challenging or daunting; research and experience shows that the classes tend to attract a higher proportion of older users, female users and people with weight loss goals.

As the body is in a weight bearing, vertical position and arm movements are also involved, more muscle groups are recruited. This means a higher calorie consumption – Indoor Walking is said to



Exercises on the GTS are done on an incline, using bodyweight for resistance

CASE STUDY 2 GRAVITY

The GRAVITY Training System (GTS) is a cable-based piece of equipment that works using gravity – all exercises are done on an incline, using body weight, and you can adjust the angle of the incline to dictate the resistance.

FEATURES / ADVANTAGES / BENEFITS:

The GTS has eight calibrated levels of resistance and safely adapts to all fitness levels. In a class environment, this means all abilities can work out at the same time, doing the same movements but at different incline levels depending on how hard they want to work. Hundreds of different exercises can be done, meaning a time-efficient, full body workout is achievable on just one piece of kit.

Classes are delivered in 30- to 45-minute, small group sessions, with

four different programming types available: group strength training, pilates-influenced classes, personal training and post-rehab workouts.

By installing GTS machines in their clubs, operators can create a new income stream and, at the same time, offer a viable and affordable training opportunity for all members – from youth to disabled users and cardiac rehab patients, and from yoga practitioners to pure strength trainers – whether they want one-to-one training, partner training or small group PT sessions. All sessions can be fee-based.

PROMOTIONS / PEOPLE / TRAINING:

Vikki Heath of Rural Space, an independent mind-body health club in Shrewsbury, runs 20 classes a week in

her standalone GTS facility. She has tapped in to The GRAVITY SYSTEM, which comprises four integrated business components – programming, product, marketing support, and instructor education and training.

Education is provided by Paul Chek among others, with additional quarterly releases made available both online and via DVD to support ongoing education.

Downloadable marketing material can be adapted to incorporate club logos and specific information that clubs use to promote GRAVITY in-house.

PREMISES:

GRAVITY can be taught on the gym floor or in a studio. Space is not an issue as the GTS is portable and folds away for easy storage.

burn up to 700 calories in a 45-minute session – but perceived exertion is low. Each unit has a computer monitor option providing feedback on the workout.

PROMOTIONS / PEOPLE / TRAINING:

Time Fitness, the independent operator in Scotland, holds classes at its club in Cupar, Fife, that vary from 30 to 60 minutes. It will also roll the concept out to its two new clubs, in Galashiels and Glasgow, which are both due to open before the end of this year.

Time Fitness staff trained with Indoor Walking's Spanish master trainers and with Enric Bonilla, one of the key driving forces behind the concept. Education and ongoing support is something Indoor Walking takes very seriously: customers receive full staff training and certification. Further education courses are also available, both on-site and online, including: designing sessions and workouts; Indoor Walking Upper Body; and Senior Indoor Walking. Marketing packages for clubs wanting to introduce the classes are also available.

PREMISES:

Indoor Walking works well in a variety of environments and for a number of different uses, thanks to the fact that the units are small and portable. Classes can take place in dedicated studios or in

shared studio space used for both Indoor Walking and group cycling, or on the gym floor – including providing the CV element for circuit classes. The equipment can also be used as standalone CV units on the gym floor.



Lab tests: Indoor Walking can burn up to 700 calories in a 45-minute session

TRX SUSPENSION
TRAINING

Distributed by Escape Fitness, the TRX Suspension System was designed by the US Navy Seals. It combines variable-resistance bodyweight training with elements of instability within multiple planes of movement to train the entire body.

FEATURES / ADVANTAGES / BENEFITS:

Hailed as a revolution in bodyweight training and exercise, TRX offers a scalable form of training for people of all abilities. It allows you to leverage your own bodyweight and gravity to develop strength, balance, flexibility and joint mobility. Suspension training is highly adaptable to the individual, as the level of difficulty and intensity of the exercises can be determined by changing the body position or adjusting the angle at which the exercise is performed, giving you complete control over your fitness development.

Luke Staton, owner of independent club Outklass Fitness in Nottinghamshire, saw an opportunity to enhance services already available at his club by offering TRX Suspension training classes as a way of maximising his earning potential. The club is currently running 45- to 60-minute classes catering for a diverse range of members, including families, members with learning difficulties, a stroke rehabilitation client, older adults and a professional sportsman.

PROMOTIONS / PEOPLE / TRAINING:

Three of the six instructors at Outklass Fitness are fully qualified in TRX; training was organised through Escape Fitness.

PREMISES:

The TRX weighs only 1.8lbs and folds to the size of a running shoe. It can be attached to any stable structure such as beams, bars, weight racks, fences or even trees, but also comes with a door attachment for easy use around the home. Alternatively, an optional wall attachment can be used.



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WaterCrew: A variety of class options using WaterRower rowing simulators

CASE STUDY 3

WATERCREW

WaterRower has been a leader in the luxury fitness market for over 20 years. Based on the WaterFlyWheel invented by oarsman John Duke in 1988, the WaterRower range of natural rowing simulators are handmade from either sustainably-sourced wood or steel frame construction.

WaterCrew is an inclusive group exercise solution for gyms wanting to ensure maximum usage from the WaterRower kit they have invested in.

FEATURES / ADVANTAGES / BENEFITS:

Research by Ohio University found that "rowers use twice the number of calories on a 2,000m course as runners on a 3,000m steeplechase course, [which is] considered the most rigorous running event."

Translate this into actual calorie figures and you get the following:

- Light to moderate rowing burns 502-733 calories an hour
- Vigorous rowing burns 709-1,035 calories an hour

Individuals and groups can compare and monitor their results using the S4 monitor that comes with each machine. In addition, WaterRower has developed WaterRegatta, racing software that allows up to 16 machines to be linked together so clubs can set up races between class participants.

Alternatively, operators can follow class plans to develop classes for

people with a variety of exercise expectations – from up-tempo classes to relaxed sessions, where the mood can be set by the music used.

Trinity Health Clubs in London was the first operator in the UK to offer WaterCrew classes, which are a cost-effective alternative to other group exercise programmes. The six machines cost £4,300. WaterCrew classes are now offered several times a week, at a cost of £15 per participant. Based on each class being full, annual revenue for the first year more than covers the cost of installing the simulators.

PROMOTIONS / PEOPLE / TRAINING:

Trainers with no prior experience of rowing can be trained through the WaterCoach and WaterCrew programmes, available through a combination of online distance learning and a two-day course with master trainers – former Olympic champion Xeno Muller and former international rower Jill Lancaster.

Ongoing support is also available to all centres offering WaterCrew. This involves mentoring in terms of technique, but also support materials in the form of suggested music, class plans and online information. There is also a Facebook page, an online forum and community, and services such as the Row2Go Programme, provided by Xeno Muller, where you can work out online.

