

health club management

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009



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great inductions

It takes a massive amount of effort, time and energy to get to that precious point where a new member comes into the club for their induction: finding the site, designing the club, building it, fitting it out, finding and training the staff, doing the marketing, selling the membership and finally getting the new member into the gym for an appointment with the person doing the induction.

At this point in time the new member's expectations are at their highest level and the club will have the benefit of the doubt in pretty much every way. This goodwill is quite simply and straightforwardly there to be kept or lost, depending on what follows.

When people commit to joining a health club they want to get in and get on – get exercising and get results. They feel motivated and keen to become involved and the way they're dealt with can make a huge difference to how positive they feel about their new commitment to exercise.

If their needs are understood, if they're professionally dealt with and a programme is designed which they'll enjoy and which will engage and motivate them, then they'll be off on the right track and will

never look back. However, if there are any problems setting up an induction or if it's badly done, then disillusionment can set in and the membership will not go well.

Yet how much attention do we give to this vital meeting? How much training do we give to staff. How carefully do we carry out inductions and how aware are we that if they're done badly, we're almost certain to lose that member sooner rather than later?

Getting inductions right is something worth spending time on and is a practice that will underpin the success of your club and business by forging enduring loyalties.

Creating a warm welcome and a memorable, effective induction that empowers new members and enables them to channel their motivation is absolutely vital to the success of the club

I know from personal experience over the years that inductions are often done exceptionally badly and that many people choose not to continue with their membership because of this. So much can go wrong: delays in getting appointments with staff to do an induction can create frustration as the momentum is lost, lack of awareness of members' needs can leave them feeling as though they've been 'processed' rather than benefitting from a bespoke programme and indifferent staff who show no enthusiasm for the task in hand can also make for an awkward and uncomfortable meeting. Finally, lack of knowledge on the part of the staff member doing the induction can undermine confidence in the ability of the club to offer the level of instruction which the new member is expecting.

There's a unique bond between the member of the team who does the induction and the new member so it's important that regular contact is maintained between the two and that check-ups are done to ensure the prescribed programme is understood and is suitable, motivating and enjoyable.

When we lose members as a result of bungled and ineffective inductions, it's not only bad for the business, but we're also sending people out into our catchment area with bad things to say about our club. We know that far more people will pass on complaints than pass on recommendations and each time this happens it is weakening the business. Creating a warm welcome and a memorable, effective induction that empowers members and enables them to channel their motivation is absolutely vital.

Liz Terry, editor

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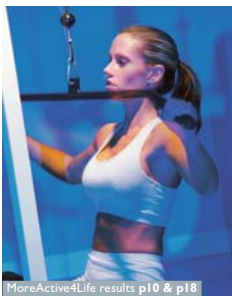
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buyers' guide:

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



write to reply



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

creating a sustainable kids' programme isn't child's play

I read with interest your recent feature (*HCM* Oct 09, p39) about kids' activity programmes. There are hosts aplenty – leisure centres, schools, private clubs, community clubs, nurseries, etc – and it's great to see so many organisations trying to make a difference to children's levels of health, fitness and wellbeing.

However, I still believe many clubs and centres are merely doing lip service with their children's activity provision. There generally seems to be much more of a focus around driving the adult

programmes that support membership figures. But children are our members of the future and we need to act now.

A structured two-pronged approach – ensuring the instructors and coaches have the crucial child management skills to engage juniors at the appropriate levels, and appointing a team or individual to promote and drive the programme on-site and in the local community – is vital to developing a truly sustainable kids' programme. It's not a simple task and the importance of these roles should never be underestimated; picking the right people is key, based not only on the qualifications they hold, but also on their drive, energy, enthusiasm and passion to make a positive difference.

Alongside this, sites must create a structured marketing plan, identify all junior income streams, draw up key messages targeting both the kids and their parents, source funding and appropriate kit, provide additional training, and so on.

It takes a lot of time and effort to run a successful junior programme, and sites achieving this really do deserve a massive pat on the back!

marina saunders
director, zigzag



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Kids are the members of the future; we should act now to engage them



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The FIA says it represents all sport and activity bodies to the PHC

public health commission: all sectors represented

In reference to the recent Talkback feature (*HCM* Oct 09, p28), it is inaccurate and misleading to suggest that the Conservative-sponsored Public Health Commission (PHC) was unaware of the contribution that local government and the sport fraternity could make to any future public health agenda, because both 'constituencies' were vociferously represented by the FIA; the 'energy-in/energy-out' message has been embedded in the PHC's recommended strategies as a result of our involvement.

The FIA champions all organisations and employees involved in helping more people to be more active, more often. We do not draw demarcation lines based on ownership or activity, as to do so would be parochial and counterproductive. All activity, including sport, was represented by Fred Turok at the Commission and continues to be represented by the FIA when dealing with the Departments of Health, Culture Media and Sport, Work and Pensions, and Children, Schools and Families.

One industry speaking with one voice and sharing one agenda must be the way forward. This strategy has proved successful so far, and I urge all organisations to focus on our collective strength rather than on individual goals.

david stalker
coo, fia

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 We are owed £1,000 by a company in France. We have no knowledge of the French legal system so would have to use lawyers there to assist us, but the costs could be prohibitive. Is there anything else we can do?