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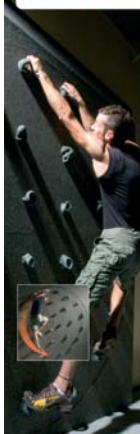
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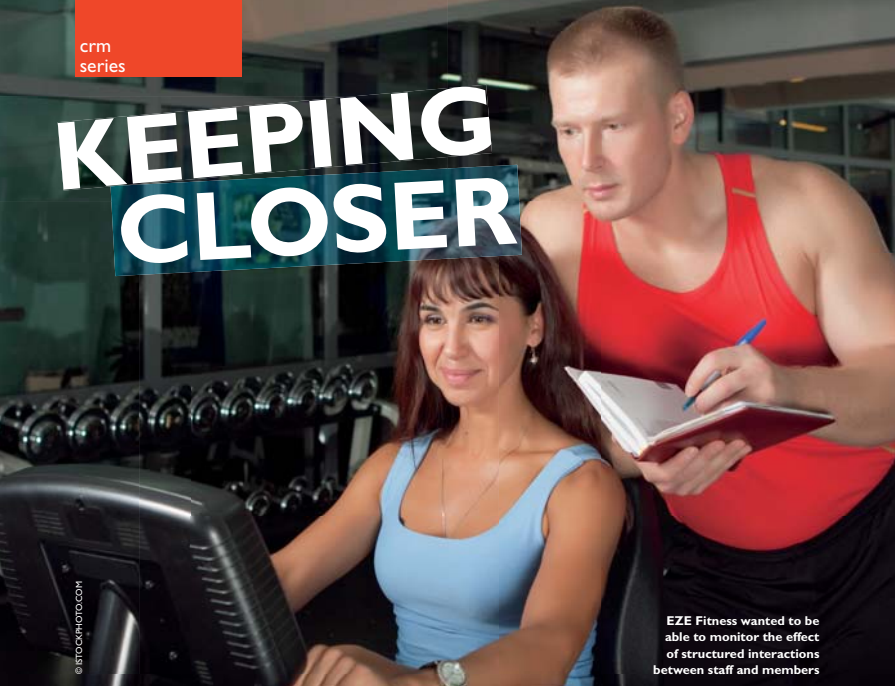
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KEEPING CLOSER



EZE Fitness wanted to be able to monitor the effect of structured interactions between staff and members

Setting up systems which help achieve operational improvements takes collaboration between software supplier and client. We look at some recent examples of good practice

CASE STUDY 1

CLIENT: **EZE FITNESS**

CRM SYSTEM: **COREQUEST**

SUPPLIER: **COREQUEST**

Eze Fitness wanted to be able to monitor the effect of structured interactions between fitness staff and new members during the first two months of membership. The hypothesis was that the higher the number of good quality interactions between staff and member in those two months, the longer the member would stay at the club.

Eze Fitness chose the Corequest member induction system, and this was then tailored to the Eze Fitness brand by calling the system the Big Rocks Induction Programme (see p8). The programme is based on a number of planned appointments for new members

at which they're asked to set fitness goals, and then subsequently to focus on different elements of their programme, from general exercise tips to nutritional and physiological information.

The structured approach means all instructors can follow the programme and set appointments for clients, getting to know them and being able to adjust or change their fitness programme on a regular basis to ensure new members are getting the results they're looking for.

Eze Fitness uses the Big Rocks programme at all six of the clubs it manages, including public sector sites for Sefton Council in Merseyside and Castlereagh Council in Northern Ireland, and a private club in England. The system logs the number of appointments made by each instructor and then analyses the overall length of membership of each

client, allowing managers to monitor the performance of individual fitness instructors. Eze Fitness can then see the exact 'value' of each interaction, and the value and effectiveness of each instructor.

The gym team is happy with Big Rocks, as it gives them a structure for new member inductions and a group-wide standard by which their hard work can be judged and rewarded.

The Big Rocks programme has doubled the amount of revenue Eze Fitness generates from members. An audit conducted in May 2009, examining figures for the previous 12 months, showed that a new member who completes the induction programme will have a lifetime value of £269 – 109 per cent more than members who do not complete the managed induction, and who have an average £129 lifetime value. ▶

CASE STUDY 2

CLIENT: **ÉNERGIE GROUP**

CRM SYSTEM: **CLUBWISE**

SUPPLIER: **CLUBWISE SOFTWARE**

Énergie was keen to enhance its existing ClubWise reporting system by providing a comprehensive range of KPIs, measuring all areas of club operation against standard benchmarks and ranking clubs within the group against each other.

A web-based KPI dashboard has been developed that provides real-time information on the key areas of income, sales, retention, administration and staff performance against targets. Additionally, the dashboard reports on member profile, member demographics and debt recovery. The dashboard is an integrated and inclusive element of the ClubWise Business Solution.

Énergie uses the dashboard to aid in tracking the performance of its franchisees. The club owners use the dashboard to provide on-the-spot information relating to their club's performance, allowing them to work on the business and not in the business.

Énergie is now able to quickly recognise and react to clubs that may require assistance in weaker performance areas.

ClubWise is a fully outsourced service that combines club management software with seamless direct debit collection and back office services, as well as CRM/web-based retention services.

Playgate's tailored, targeted email campaigns have led to a 10 per cent increase in both new memberships and secondary spend

CASE STUDY 3

CLIENT: **TOPNOTCH**

CRM SYSTEM: **RETENTION MANAGEMENT**

SUPPLIER: **RETENTION MANAGEMENT**

Topnotch turned to Retention Management when it was looking to present customers with a simple, easy to use and recordable method of ensuring consistent communication. The core elements of the service are left running behind the scenes with no need for input from the clubs.

A weekly report is delivered from Topnotch's Legend club management system which Retention Management uses to analyse attendance patterns. Motivational messages are then sent out to ensure continual communication with members. The clubs can also utilise attendance reports that are sent

fortnightly. Topnotch uses the recovery reports provided by the system to establish who their "at risk" members are. Staff can see at a glance which members need a little extra attention to keep them on track before the opportunity to do so passes.

All of Topnotch clubs have seen at least a 0.5 per cent reduction in their monthly attrition since it launched with Retention Management, making a significant difference to revenues.

Over the last 12 months, Retention Management has delivered more than 65 million emails to club members and on average improved retention by 6 per cent. It has worked closely with the major ISPs for the last eight years to ensure delivery of emails from their servers and has had less than 1 per cent of health club members ever opt out of its service.

CASE STUDY 4

CLIENT: **SOUTH LANARKSHIRE LEISURE**

CRM SYSTEM: **PLUS2 WITH VISUAL ANALYTICS**

SUPPLIER: **GLADSTONE HEALTH & LEISURE**

The team at South Lanarkshire Leisure felt it was important to be able to access data in a more visual format, to allow managers to make critical decisions more quickly and to be able to drill down into their business.

Data mining and report building have traditionally required specialist skills, with extensive knowledge of database structures and experience of complex design and development tools. Such skills and time are hard to find and the company wanted a fast, intuitive solution that any member of staff could use.

To tackle this challenge, Gladstone created a system called Plus2 Visual Analytics. This has opened up the company's Plus2 database by allowing non-technical users to interrogate a specially designed data layer which presents the results graphically as

interactive reports, charts and dashboards. This unique approach means clients can closely monitor and track business performance and identify problem areas, giving them the power to identify new opportunities and expand their businesses.

Gerry Campbell, CEO of South Lanarkshire Leisure, says the solution has helped his business manage some very specific reporting requirements. "With 30 sites operating across a large geographical area, tracking usage against KPIs and distributing the results across our management team was a significant drain on resources," he says.

"Using Gladstone's Visual Analytics tool, our team has been able to quickly audit and analyse our data and has created interactive dashboards which present the results to the management team through a web browser. The data behind the tables and charts in our dashboards refreshes constantly, so we have instant performance data available without anyone having to run a report. This means we can spend our time focusing on using business information rather than producing it."





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CASE STUDY 6

CLIENT: **PLAYGATE**
CRM SYSTEM: **SDACONNECT**
SUPPLIER: **SDA SOLUTIONS**

With a relatively limited budget, health club operator Playgate's group marketing manager Ian Hassett was aware existing marketing wasn't as effective as it could be: "We relied on posters and leaflets in the clubs. This generated a small amount of business, but we knew we had to improve our marketing to attract new members."

Recognising the need to communicate its messages in a more dynamic way, the company looked at the potential of email marketing. "We'd already used email, but our approach wasn't very efficient," says Hassett. "We had a large address list, but were limited by our inability to send emails to target specific groups." The challenge was to differentiate effectively between existing members, prospects and lapsed members.

SDAconnect created a complete email management solution for Playgate that has enabled the team to produce targeted emails for each of its four clubs.

Playgate can control the content so each email is relevant to the recipient, and can schedule campaigns and monitor results to identify those who have opened them and clicked appropriate links. "We can target all our emails and ensure the right one is sent to the right person," says Hassett. "When we started, we planned to send four different emails each month. However, due to the flexibility of the system, we send up to 20 different email campaigns each month – but each member will only receive two at the most."

The company has reduced expenditure on traditional marketing as a result of the new system and reports enhanced perception of its clubs. There has been a 10 per cent increase in both new memberships and secondary spend, as well as a significant increase in web traffic to the club's websites in the 24 hours after a campaign has been sent.

"We initially saw SDAconnect as being a professional way to keep members informed of upcoming events, but it's become the centre of our marketing," says Hassett. "We've also become more effective in sales and following up referrals."

Previously, staff working from lists would telephone prospects on a regular basis, managing around 30 calls a day – often to out of date lists. They've found that referrals generated by email are of a higher quality, with prospects providing complete contact details. This means potential members can be contacted more efficiently and has freed staff to focus on tasks that are of more direct benefit. "We've increased revenue," says Hassett, "because we can concentrate on members and prospects who've expressed an interest, thereby pre-qualifying themselves for our services."

"The ease of response for the customer means we've had significantly higher returns than from more traditional marketing, as well as increased goodwill because the customer is initiating the sales call, as opposed to the other way around. The knock-on effect is increased efficiency and most importantly, more sales."

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POOLING KNOWLEDGE

Johanna Whitaker talks to Tara Dillon, executive director at IQL UK, about the research that's led to the development of a new, managerial pool safety qualification

Changes in the law – Corporate Manslaughter and, more recently, the Health & Safety Offences Act – prompted IQL to carry out a health check of UK pool operators to see if they might be culpable under new legislation.

As the organisation that manages the National Pool Lifeguard qualification on behalf of registered charity the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK), IQL UK conducted this survey in conjunction with Leisure-net Solutions to assess how well safety in UK pools is being managed.

Are facilities aware of recent changes in legislation? Has the balance slipped on sales versus standards? These are just two issues tackled in the industry-wide survey that discovered huge gaps in the knowledge of pool operators.

RLSS UK has since reacted and developed a qualification designed to bring health clubs and pool operators up-to-date in the management of pool safety. Tara Dillon reveals more:



We receive hundreds of calls a week on operational issues, frequently relating to health and safety or possible breaches of law, misunderstanding or misinterpretation of legal obligations. We were having discussions with operators and started to worry that, with the threat of recession, operators were starting to look at cost-saving options that could compromise safety.

We aimed to answer a number of questions:

- Is the industry aware of changes in legislation and, if so, do they understand it?
- With managers under pressure from an

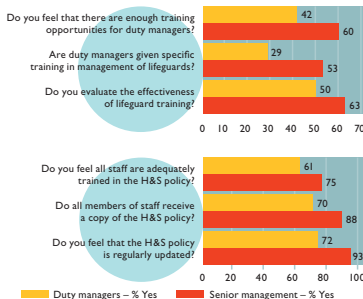
ever-expanding number of KPIs, has the balance tipped between sales and standards?

- Where are the skills gaps and what might the solutions be?
- What is the industry's perspective on its own practices or arrangements for managing pools within guidance/law?

Why did IQL decide to conduct the research?

We know that, in the main, operators take their responsibilities seriously when it comes to making arrangements for, or setting policy in, the health, safety and welfare of staff and customers. However, new legislation looks at the application of these procedures and a full understanding/ownership at all levels within the organisation.

understanding and implementation of policies



What were the most relevant findings?

Firstly, there's a massive amount of evidence demonstrating abdication of responsibility for the development, management and review of procedures in pools. A majority of those surveyed appeared unsure of their levels of responsibility in meeting the law.


Secondly is the lack of adequate training for site personnel. The role of a club manager and duty manager is undeniably more demanding than ever, but would you leave someone in charge of a building without suitable training?

Thirdly, we noted differences between senior management's and middle/lower management's understanding and implementation of their own policies and procedures (see graphs, left). If we consider that the motivation for commissioning the research was to establish a check on compliance under Corporate Manslaughter, this is a key factor in bringing a prosecution and therefore a very relevant outcome.

But the key finding was that there are no specific pool safety qualifications available for those in a supervisory capacity – to educate and train them in the new health and safety legislation, for example, and in the guidance provided by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in its *Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools* document. In spite of the litigation culture we live in, this shortfall appears to have been overlooked for years.

Did the research shock you?

Yes! The good news is that operators have clearly stepped up to the mark in terms of managing health and safety over the last decade. Many of them have a sole manager or consultant responsible for group health and safety, particularly



Lifeguards are trained in rescue, but there has not traditionally been a qualification in managing incidents from a legal perspective

health clubs and private operators. In some cases, they have excellent arrangements in place for communication and consultation throughout the group. The bad news, however, is that there appears to be a culture of 'somebody else does it' at site level; this is precisely the reason for the changes in law.