A If the claim (excluding costs) is less than €2,000, the new EU Small Claims Procedure can be used. A claim can now be brought in your local county court in the UK against a party domiciled in another EU country. The process is simple and details can readily be found online (for example, www.ukecc.net). In essence, a claim form is submitted to your local court with a court fee. The court will issue it and post it to the defendant, who will have 30 days to respond. The district judge will then make a decision based on the paperwork before him, or possibly after an oral hearing by telephone or video conference. Any judgement given will be enforceable in the other EU country.

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Lucozade Sport, the leaders in sports nutrition, have a range of sport nutrition products that deliver against a variety of training needs. The sports nutrition range has been developed alongside top athletes and sports scientists to ensure quality and reinforce credibility among consumers, which has been integral to the success of the range since its launch in January this year.



HYDRATE YOUR BODY



Just a 2% reduction in body weight through sweating can result in a significant decrease in performance. Replacing fluids and electrolytes lost through sweat will help improve exercise levels and stay hydrated.

WHY USE IT?

Lucozade Sport Hydro Active helps replace fluid and electrolytes lost in sweat during exercise. It contains just 50 calories per serve (excluding Lucozade Sport Hydro Active Plus).

WHEN TO USE IT?

Lucozade Sport Hydro Active can be consumed before, during and after exercise for better hydration throughout a training session. It is ideal for exercise sessions of up to an hour.



FUEL YOUR MUSCLES



Fuelling the body is crucial to performance. Carbohydrate is the body's preferred source of energy during exercise and is stored in the body within muscle and liver as glycogen. Carbohydrate intake improves performance by providing muscles with the energy required to maintain a high work rate or exercise intensity for the duration of a training session or event.

WHY USE IT?

Lucozade Sport Body Fuel contains fluid and carbohydrate to help fuel muscles and maintain hydration. It is proven to help increase work rate and duration and help exercise participants feel better during training.

WHEN TO USE IT?

Lucozade Sport Body Fuel is ideal when exercising for 30 minutes or longer at a high intensity or more than 60 minutes at any intensity.



FOCUS YOUR MIND



All sport requires you to be at the top of your game both physically and mentally. The brain is the control centre for the central nervous system and is responsible for the efficient functioning of many key mental attributes required in sport. Caffeine acts on the central nervous system and can improve focus, alertness and reaction time as well as reduce the perception of effort.

WHY USE IT?

Lucozade Sport with Caffeine Boost contains carbohydrate to improve physical performance and caffeine, which has been proven to enhance focus and improve alertness and concentration.

WHEN TO USE IT?

Drinking approximately 500ml of Lucozade Sport with Caffeine Boost one hour before exercise will allow the caffeine to peak in the bloodstream at the right time. It is ideal for high intensity training sessions or in competitive situations.



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ACCELERATE YOUR RECOVERY



Rapid recovery after sport is vital for people training regularly who want to get the most from their performance. Put simply, recovery is the ability to restore exercise capacity. Recovery requires protein to enhance muscle protein synthesis, carbohydrate to replace the stores lost during exercise and fluid to counter sweat loss.

WHY USE IT?

Lucozade Sport Recovery products contain a mix of carbohydrate and protein. Protein is required for muscle maintenance and has been scientifically proven to accelerate recovery after sport and exercise.

WHEN TO USE IT?

For the best results, Lucozade Sport Recovery products should be consumed soon after sport or exercise in order to promote muscle protein synthesis and rebuild glycogen stores.



INCREASE MUSCLE MASS



Building muscle mass to gain strength requires a programme combining effective resistance training with suitable nutrition strategies. Protein is key to gains in strength as it has been shown to help promote the growth of muscle over time by enhancing protein synthesis.

WHY USE IT?

Lucozade Sport Pro Muscle has a range of high quality protein products that are designed to meet the needs of those looking to build strength and help the development of lean muscle mass.

WHEN TO USE IT?

For the best results, Lucozade Sport Pro Muscle high quality protein product should be consumed in the period immediately after resistance based training.



BUILD EXPLOSIVE POWER



The two components of power are strength and speed. The combination of carbohydrate for fuel and protein for muscle growth is crucial for the development of power in any training programme. Furthermore, creatine intake is proven to increase the ability to perform repeated bouts of high intensity and power based exercise.

WHY USE IT?

Lucozade Sport Pro Muscle has a range of power and strength products that include creatine to help build explosive power.

WHEN TO USE IT?

Although Lucozade Sport Pro Muscle Power & Strength can be consumed at any point in the day, for most effective results it should be consumed in the period immediately after power based training.



or email simon.x.farrel@gsk.com

in brief...

mayor outlines childhood obesity plans

Boris Johnson, mayor of London, has called on each of the 32 London boroughs to adopt a new city-wide approach to tackling childhood obesity in the lead-up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Among the recommendations outlined in the mayor's strategy is the use of sports to help young people build self-confidence.

one-to-one training still top fitness trend

A report into the trends in personal fitness training by IDEA Health and Fitness has revealed that one-to-one training and small group exercise are the most popular forms of exercise among gym members.

IDEA Health & Fitness Association, the worldwide membership organisation for exercise professionals, has published the results of its 2009 IDEA Personal Training Fitness Programs & Equipment Trends Report.