What are you doing to help pool operators understand and comply with the new legislation?

Since analysing the results and presenting the facts to operators, we've worked hard to develop a new qualification, which we're calling the NPMQ. It's a specialised qualification that covers all areas of pool safety management and the potential implications of health and safety legislation.

Is the new qualification relevant to health clubs?

The qualification is as relevant to the health club market as anywhere else – if an operator manages a facility with a pool, how can they possibly judge themselves as different or with fewer hazards? Health clubs and private operators often have smaller pools, so may not need as many lifeguards, if at all. However, this does not exempt them from their responsibilities under legislation or HSE guidance.

Arrangements must be comprehensive and measurable, and staff also need the skills or training necessary to implement these arrangements and deal with an emergency. At present, this is often not the case: lifeguards are trained in rescue and resuscitation, for example, but there has not traditionally been a qualification that oversees incidents and their management from a legal perspective. The custodians of systems, standards and procedures must have adequate training and appropriate levels of competency if operators are to avoid falling foul of the law.

Some operators worry about cost and feel we're increasing these by demanding all pools have lifeguards. Not so. If your next generation of duty managers and club managers, having completed this qualification, can understand the guidance and legislation out there, operators will probably save money. Every £1 invested in prevention has been shown to save £7 required for the equivalent cure. I've been told: "Having dealt with one drowning and one near miss, this year procedures and training are key." But why wait until something awful happens before doing anything about it?

What are your current fears in safety standards?

Some operators are still citing cost as an issue and looking to make savings. This is a worrying notion and a culture that must change. I'm often asked the question: "Can I risk-assess my way out of having two lifeguards on poolside?" If the prompt for reviewing your risk assessments in your pool is a cost-saving exercise, proceed with caution.

A balance must be found in every single aspect of operation. The way to manage risk is clearly dictated in law: measure the risk against the sacrifice required to avert it.

What's your ideal in pool safety?

Follow the HSE guidance contained in *Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools*. If in doubt, seek advice – call us, as we can help. And establish practical steps to manage your own health and safety policy: monitor compliance in terms of written policy/procedure, knowledge and understanding, and implementation; check your insurance cover; risk-assess your site; and foster a compliance culture.



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New online health and safety programme

Inta Fitness has launched a new initiative to reduce the paper-based health and safety procedures undertaken in many health clubs. Called Leisure Safety Link, the online system can be adjusted to suit any club size and can be created to contain criteria specific to each individual site. Prompts and support can be sent during the working day, while operators can also view reports on each facility's compliance – from anywhere in the world and in real time.

fitness-kit.net keywords
inta fitness



TOA Europe reveals new VM-3000 series

TOA Europe, the audio and security products developer, has unveiled its new VM-3000 Series, suitable for small to medium-sized sites within the leisure industry. Combining an emergency voice alarm system with a digital audio PA and paging functionality, the VM-3000 also offers a range of emergency functions. These include a built-in voice alarm, and continuous speaker line monitoring without interruption.

fitness-kit.net keyword
toa

DORMA unveils versatile push-bar panic systems

Door technology systems supplier DORMA has unveiled its latest two panic hardware systems.

The PHA2000 cross-bar and PHB3000 push-bar systems are both modular and can be configured for single, double, or multi-point locking. There are also horizontal, vertical and lateral latch options for both models, which are available with die-cast zinc latches or, for added security, steel anti-thrust latches. Both systems are also fitted with a device that holds the door latch in its retracted position, allowing the door to be opened and closed with ease. The systems are suitable for fire, smoke check and standard doors and are CE-marked to EN1125.



fitness-kit.net keyword
dorma

New voice alarm controller from Baldwin Boxall

Independent voice alarm manufacturer Baldwin Boxall (BB) has launched a new voice alarm controller within its BVRD range. The microphone controller has been designed specifically for the voice alarm market and interfaces with BB's VIGIL2 routers. The BVRD controller features LCD screens, an emergency control mode, volume adjustment and performs as a paging microphone, or an emergency 'all call' microphone. The controller comes in four different sizes.



fitness-kit.net keywords
baldwin boxall



fitness-kit.net keyword
fireco

Dorgard: the legal way to hold open fire doors

Wireless safety product Dorgards, manufactured by FireCo, have now been installed in more than 300,000 leisure facilities and care homes throughout the UK. Fully complying with all relevant British Standards and EU directives, Dorgards safely and legally hold open a fire door in any position – but automatically release upon the sound of a fire alarm. Battery operated and self-contained, they are affixed to a fire door with four screws and take minutes to fit.



PLAY TOGETHER

STAY TOGETHER

Well-known Cornish bakery Ginsters' gamble of investing in a healthy workplace has paid off. After winning the 2008 World Leisure Innovation Prize, the Ginsters Active Workplace programme is now the focus of international interest.

"Cornish children used to be told that, if they didn't behave themselves, they'd end up working at the Ginsters factory," says former Caradon Council leader John Turner. "Now parents say to their kids: 'If you're good, you might get a job at Ginsters.'"

Part of the Samworth Brothers Group, which has 15 food production sites, Ginsters didn't have a high standing as an employer, despite the company's attempts to convey the fact that it offered a wide range of career opportunities and needed skilled workers.

The company faced a number of challenges. Around 18 per cent of the 450-strong workforce came from ethnic minorities and were resisting

Parents used to tell their kids: "If you don't behave, you'll end up working at Ginsters." Now they say: "If you're good, you might get a job at Ginsters."

attempts to integrate them into the team. The night and day shifts didn't mix, and people on separate areas of the production line mistrusted each other. Not surprisingly, the annual staff survey showed staff morale was low.

Three years after the implementation of the Active Workplace programme, the surveys show staff are now engaged with the business and take pride in their work. Best of all, comments from local schools show that the negative external image has been turned around.

taking a gamble

Caradon Council started the ball rolling in 2004. Under the government's *Choosing Health* White Paper, it gained funding to offer fitness testing to employees at local companies. Half the Ginsters workforce volunteered to be tested. Because they worked long hours, standing up and being busy, staff considered themselves fit; results showed that, in fact, they weren't.

Clearly some work needed to be done, and at this point the company made the commitment to invest in an active workplace, in spite of a lack of evidence to prove that such a scheme would be successful.

Caradon Council's then health improvement officer, Jane Abraham, played a vital role in the project. She approached Sport England and secured funding to appoint a full-time fitness co-ordinator, Steve Smeeth, and also to buy equipment to create a gym in an existing building. A partnership was struck up with Bristol Business School to ▶



Award-winning leisure: (clockwise from above)
The Ginsters team receives its World Leisure Award; in January 2009, a number of allotments were made available to target those who were still inactive; and Ginsters staff are given the chance to try a range of activities, including kayaking, surfing, archery and skiing at a nearby slope (right)



The breakthrough came when Polish players voted to speak English during a football match, so they could work together

► monitor the results, using another of the Samworth Brothers' sites as a control.

Ginsters' managing director, Mark Duddridge, concedes the whole scheme was a gamble, but he also saw it as an extension of the company's training academy, which supports individuals in further learning, languages and interests.

"It felt like the right thing to do, because of the academy. Nearly all the staff on site are permanent and it's really important we keep hold of them after we've trained them," he says.

"However, there was a fear it might not work because we have a 24-hour operation – people have to do the activities before or after work. We were a bit nervous we might do all this and it wouldn't work, or it would just appeal to those who were already fit. Although we were hopeful, we wouldn't have been at all surprised if it had faltered."

Duddridge and Smeeth both agree that the key to the scheme's success is that it has been gently encouraged and opportunities have been made available, but there has been no compulsion to do them. "It has been non-threatening

and non-competitive. We've taken a really softly softly approach, by making opportunities available and offering gentle encouragement," says Duddridge.

Thanks to the Sport England funding, the financial outlay for Ginsters was not extensive, the biggest investment being the supply of activity taster sessions.

After an initial survey to find out what staff wanted to do, they were given the chance to try a range of activities including golf, kayaking, canoeing, surfing, skating, skiing (at a nearby slope), archery and deep sea fishing. In the first year, the company funded all the sessions. It's now funded 50/50 company/employees, but interestingly this hasn't detracted from the uptake. Indeed, Smeeth says people are starting to involve their families more in the day trips.

Free fruit was made available in the canteen and more healthy food choices were provided, as well as advice on diet and exercise. Other activities were organised on a weekly basis: badminton, group cycling (a couple of employees have now trained as instructors), kettlebell workouts and football.

The football matches have had the most impact in unifying the workforce. Initially rivalry was intense, but when the teams were mixed up, it significantly improved employee relations: the turning point came when the Polish players voted to speak English during a match and they all started working together.

moving on

Having started off sporty and gym-based, the project has become softer and broader as it's progressed. In January, a number of allotments were made available, targeting those who were still inactive. The uptake has been excellent and participants have been given guidance by tutors at the local college.

The success has led to the company becoming braver about the initiatives it runs, and difficult issues like drink, drugs and abuse are now being tackled.

"We ran a large campaign on domestic violence and set up a room with a screen so employees could chat to the Citizens Advice Bureau during work time," says Smeeth. "This would never have worked if we'd set it up at the



Activity days out are popular among the staff, with people increasingly starting to bring their families along with them

beginning, but it works now because we've won their trust."

the world leisure innovation prize

It was Turner's idea to go after awards. "When I became council leader, I became more greatly involved because I could see people were showing a significant interest at government level, and wanted to find out more," he explains. "They all started to take note, which was when we began to enter awards. I suggested we went for the Local Government Association award and the *Municipal Journal* award, which we won. This is what led us to enter the World Leisure Innovation Award."

This award focuses on the social and cultural aspects of leisure as part of the lived experience. It represents the use of leisure as a creative solution in collectively enhancing the social, cultural, environmental and economic quality of life in a geographical area.

The prize seeks to recognise organisations that have implemented creative solutions to foster local national

or international leisure opportunities for the benefit and development of individuals and communities.

Turner thinks Active Workplace was a winner because staff became so engaged by the scheme, and because it could be put into any company and be of benefit: "The savings they could make from the initial investment and benefits to people's health are extensive, and it could be applied anywhere in the world."

Duddridge thinks the fact it could be replicated so easily gave it the edge. Now there's a constant stream of companies visiting Ginsters and, having left Caradon Council, Abraham has taken the blueprint to Unilever, Tate & Lyle and Boots. With the final evidence from Bristol Business School due to be released in December, the offshoots are likely to be even more wide-ranging.

Even in the difficult economic climate, Duddridge says he would do it again, and in fact would be even more likely to do it since there's now evidence available to show it works.

Recruitment ad costs have fallen from £55,000 to £15,000 in the last three years

and staff turnover has decreased by 14 per cent. Most people are now recruited directly, which didn't happen before.

"Even before the downturn in the economy, we'd seen staff turnover creep down, but now stability is at 90 per cent which is rare for the food industry," says Duddridge. "The survey corresponded almost exactly with this programme, so although there have been other changes, the single biggest thing has been the programme. Buyers comment on how engaged and confident staff are with their work, which helps us get contracts. But the biggest success for us is the morale and the way everyone is linked together."

"This has cut across the boundaries in the workforce and a manager going into the bakery is no longer viewed as a royal visit." Indeed, having been seen by many workers squeezing himself into a wetsuit on a surfing taster day, one senior manager commented that airs and graces are no longer an option for the management team!



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world view

Kristen A Walsh summarises the challenges and opportunities for the global health and fitness industry identified in the IHRSA 2009 Global Report

The health club industry continues to expand at an impressive rate, according to the IHRSA 2009 Global Report, which was released in June by the US-based International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA).

In these uncertain economic times, the global health and fitness club industry has proved to be resilient. In 2008, the health and fitness club industry generated an estimated US\$68.2bn in total revenue, serving nearly 117,500,000 members at more than 122,000 facilities worldwide. This represents solid growth across the board from 2007, when 108,059 clubs served 106,774,500 members and brought in US\$61.5bn in revenue. It also keeps the industry on track to meet the IHRSA-led goal of 120 million health club members by 2010.

The North American market is setting the pace with consistently steady performance; in the US, industry revenues totalled US\$19.1bn in 2008, an increase of 3 per cent on 2007. The total number of US health club locations increased by 1 per cent in 2008 – up from 29,636 to 30,022 – although the 45.5 million health club memberships marks a decrease of 2.4 per cent from 2007. Nonetheless, existing members drove increased revenues for club operators, as non-dues related sales improved by 4 per cent.

global industry overview

Non-dues revenue, along with membership retention, has also been steadily climbing in the Canadian fitness market, as more members opt for additional services such as personal training and spa amenities. In Latin America, especially Brazil, the fitness industry has been growing steadily, as business owners in these emerging markets improve their fitness operations and consumers' willingness to pay for club membership increases.

Health and fitness is also increasingly important in Europe. Consumer spending on health has increased, and the fitness industry competes for the discretionary income of these health-conscious consumers. The European health club market generated US\$33.3bn in revenue in 2007 (the most recent year

“Non-dues revenue is up as members opt for services like personal training”

for which non-US data is available), an increase of 16 per cent on 2006. The number of club units also rose by 8.6 per cent, with memberships up 4.6 per cent.