The research asked personal trainers and exercise professionals to list current trends and innovations. The survey shows that one-to-one personal training is still the most popular fitness trend, with 98 per cent of respondents reporting that they offer it to their clientele. More than 53 per cent believe one-on-one training is stable, while a third (33 per cent) believe there is still potential for growth in the industry.

fullwell cross revamp completed

Fullwell Cross Leisure Centre in Ilford, London, has undergone a £350,000 redevelopment.

Alliance Leisure completed the revamp for Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure, the trust that runs the centre on behalf of the London Borough of Redbridge.

Cosmur Construction was appointed as constructor for the project, which included the creation of a new, two-floor, 180sq m (1,938 sq ft) 42-station fitness suite.

mbodies studio 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 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.

"Early indications show that, when a complimentary basic principles session is booked on the first visit, we have a conversion rate of 80 per cent of visiting prospects."

There are no memberships at mbodies. Sessions are open for anyone to attend on a 'pay as you go' basis – £12 per group class – or paying in advance to

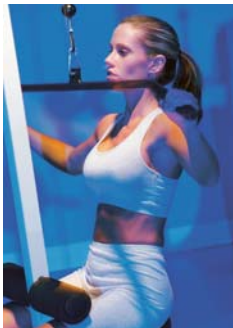
attend five sessions in a month for £50, 10 sessions for £80, and £100 to attend 15 group classes in a month. Onslow has set a target of attracting 250 regular class-based customers during the first year of operation.

"The mbodies brand is new and develops the Active Pilates studio concept of pilates-only exercise studios located in Oxford, central London and Southampton," Onslow adds.

For further details, see the new opening feature on page 30.



Centre offers 'pay as you go' pilates

moreactive4life results released

200,000 people took part in MA4L

New statistics from the FIA have revealed that more than 200,000 people across the UK participated in the inaugural MoreActive4Life campaign during the three summer months.

The initiative, which was launched by the FIA as part of the government's Change4Life programme in June this year, saw more than 1,200 health clubs and leisure centres participate in a bid to increase levels of physical activity throughout Britain.

FIA chief operating officer Dave Stalker announced results from the first year of the three-year campaign at Leisure Industry Week (LIW) on 22 September. These revealed that participating health and fitness facilities reported an average of 200 referrals through MoreActive4Life.

For further details, see page 18.



The Marshall Street Baths have remained closed to the public since 1997

historic baths to re-open in 2010

Westminster City Council (WCC) has confirmed that the Marshall Street Baths in central London will re-open to the public in 2010.

Redevelopment work on the site, which has been closed since 1997 due to safety fears, began in August 2008. The £25m revamp is being carried out by Marshall Street Regeneration.

SG Interior Exterior is acting as the construction manager for the project. It will continue to oversee and carry out the build and restoration of the listed features for the regeneration of the site. The new facility was designed by Finch Forman in collaboration with Fulcrum Consulting and design firms

PSL Structural Projects and Lucking & Clarke. When it re-opens, the facility will include a fully restored main pool, as well as a new fitness club and health suite with sauna and multi-purpose dance and exercise studios.

WCC has already signed a management agreement with Nuffield Health, which will manage the new facilities on behalf of the council once the work has been completed.

As part of the development, 52 new homes will also be built, 15 of which will be part of an affordable housing scheme.

The Marshall Street leisure centre will be operated as a public facility, and will offer resident discounts.

public fitness sector gains in confidence

Fitness operators in the public sector are more confident of their future prospects now than they were last year, according to a state of the industry report from sporta.

sporta's annual report is now in its eighth year, and results show that there has also been an increase in the number of trusts looking to take over facilities within their area. More than 75 per cent of respondents also reported that they were considering expansion of existing facilities.

However, the study also revealed that trusts still have concerns over their finances: nearly a quarter of respondents said that reducing subsidy from, or increasing payments to, the local authority was their primary concern.

Other challenges identified in the report, which was carried out by Leisure-net Solutions, included reaching membership targets and dealing with falling income and rising operating costs.


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At this time of the year we always start talking about heading 'back to the gym'. Inevitably people rethink their approach to exercise in January, either because they've simply lost momentum during the colder months or more specifically they are worried about the effects of indulgence during the festive season. Either way, we have a duty to try, once again, to help and support long term fitness goals.

So what will make the biggest difference? Most will seek immediate results, despite the fact that short term gains don't usually deliver long term benefits. Therefore, my biggest piece of advice would be to help people set realistic, achievable goals and understand the importance of long term commitment.

Once goals are set, 'getting the basics right' is the next important step. Not just in relation to an individual's exercise regime, but also their nutrition as this can have a big impact on the efficacy of any training. Consuming the correct fuel before, during and after a workout provides energy and hydration to help individuals of all levels to achieve their full potential. Likewise, if strength is your aim then maximising the recovery period after a resistance workout with protein is logical.

Unfortunately, there is no magic formula, if there were I'd be eulogising about the fact our population is the fittest and healthiest. Clearly, we will always have work to do and people to motivate!

Nick Morgan

Applied Sport Science Manager,
Lucozade Sport Science Academy

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training

news



Lifetime will now offer its own awards

awarding status for lifetime

Training provider Lifetime has been recognised as an official Awarding Organisation by Ofqual, the regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England.

The company will now be able to submit full qualifications to the new Qualifications & Credit Framework (QCF) beyond 2010, under the name Lifetime Awarding.

According to Peta Hairsine, Lifetime Awarding organisation manager, the company's awarding arm was established in response to a growing need for 'fit for purpose' qualifications and work-ready recruits to enhance the quality and professionalism of the fitness industry and beyond.

Hairsine adds: "By establishing ourselves as an industry-based awarding organisation, we will maintain the continuity of programme, brand and quality assurance of our awards."

Lifetime Awarding works in partnership with employers and operators to secure jobs in the sector.

working in fitness results

SkillsActive, the sector skills council for active learning and leisure, has unveiled the results of the sixth Working in Fitness survey (see also p48).

Almost 1,500 workers from across the health and fitness sector took part in the 2009 study, which is designed to monitor salary and training trends.

According to the 2009 survey, the average number of training days for employees throughout the fitness sector remains high, at six days a year, although more than half of respondents said they now pay for their own training, compared with 48 per cent last year.

More than a quarter of fitness workers hold an honours degree, while 11 per cent have obtained a masters or other postgraduate qualification. A total of 59 per cent have acquired a Level 3 fitness qualification, while more than a quarter are qualified at Level 2.

In terms of pay, the report has also found that males earn 16 per cent more, on average, than female counterparts.



More than half of trainers are Level 2

sports leaders launches new tool

Sports Leaders UK has launched a new, complimentary teaching tool specifically developed to celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Katharine Merry – bronze medal winner for the 400m sprint at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney – was part of the team launching the tool at this year's Leisure Industry Week (LIW), held in Birmingham.

The new Sports Leaders UK resource is designed to give young candidates wanting to work in active leisure and sport the opportunity to explore the values of the Games and understand how they impact everyday life.

The new resource will be offered as a free download via the Sports Leaders UK website for schools, colleges, local authority sports development teams and other official organisations registered with Sports Leaders UK.

The teaching tool is one of a number of initiatives aimed at extending the London 2012 legacy to encompass a far wider audience than the lucky few who are able to play a role in the Games.

Formerly named the British Sports Trust, Sports Leaders UK is a charity providing leadership training in sport. It trains more than 2,500 sports tutors and coaches every year.



Kirklees Active Leisure invested more than £250,000 in the new dance area

new shokk area for kirklees

Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) has unveiled a new £250,000 SHOKK activity area at Whitcliffe Mount Sports Centre.

The new facility, funded by NHS Kirklees, includes a wireless dance mats system, traverse climbing wall, target wall, Wushu martial arts tower and Vew-Do balance boards.

The mayor of Kirklees, councillor Julie Stewart-Turner, officially opened the SHOKK activity area and speeches were made by Alasdair Brown, chief executive of KAL and Jonathan Williams, CEO of SHOKK.

"We are very excited about this thoroughly new project, which takes

a proactive approach towards getting young people participating in fun group exercise," says Brown.

"Together with our partners, Kirklees Council, NHS Kirklees and SHOKK, we are keen to get everyone interested in a project that will affect the futures of so many young people in Kirklees."

Following the centre's opening, pupils from Westborough High School provided a demonstration of the equipment under the guidance of SHOKK and KAL instructors.

A further four portable dance mat sets are being used by schools on a rolling basis throughout Kirklees.

barrow teams up with pulse

Barrow Borough Council has signed a 30-year income share deal, with leisure equipment provider Pulse Fitness, on Park Leisure Centre in Cumbria.

According to the *North West Evening Mail*, the £1.3m deal involves Pulse Fitness maintaining the centre on the proviso that the council can buy out the company and claim complete ownership of the site on demand.

As part of the contract, the all-weather pitch at the facility will be converted into six five-a-side courts.

red corner chooses scift

Red Corner, the Coventry-based boxing and fitness gym, has recently taken delivery of a SCIFIT PRO 1 Sport upper body exerciser.

Red Corner purchased the piece of equipment to complement its existing cardio machines. The gym offers its professional boxers and martial arts specialists the opportunity to continue their upper body training while recovering from knee or ankle injuries.

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in brief...

premier training in oman

Premier Training International has secured a contract to provide health and fitness instructors to Oman.

The contract has been agreed with Khimji Ramdas, an organisation based in Oman that trades in a range of markets, spanning distribution, retailing, services and manufacturing.

The aim of the new co-venture is to target affluent Omanis who are more likely to install private gyms at home than they are to acquire membership at a health club.

Premier will train Khimji staff in Level 2 Gym Instruction and Level 3 Certified Personal Trainer. Khimji Ramdas will then provide Premier-qualified trainers to work in people's homes, complementing equipment installations by Cybex, another of its partners.

ehfa expansion continues

The European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) has expanded its membership beyond the 7,000-facility mark for the first time, taking its reach to 22 countries.

Two new national associations have joined EHFA as members – DFHO from Denmark and FNEID from Spain – bringing the total to 12. And new sponsors Nintendo, Achmea Health Centers, High Five Health Promotion and Reebok International have also signed up.

vivafit's bodyvive success

Vivafit, the largest gym chain in Portugal which caters for women only, has seen an uplift in attendance and revenue thanks to the introduction of a special 'express' version of Les Mills' BODYVIVE workout.

The launch of the 35-minute workout earlier this year was designed to increase use of the chain's group exercise studios. A new 'Gold' membership – costing a €10 premium at €49/month – allows members to use the gym as well as to access all pilates and BODYVIVE classes. In less than nine months, 40 per cent of all members have traded up to this option.

aspria launches berlin hotel

The new Aspria Hotel opened in Berlin, Germany, on 12 October.