As Europeans recognise the role that fitness clubs can play in improving health, the market has encountered opportunities for growth through government regulation and investment. Business transactions within the industry have increased over the past few years through consolidation, private equity investment and management buy-outs/buy-ins; investors have been attracted to the industry's robust growth rates and profit potential.

Revenue from the Asia Pacific market increased by 12.5 per cent from 2006 to 2007, while the total number of health club facilities nearly doubled from 10,094 to 19,590 locations. During that same period, membership increased by 21 per cent from 13.2 million to 16 million. The fitness market is fragmented in

GLOBAL MARKET SIZE AND SCOPE

Continent	Total Industry Revenue (US\$)	Total # of clubs	Total # of members	Members as % of population
Europe	\$33,292,523,912	46,736	40,685,750	–
North America	\$22,699,904,000	35,759	53,438,100	–
Asia	\$8,575,700,000	16,390	12,974,000	–
Australia and New Zealand	\$2,207,000,000	3,200	3,010,000	–
South America	\$1,365,760,000	19,638	6,002,000	–
South Africa	\$26,419,683	750	1,379,525	–
Total	\$68,167,307,595	122,473	117,489,375	–



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EUROPE

Country	Total Industry Revenue (US\$)	Total # of clubs	Total # of members	Members as % of population
UK	\$7,090,696,800.00	5,755	7,200,000	11.86%
Spain	\$5,371,740,000.00	5,700	7,500,000	16.59%
Italy	\$4,431,685,500.00	8,800	5,500,000	9.47%
Germany	\$4,331,413,020.00	6,074	5,900,000	7.14%
Netherlands	\$2,232,853,260.00	2,030	2,400,000	14.55%
Russia	\$2,148,696,000.00	3,000	1,500,000	5.43%
France	\$1,948,151,040.00	3,295	3,350,000	5.44%
Sweden	\$966,913,200.00	870	1,350,000	14.74%
Greece	\$552,752,046.00	1,470	735,000	6.68%
Finland	\$526,878,165.00	455	535,000	10.50%
Portugal	\$494,200,080.00	1,400	600,000	5.66%
Belgium	\$483,456,600.00	817	600,000	5.7%
Norway	\$481,307,904.00	475	560,000	11.91%
Switzerland	\$443,168,550.00	675	550,000	7.24%
Ireland (Republic of)	\$384,974,700.00	680	430,000	10.0%
Austria	\$331,973,532.00	500	412,000	4.96%
Denmark	\$322,304,400.00	687	480,000	8.9%
Turkey	\$282,016,350.00	1,340	350,000	1.78%
Poland	\$156,675,750.00	800	250,000	0.66%
Hungary	\$114,597,120.00	270	200,000	2.00%
Czech Republic	\$107,434,800.00	1,100	150,000	1.47%
Lithuania	\$26,948,229.00	85	35,000	1.03%
Slovakia	\$20,681,199.00	230	35,000	0.64%
Latvia	\$20,054,496.00	118	35,000	1.52%
Estonia	\$13,414,429.00	60	15,750	1.21%
Slovenia	\$4,673,414.00	30	9,000	0.45%
Bulgaria	\$2,864,128.00	20	4,000	0.10%

several Asia Pacific countries, with many operators offering basic facilities at rock-bottom prices and select leading clubs providing additional amenities to justify their premium prices. However, in spite of the fluctuating nature of the market, the region's potential for growth remains promising.

All in all, the worldwide health club industry made advances in 2008. While 2009 is certainly proving to be a challenging year for operators, the industry's first quarter performance – which has shown it to be recession-resilient – indicates that it should fare better than many other sectors of the global economy.

beyond the numbers

A surprising number of facilities report that they're holding their own, while a few are actually experiencing growth. The most common observation is that, while selling new memberships has become more difficult, clients are holding onto memberships and increasing club usage; members have more time on their hands and want to take control of their health to relieve the stress that accompany an uncertain economy. In this regard, health clubs are offering unbeatable value to regular users.

"Some people, of course, will cancel their membership during periods of financial belt-tightening, but there will also be those who buy a health club membership instead of spending money on other, more expensive recreational options and/or vacations," says Casey Conrad, president of Communication Consultants, which is based in Rhode Island, US. ▶

Source: 2008 European Market Report (Deloitte analysis); see Leisure Datacube, UK.

► And for many club operators, the recession has had a silver lining. "Right now, we see incredible opportunities for international growth," says Jeff Klinger, CEO of Anytime Fitness, which recently opened its 1,000th facility, making it the world's largest 24-hour, co-ed fitness franchise in terms of operational facilities. Before the end of 2009, Klinger predicts that the company will have more than 30 clubs located in Canada and will have opened its first clubs in New Zealand, Italy and India. Additional international expansion plans include several European countries, the Middle East and Asia.

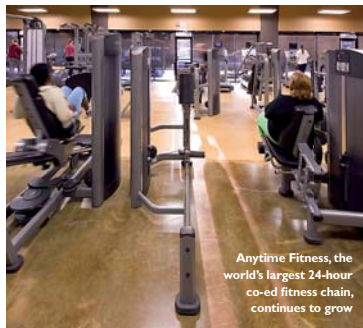
Holmes Place Iberia has three clubs in the pipeline for Portugal and is looking for sites in Spain. "We're also analysing possible acquisitions," says CEO Nick Coutts. "More opportunities are coming up because people have run out of cash."

"We're well capitalised and we've been able to take advantage of a soft real estate market and lower construction costs," says Jim Rowley who, along with Mark Mastrov, moved from 24 Hour Fitness and launched UFC Gym. The company plans to open five to 10 clubs by the end of this year.

However, the majority of clubs responding to a February 2009 IHRSA survey reported making at least some minor changes in response to the recession, including:

- Increasing the focus on customer service
- Discounting joining fees
- Offering shorter-term memberships
- Increasing marketing and advertising
- Creating new promotions
- Increasing focus on profit centres
- Offering club services to non-members
- Reviewing staffing schedules and hours
- Closely managing expenses
- Postponing equipment purchases but maintaining capital expenditure

Operators are generally finding ways to cut costs without adversely affecting the member experience. "In many cases, clubs have been successful in offsetting flat, or slightly reduced, revenues through significant expense savings," says Rick Caro, president of Management Vision, a consultancy based in New York. "Those clubs that focus on all of the right things now – the member experience, better systems, tighter cost controls, effective marketing and sales, the fragile member, adequate financial resources, etc – will be poised for greater success once the economy strengthens again."



Anytime Fitness, the world's largest 24-hour co-ed fitness chain, continues to grow



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Strong performance: Health and fitness is recession-resilient

looking ahead

The fitness industry may prove to be one of the "recession's top winners," according to financialweek.com, which designated the sector one of its six winners.