Adjoining the city's Aspria Spa and Sporting Club, the hotel extension – 39 rooms, three apartment suites and two conference rooms – also incorporates new spa features to enhance the existing



New hotel offers 39 rooms, three apartment suites and conferencing

spa offering. These include a wave dream installation relaxation room, salt inhalation room, 46sq m hammam and a second mind-body studio.

All hotel guests have full access to the facilities at the 14,000sq m club, which include a state of the art gym with an extensive class timetable and personal training, as well as activities such as beach volleyball in the summer.

"Staying at Aspria Hotel in Berlin will be like staying in a private members club. It's intimate and friendly and there's more engagement – a large number of guests will use the club facilities and feel like members of the extended family," says Aspria CEO Brian Morris. "There's really nothing in the city that compares. It's a real 'escape' and we're very proud of it." (see also HCM Oct 09, p30)

anytime expands into mexico

Fitness franchise Anytime Fitness will soon be expanding into Mexico, thanks to a master franchise agreement signed with entrepreneur Rodrigo Chavez.

Chavez aims to open the first Anytime Fitness club in Mexico within the next six months. His goal is to open five clubs within a year, 50 clubs within three years and more than 100 clubs by 2014.

Initially, he plans to open clubs near resort areas such as Cancun, Guadalajara, Monterrey and Los Cabos, targeting the resort workforce rather than tourists.

"There aren't many good fitness options for those living in Mexico," says Chavez, "especially those in 24-hour resorts. Our 24/7 opening times will appeal to them."



Anytime Fitness: Master franchisee signed to expand into Mexico

star fitness – first club in poland

Star Fitness opened its first club, Fabryka Formy, in the Polish city of Boleslaw on 26 September.

The 3,000sq m club is located in Cinema City – a popular entertainment complex in the centre of town, with high levels of consumer traffic.

The fitness-based facility has been equipped by Star Trac and Escape Fitness. Star Trac has installed the full E-Series range of cardio equipment, including the e-Spinner, the Impact, Instinct and HumanSport strength

ranges, and Spinning bikes. Escape Fitness has supplied the Reebok Professional range.

The club offers cardio studio and circuit training, a stretching pool, rowing and Spinning areas, aerobics and combat fitness, a HumanSport functional training area, Active Mom zone – a dedicated pre- and post-natal area – and personal training.

Star Fitness has plans to open a further nine clubs in Poland over the next five years.

edited by kate cracknell email: katecracknell@leisuremedia.com



Bebekoy club, in Istanbul, is one of the most luxurious in the MAC chain

fourth mac club opens in turkey

The MAC Bebekoy club, owned by the Mars Entertainment Group, opened in Istanbul in September.

Located in the upmarket Etiler/Bebek neighbourhood, with views across the Bosphorus, the 4,000sq m club is the most luxurious in the MAC (Mars Athletic Club) chain. Annual membership costs US\$2,400 (£1,450).

Facilities include a gym equipped by Life Fitness, Nautilus, Technogym, Hoist, Free Motion and GRAVITY. A broad range of group exercise classes spans everything from group cycling, through oriental dance and Latin street dance, to Hip Hop Theatre and kids' sessions. These are complemented by martial

arts classes and fitness/swimming programmes delivered in the club's pool.

An exclusive yoga studio delivers Jivamukti, Hot Power, Vinyasa, Slow Flow, Kundalini and Ashtanga Yoga, as well as Yogafit and Feldenkreis – many of which are brand new to Turkey. There's also a pilates studio, set up in partnership with MK Pilates Studios.

The club also offers two WTA-standard tennis courts, professional squash and racquetball courts, and an NBA-standard basketball court.

There are currently four MAC clubs in Turkey, with a further two sites planned to open over the next two years: one in Istanbul and the other in Izmir.

indoor cycling focus for the us

RealRyder is equipping two new indoor cycling-focused facilities in the US, both due to open in November.

Equilibria Fitness, in Miami, is a 280sq m club owned by locally renowned fitness and group cycling coach and personal trainer Thamara Gonzalez. At the heart of the offering is the dedicated group cycling studio. Equipped by RealRyder with its bikes that tilt and pivot on their axel to provide a 'real-feel' cycling experience, the studio has a stage, lighting and music designed to enhance the indoor cycling experience.

A second studio offers classes such as yoga, kettlebells and dance-therapy, while a resistance training room is available for personal training.

Meanwhile On-the-Go Fitness, a 240sq m independent club in the Long Island area of New York, focuses on small group speciality training. It offers 35 RealRyder bikes in a pitch black studio with fluorescent graffiti of the Manhattan skyline, plus TRX suspension training, kettlebells and Free Motion kit. Children's activities include yoga, as well as speed/agility training for older kids.

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from the board



looking ahead

fred turok • fia chair

Twenty years ago our industry prospered on the coat tails of a Jane Fonda-inspired 'fitness revolution'.

Today, our work with the government allows us to position ourselves as a government delivery partner. This, however, is just the beginning of a much bigger journey.

There are two key issues we have to address. Firstly, what do we need to do as an industry to be more relevant to more consumers more often? And secondly, how can we be more valuable to the healthcare sector to ensure that we are embedded in, and a vital part of, their delivery strategy?

These are the questions that have now given the rise to the new TwentyTen Commission.

The Commission is the start of a process designed to be a catalyst for the industry to develop a five-year plan to allow us to crash through our 12 per cent market penetration glass ceiling and attract Department of Health funds for the delivery of 'exercise medicine'.

The process has started. More than 30 industry leaders will define the issues on which we need to focus – for example, does the industry have the right 'products' and skillsets to achieve our objectives? The next stage will be an open consultation with the industry at large, before the various strands are brought together into one integrated strategic plan.

This is an exciting plan and the FIA board hopes you will support it.

new hcs helps bridge healthcare and exercise gap

More than 15 years ago, the industry adopted the PAR-Q (Pre-activity Readiness Questionnaire) which was developed to help operators assess if it was safe for a person to embark on a new exercise or fitness programme.

To be consistent with current government policies, the new Health Commitment Statement (HCS) pre-activity questionnaire, developed by the FIA in association with medico-legal risk management specialist EIDO, has been produced in consultation with fitness industry operators, medico-legal professionals and health providers to support the evolving requirements of consumers and operators.

"The health and wellbeing world has changed enormously since PAR-Qs were first developed in Canada over 15 years ago," said David Stalker, the FIA's COO, at the launch of the new HCS. "Any pre-activity questionnaire should be a tool to help assess the needs of potential exercisers, as well as helping to decide on the optimum combination of activities designed to achieve specific goals. Regrettably PAR-Qs had become a barrier to exercise, with over 5 per cent of potential new exercisers being turned away for often inappropriate reasons – for example, a former asthma sufferer would not be able to enroll as a member despite the fact that he/she had not suffered from the condition for years."

Stalker continued: "Our aim was to develop a protocol which relied

on current fact, not just historic data. Starting from just £60 per site – for Code of Practice-compliant leisure facilities – we believe that HCS will help underpin the Department of Health's physical activity engagement strategy, save PCTs and GPs millions in prescription charges, remove a frequent barrier to exercise for consumers and help get more people more active more often. This long overdue initiative could well prove one of the major milestones in our evolution from health and fitness operators to public health delivery partner."

Commenting for EIDO Healthcare, Owain Tudor, director of product development, says: "Our remit was to update the health and fitness industry on Department of Health guidelines, legislation and case law, while promoting a joint commitment from the industry and its customers to improving health through exercise. The 24-month development process included consultation with industry operators and health and safety experts prior to approval by the FIA's Technical Health and Safety Group and the Code of Practice Working Group."

The HCS, which has been designed specifically for the UK gym environment, is available from the FIA standards team. It can be downloaded and adapted by operators to meet their individual needs.

For more information about the HCS, contact Pete Wells at pete@fia.org.uk or on +44 (0)20 7420 8571.



The HCS pre-activity questionnaire would not exclude former asthma sufferers

edited by tom walker. email: tomwalker@leisuremedia.com



Team members from Cadbury House, Spirit of Flame 2009 winner

flame 2010

The Oscars of the industry is now open for business. The 2010 FLAME awards (Fitness Leadership and Management Excellence), launched at LIW and sponsored by Matrix, is now open to all well run facilities whose management would like to prove that they are 'best of class'.

The awards, which recognise and celebrate excellence and best practice in the health and fitness industry, is a high profile endorsement perfect for both internal motivation and external promotional. According to Jason Eaton, club manager at Cadbury House, the 2009 Spirit of Flame winner: "Our members and staff are proud to be associated with such a prestigious award and we will be working hard to retain it."

FLAME assessor Tony Brettell adds: "Every year the FLAME awards become more competitive; the standards get higher and the innovation gets more creative. It's a pleasure to be involved in such a prestigious and sought-after award, and next year I'm sure there will be even more new clubs and centres

that will enter, all with a burning ambition to be a FLAME winner."

To find out which of the 10 FLAME awards is most appropriate for your organisation, visit the FIA website (www.fia.org.uk) and complete the online questionnaire.

"FLAME is not just about winning an industry award and the prestige and publicity that accompany it," says David Stalker, the FIA's COO. "It's also a business health check undertaken by specialists – the FLAME assessors. This alone is worth the entry fee."

"But, having said that, the emotional value for the winning team of being declared 'best of class' is priceless. It must be one of the most powerful employee retention and attraction tools any organisation can have."

To help entrants maximise their chance of winning, the FIA runs workshops across the country in December. For more information on this, as well as how to enter, contact Lauren Milne on +44 (0)20 7420 8564 or email flame@fia.org.uk

diary dates

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moreactive4life moves on

David Stalker, the FIA's chief operating officer, discusses the success of MoreActive4Life and the next phase of the campaign



MoreActive4Life is a consumer campaign launched by the FIA in late June 2009. In addition to providing access to gyms, the programme also engaged communities in activities beyond the perimeter of the fitness facility. The initiative comprised three key elements: a free day pass to the gym, a six-week walking group and a six-week in-gym session.

MoreActive4Life is the FIA sub-brand of the Change4Life campaign, targeting the latter's 'move more' goal. A three-year initiative, this summer saw the first wave of the campaign. In the eyes of the Department of Health, the scheme is "at the vanguard" of attempts to drive Change4Life into the community.