"With more people focusing on achieving healthier lifestyles, the health and fitness club industry is expected to increase 2.2 per cent in 2009," Ibis senior analyst George Van Horn told financialweek.com. "As baby boomers pass through their 40s and 50s, healthcare costs are forecast to rise dramatically, creating an incentive for insurers to promote preventative practices like hitting the gym and exercising."

Not only that, but recent data suggests that the pace of economic deterioration is slowing. According to the Blue Chip Economic Indicators survey of private economists, released in April, the US economy is set to emerge from recession before the end of 2009, as consumer spending and the housing sector recover. Health club companies around the globe should be prepared to take advantage of this rebounding economy.

Now is an exciting time for the fitness industry. Our facilities offer a phenomenal product – exercise – and customer service and member retention are improving across the board. Demand is increasing, with the growing awareness of the seemingly countless benefits of regular exercise and the pressing need to address skyrocketing healthcare costs across the globe. The industry also has among its ranks many remarkable entrepreneurs, whose ability to adapt to ever-changing business conditions will ensure the long-term success of their operations.

"The resilience of the health and fitness industry, led by operators and entrepreneurs, positions it strategically for the future," said Jay Ablondi, IHRSA's executive VP of global products. "While these are not ordinary times, the fact remains that there's simply no better industry in which to work or invest."

● Readers can purchase a copy of 2009 IHRSA Global Report: The State of the Health Club Industry from www.ihrsastore.com or by calling IHRSA on +1 617-951-0055.



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New VISIO interface from Technogym

Technogym has introduced a new CV equipment interface aimed at providing users with a comprehensive training and entertainment experience. Called VISIO, it has been created to offer a 'user-defined' experience and is powered through the Excite CV range. Incorporating Active Wellness TV, it's said that VISIO can result in an increase in secondary spend, as the screensaver channel can be defined to broadcast ads or club-specific information.

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Customers ENGAGE™ with Life Fitness kit

Life Fitness is promoting the latest innovations in its personal entertainment solutions. Part of the Elevation™ Series of cardio kit, its integrated touch-screens offer a range of intuitive features. These include a built-in television with three viewing sizes; iPod compatibility, allowing users to charge their iPod; a Virtual Trainer to provide users with both motivation and education; and USB connectivity.

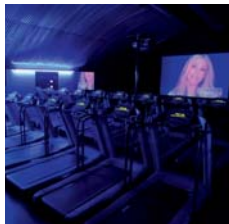
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New generation of players from ClubCom

A new generation of HD-compatible players are being rolled out to a range of health club operators by the digital media network company ClubCom. Offering a range of multi-media programming, ClubCom channels combine customised music video entertainment with features including local news and weather, health and wellness education and instant scrolling text messaging. Each option can be individually customised and also has the potential to create incremental revenue for clubs via third-party advertising.



fitness-kit.net keyword
clubcom

Acquired by Zoom Media in 2008, ClubCom currently operates more than 2,000 custom private television and media networks for health club organisations.



fitness-kit.net keyword
audiofuel

Custom-composed music from AudioFuel

Bespoke music provider AudioFuel has released a range of new music, custom-composed for people to run to. Designed to exactly match the stride and pace of a runner, the music is composed by a range of UK-based artists and producers, overseen by AudioFuel's music director Howie Saunders. Runners can choose from 20-, 30-, or 40-minute compilations as digital downloads at three intensity levels, or can either buy individual tracks or create their own playlists.



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duncan lawson

Workouts are boring, according to Instyle MD Duncan Lawson. If clubs are to retain members, they need to engage their members' minds in the activities they do. He talks to Kath Hudson about how clubs can do this



COMPANY BY NUMBERS

Head office: East Grinstead, UK

Annual turnover: £500,000

Year-on-year growth: 40 per cent growth in the first three months of this year

Other offices: Amsterdam and Wisconsin, with everything done virtually

Number of employees: Three

Q When and by whom was Instyle set up?

It was set up in 1996, by Mark Pemberton and John Fenn, as Instyle Aerobiking. I'd previously worked with them for a number of years and stayed good friends when I left the health and fitness sector to work in the pharmaceutical industry. Instyle ran into some difficulties in 2001 and I bought them out, with the vision of taking the company down the WebRacing route.

Q What's WebRacing?

The idea of WebRacing dates from 1988 and what makes it different is that fitness isn't the focus. The focus is engagement in sport or entertainment and social grouping, and fitness is the by-product.

Q How did this idea come about?

During the early 90s, while working in the pharmaceutical industry, I'd worked with Philips Electrical on the development of interactive, medical diagnostic equipment, which introduced me to interactive software development and illustrated the power of involvement.

The pharmaceutical market was fully aware in the 1980s of the huge problem that obesity was set to become. It also recognised that exercise would become a major trend, but that the mass market would need more help with motivation to exercise.

You could argue that paintballing and laser quest is just entertainment, yet exercise is a by-product of this. The same with sport: people are mentally

On yer bike! Instyle already distributes the Aerobike (left, with Duncan Lawson); a WebRacing Aerobike will launch in 2010



engaged, there's social interaction, point of contact and a routine to the training. These are all the key motivators and, as a result, people take part in exercise.

Q How did you develop the WebRacing technology?

Dr Ken Burres was the originator of the software. He was a neuroscientist working in the medical field and was hugely intelligent. He had the concept, but didn't have the ability to get it into the market, which was when we became partners. His concept has emerged as the world's number one worldwide web racing software.

We knew the market wasn't ready for it in the 90s, so we were able slowly develop the technology. What we have now is the culmination of eight years' work.

Q How is this software used?

Our Simultrainer racing software can be retrofitted to bikes, treadmills, ellipticals, rowers and kayak trainers and allows users to compete with others or against themselves.

Bike users, for example, can ride a virtual track on roads, famous courses, through mountains, cross-country, in a velodrome or even on the moon. Users can race against a ghost rider, or against other cyclists – either in the same club or over the internet.

The software has steering, gears, high quality video and computer, and shows virtual reality races or live action video of famous racing routes. It simulates the feeling of being in a race so that, if you are behind a bike, the resistance is decreased by 2 per cent because of the draughting, but if you are in front it increases by 2 per cent because of the wind resistance.

We already offer Aerobikes, which have a belt/chain pad or magnetic braking, and the full-blown WebRacing Aerobike is coming out next year.



Product portfolio The T-Bow (this photo) and WebRacing (above), which simulates the feeling of being in a race

Q What other equipment do you offer?

The Dogfight is our latest product: a recumbent bike and flight simulator in one. You have to pedal to launch, stay in the air and avoid other planes, but can also launch missiles and fire machine guns via spring-loaded handles. You can compete over the internet in worldwide dogfights, hence the name. If you don't pedal hard enough during take-off, or while avoiding a competitor, you stall, so it's a great motivational tool.