The objectives of the MoreActive4Life campaign were to create a compelling consumer offer which could be delivered consistently across the country at more than 1,000 sites; no other organisation has the reach or capacity to work in this way with the Department of Health.

It sought to stimulate consumer interest and convert this into action, either in the shape of visiting a participating health and fitness facility, or by logging on to the campaign website for more information.

Initial results have now been analysed and plans created for the next phase of the MoreActive4Life campaign.



PICTURE: WWW.STOCK.COM/JOAN TEAK

Walking groups were part of the MoreActive4Life six-week programme

the results

MoreActive4Life was a qualified success. The overall results from year one of the campaign show that more than 200,000 people participated, with 167,000 estimated six-week gym programmes, an estimated 26,000 day passes issued and 11,000 estimated six-week walking groups set up. Each participating site received an average of 201 referrals and the data shows an average conversion rate from the programme to membership of 44.7 per cent.

The initiative was equally delivered by FIA members from the public, private and charitable sectors.

Encouragingly, MoreActive4Life not only engaged a sizeable number of people but also made a difference to their health. This was measured via the use of the Healthy Living Index, which scored participants' lifestyles out of 100, using indicators including

levels of physical activity, activeness at work, dietary habits, lifestyle (including smoking and drinking) and energy levels. This Healthy Living Index was calculated prior to participants beginning the six-week programme and recalculated after it was completed.

As a result of the programmes, the data collected shows that participants improved their healthy living score by an average of almost 20 per cent, with 40.7 per cent of participants rising from a below average score to above average. Further, nearly 8 per cent of participants achieved the optimum score range (80 to 100) during the programme.

Public interest was measured through activity on the MoreActive4Life website, which showed 20,518 visits from campaign launch to end. From this, consumer interest and the impact that PR was having on the website activity was tracked.

The lack of additional promotional support from the Department of Health (coverage was withdrawn to concentrate on countering the outbreak of swine flu), hindered the 'above the line' effectiveness of the initiative. This meant that success was dependent on facilities mobilising their staff on the ground to implement the campaign

The campaign sought to stimulate consumer interest and convert this into action



MoreActive4Life created a network of gyms and professionals willing to take forward the next stage of the campaign

locally. The most successful operators, such as Nirvana Spa which engaged over 1,500 people, were able to match a compelling offer over six weeks to their own local promotional activity and strong partnerships with local retailers.

This is reflected in the press coverage given to MoreActive4Life. Although it received fantastic national press coverage, including from the BBC, *The Times* and *The Independent*, it was at the local level that had the most impact, with 33 pieces of local media coverage.

the pipeline

This summer's campaign has created a network of more than 1,000 sites and thousands of exercise professionals – an excellent pipeline through which to deliver future evolutions of the initiative. The reaction from the industry has been

fantastic. It's heartening to see so many organisations – not just operators – willing to do their bit in support of the movement.

As a response to this support, we have decided to bring forward the next stage of the campaign.

The FIA has partnered with MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition ... Do it!) to develop an innovative behavioural intervention specifically designed to enable the health and fitness sector to proactively target and appeal to sedentary people.

The six-week facilitated self-help programme combines evidence-based behaviour change techniques with nutrition education and an introduction to varied forms of graded physical activity. MEND has developed these innovative behaviour change tools, with

a specific focus on physical activity, for inclusion in a 'kit' that participants receive. The objective is to help people develop sustainable healthy living habits.

Researched and written by MEND's specialist team of psychologists, dieticians and physical activity experts, and guided by in-depth health and fitness sector expertise, the programme is designed expressly for safe and cost-effective delivery by non-specialists.

The programme will be available exclusively through the MoreActive4Life campaign. It has been approved by the Department of Health as suitable for use of the Change4Life branding.

The FIA is excited to be sustaining the MoreActive4Life brand into 2010. We hope it will continue to enable the sector to engage with the public health agenda in a whole hearted and effective fashion.

leisureopportunities is the official recruitment magazine of the fia



Andrée Deane has left the FIA

fia confirms deane's exit

After some speculation, the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has confirmed that Andrée Deane has left the organisation.

In a short statement, a spokesperson confirmed that Deane parted company with the FIA back in July, but did not offer any reason for her departure.

The statement reads: "The Board of the FIA today confirmed that Andrée Deane ceased being chief executive officer of the organisation with effect from July 2009. Andrée has served the fitness industry and the association for many years and we wish her well in the future."

Deane joined the FIA in 1999 and was responsible for developing the FIA's public affairs strategy.

in brief...

hoole hall appoints sowden

Sara Sowden has been appointed fitness manager at the new Club and Spa at Hoole Hall, the multi-million pound purpose-built gym and spa which officially opened on Monday 2 November. Sowden joins Hoole Hall from Old Hall Country Club in Chester, where she spent five years working as a gym manager.

Sowden says: "It's important to adapt and grow as a professional. Having the opportunity to work in such a high-spec gym with all the latest technology is very exciting, particularly being involved from the start."

premier sales hitting the mark

Premier Training International has appointed Mark Botha as its new global sales and marketing director.

Botha joins Premier from Leisure Connection, where he worked as the company's sales and marketing director from January 2006 onwards.

At Leisure Connection, Botha was credited with transforming the performance of the Harpers fitness clubs arm: during his time, personal training revenue grew to £750,000 a year, while fitness and swimming memberships grew by 21 per cent in 2006.