We also distribute the T-Bow, which offers all the functions of Step, BOSU,

core/wobble-board and exercise balls, but is stackable so it only occupies the space of one. And we launched our home fitness range last month, which includes biking, Nordic skiing and running.

The studio bike package will be unveiled at FIBO next year, as will MyTrak. This is a wireless device, the size of an iPod, which works a bit like a pedometer but records all the individual's daily activity. It manages the output and downloads it to a server, and then a coach calls to discuss the results. There are about 2.5 million people using these services already in the US. ▶

WebRacing This system can be retro-fitted to gym equipment such as bikes and kayak trainers, allowing users to participate in virtual reality races



► We're also working on the WebRacing software. Currently a personal computer is needed for each piece of equipment, connected by wires. This autumn we'll be testing wireless connections, and early next year we should have commercial servers operating wirelessly. These will be able to control the whole cardio equipment floor, allowing collective racing and inter-club competitions.

Q Who are your customers?

Four years ago we had Expresso interactive bikes at LIW and just had blank looks from the industry. This only began to change at the end of last year, and I think the reason was that Nintendo has shown the power of interactivity with the Wii.

We have 15,000–20,000 users online at the moment, mainly home users, but we're also in discussions with most of the industry's major players now. Sport England is interested in using the technology to bind schools and sports clubs together, to stem the drop-out rate of children from physical activity once they leave school. They'd also like data to show that their investment is working, and we should be able to provide that.

Meanwhile, the Paralympics Association wants to set up a national network, to

store the cardiovascular workout data of all disabled people in a central database, so they know who to invest in. It will also help them to link disabled people together and get a social function going.

Q What challenges is the health club industry facing at the moment?

Health clubs are too similar in what they offer in terms of equipment and programming. And everyone's chasing a similar pool of people: 18- to 30-year-olds who fit into the mould of what clubs and leisure centres are offering. However, some of these people will be in financial difficulties now and will opt out of gym membership, trade down or find different ways of taking exercise.

Q What is the industry doing wrong?

The industry has had a never-ending stream of people coming to its clubs, but still has the same penetration level as it did eight years ago. For every three people who join a health club, two drop out. Clubs are lacking in social interaction and entertainment and, apart from some independents, haven't done enough to integrate people socially.

We've spoken to those who dropped out and have heard comments like "it wasn't right for me" and "I didn't fit in". Those who were even more negative said the industry isn't innovative enough.

Q Why do you think the health and fitness industry is lacking in innovation?

Lack of confidence. The management is stuck with the status quo. The UK is one of the most concentrated markets in the world and a very small number of companies are controlling most of the market share. Young people come in, but they're not paid much, their ideas are squashed and they end up leaving.

WHO'S WHO?

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A lot of the industry is still focused on testosterone-led decision making, hanging onto the weightlifting and gym floor mentality. Other than group cycling bikes, studios have had minimal investment, and studio co-ordinators are under-supported. Clubs have held on to their vision and tried to bend everyone to that, rather than asking their members what might excite them.

Q So what, if anything, is the industry doing well?

Facilities are on the whole very good and operations have expanded, meaning there's now a site within reach of most of the population. The hardware is there, but the people side and engaging with the customer is still missing.

Q What would be the impact of incorporating WebRacing more broadly?

We could see new entertainment-focused facilities, with interactive climbing walls and games, where physical activity is the by-product. If it adapts, the fitness industry will grow and evolve, with facilities changing and offering the opportunity to create teams, challenges and social groupings. The potential for chains to create a community, with clubs racing against each other, is phenomenal.

If the industry doesn't take it on board, though, it will be stuck with just a small per cent of the population as members and will be a minor influence.

kath hudson
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

FAVOURITES

Book: *Shantaram* by

Gregory Roberts

Music: Steely Dan, Genesis – that kind of era

Place: West coast of Scotland

Food: I'm guilty of eating too much cheese!

Season: Autumn

Leisure activity: Sailing and watersports – I used to be a professional windsurfer

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Health Club Management is published 11 times a year by The Leisure Media Company Limited, Portmill House, Portmill Lane, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 1DJ, UK, and is distributed in the USA by SPP, 75 Aberdeen Road, Emigsville, PA 17318-0437. Periodicals postage paid @ Manchester, PA. POSTMASTER Send US address changes to Health Club Management, c/o PO Box 437, Emigsville, PA 17318-0437.

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lightweights

BALLET LESSONS FOR BRITISH MILITARY

British Military Fitness (BMF), the UK military-style fitness provider, has joined forces with the English National Ballet to freshen up the classes it offers and to make them more challenging.

Three BMF instructors, two of whom served in Iraq, put five dancers from the famous ballet company through their paces in a typical BMF session in London's Hyde Park.

The BMF instructors then experienced the hard work and precision that goes into a one-hour balance and core workout at the ballet company's dance studio.

While the very thought of it conjures up images of drill sergeants in tutus, the BMF maintains that it got a lot out of it. Simon Richman, London area manager at BMF, says: "The challenge will give our instructors new ideas [including balance, core stability, flexibility and posture] for exercises that can be transferred into sessions."



66: THE NUMBER OF DAYS TO FORM A HABIT

Keep your members coming to your gym for more than 66 days straight and your retention levels could rise.

According to recent research, 66 days is the length of time it takes for people to form a habit. The study, conducted by University College London (UCL), focused on volunteers who adopted a daily duty such as eating fruit or drinking a glass of water with their lunch, or going for a 15-minute run before dinner.

The average length of time before they automatically carried them out was 66 days. However, it typically took longer to form an exercise habit than a healthy eating or drinking habit.



LAUGHING ALONG TO YOGA IN THE US

A typical yoga class involves deep breathing and moments of quietness and tranquility.

Yet that's not necessarily the case with laughing yoga – a popular practice in the US. The technique, developed in India in the 1990s, involves laughing with yogic breathing exercises: chanting "ha ha ha, hee hee hee", for example. It's based on the principle that you can laugh whenever you feel like it, and not just because you find something funny.

Laughing is said to have many health benefits, such as improving respiratory function and increasing the production of stress-busting endorphins. It's also believed to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and allergies.

it's peanuts to be kind to the heart

Move over energy bars and sports supplements – a new contender for the perfect health club snack has come to light: the humble peanut.

Eating peanuts and peanut butter five days a week may halve the risk of a heart attack, according to research published in the *Journal of Nutrition*.

A team from Harvard Medical School studied 6,000 women with Type 2 diabetes – the condition associated with

obesity, lack of physical activity and poor diet that can increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Those who frequently ate peanuts or peanut butter were found to have the greatest protection against heart attack, with the risk reduced by up to 44 per cent. It's believed that the nuts help lower bad cholesterol and reduce inflammation in the body, as well as boosting blood vessels around the heart.

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