Botha has also previously worked for Fitness First, where he spent five years.

At Premier, Botha will be responsible for all areas of sales and marketing. One of his main tasks will be to drive forward the organisation's business-to-business and international training division, using the National Academy



Mark Botha joins Premier Training

of Sports Medicine (NASM) training resources and tools.

Premier Training has a turnover of around £9m and the company currently employs 150 people, with sites in 18 locations across the UK.

balfour resigns from fitness first

Mike Balfour, founder of Fitness First, has resigned from the company's board.

Balfour launched the company with business partner Christopher Pearce in 1992. Since then, the group has grown from a single site in Bournemouth, UK, to a global chain operating 538 sites across 21 countries.

Balfour has remained at the company through two takeovers, the last one in September 2005 when venture capitalist group BC Partners paid a total of £830m for the company.

It is understood that Balfour's resignation is due to disagreements with BC Partners over the company's strategy. Balfour still holds a significant shareholding in Fitness First.

In a short statement, a Fitness First spokesperson said: "Mike Balfour has created a tremendous business and everyone in the business is hugely appreciative of the legacy he has given us. While it is a shame he is stepping down, I am sure he will remain a friend of the business."

new hr director for la fitness

LA fitness is strengthening its team with the appointment of Karen Shotbolt as its new HR director.

Shotbolt joins as a director on the LA Fitness operating board following seven years as UK HR director at Select Service Partners, the international catering and retail group.

Working from the group's Doncaster HQ, Shotbolt will be responsible for more than 4,500 LA Fitness employees across more than 80 gyms, including club management, fitness coaches, the sales team and the functional support team at the 70-strong head office.

johnston to split role

Jon Johnston, managing director of Matrix Fitness Systems, has been appointed managing director of Matrix's sister company, Johnson Health Tech. Johnston will now work in a dual role, overseeing operations for both organisations.

Johnson Health Tech, UK distributor of Horizon and Vision home fitness equipment brands, is owned by the same parent company as Matrix.

Johnston says: "I will be taking a strategic managerial approach with both organisations. This will not affect the growing success of Matrix."

PEOPLE PROFILE



patricia laus

The founder and director of The Atlantic Club has worked in the health and fitness industry for more than 30 years. Laus is also the founder of the charity Clubs for the Cure

How has your career progressed?

I began in the health and fitness industry in 1976, as an instructor for Jackie Sorenson Aerobic Dance. Within a year, I was promoted to the position of area co-ordinator in New Jersey. In 1983, I became president of What's Your Racket, which at the time was a failing 2,600sq m racquetball, tennis and fitness club. Soon after, I changed the name of the business to The Atlantic Club and, by 1986, I owned the business. We now have two large resort clubs, 750 employees and 9,000 members.

What is Clubs for the Cure and how did it come about?

I created Clubs for the Cure in 2006 to raise money for good causes. It harnesses the power of the relationships that our staff, members and the communities we serve share, and it aims to make a difference in the world. We've raised US\$1m for breast cancer research alone!

How can people get involved with Clubs for the Cure?

Our latest initiative is 12 Days of Fitness, which will run at the end of this year, and any club in the world can sign up to be involved. Participating clubs sell 12-day passes to members of the public in the run-up to Christmas, and the proceeds (£20 per pass) go to Clubs for

the Cure, which is supporting Augie's Quest – Augie Nieto's charity, which raises funds for research into a cure for ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease).

At the same time, 12 Days of Fitness will generate hundreds of sales leads for the clubs, at no cost to them.

Full details are available on our website, www.clubsfortheCure.com, and clubs can also register their interest online.

Is there anything you would have done differently in your career?

I'm satisfied with the choices that I've made in the past. Those choices I've made that could be viewed as the 'right choices' were the choices that I celebrate – they were choices that grew the business. But the choices I've made that could be viewed as the 'wrong choices' I celebrate as well – they were choices that helped me to grow.

What are your future plans?

To continue to sustain a profitable, growing business and be of service to my community, industry and the world. I want to teach young women that there are no limits to what they can achieve. I want to continue my pursuit of the balance of work, play, self and relationships and maintain my good health.

What do you think is the greatest weakness in the fitness industry?

The inability to unite behind one message and take a stand. We need to have all individuals, globally, embrace the benefits of exercise as preventative healthcare, and we must do everything possible to encourage people to remain committed to their exercise programmes. To that end, the industry has the power to be responsible for 'expanding wellness, extending life' worldwide for future generations.



Charity raised US\$1m for breast cancer



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competitive edge

5 & 6 DECEMBER 09

grim challenge

Running, wading or crawling an eight-mile course on an army site in Aldershot, Hampshire, might not be everyone's idea of fun. However, this event has proved so popular that this year's Grim Challenge will run on two consecutive days, attracting up to 5,000 people. Participants will tackle long hills, water-filled ravines, puddle-strewn paths, camouflage nets (to crawl under) and man-made mounds. Individuals or teams of three can enter, with registration costing £25 per person. The website lists numerous charities to raise money for. Details: www.grimchallenge.co.uk



Have you got what it takes for the eight-mile Grim Challenge?



Brighton hosts a new marathon

18 APRIL 10

brighton marathon

Take part in the first ever marathon in Brighton next spring. Last minute paid-for places are being made available in early November, or you might want to opt for a charity place instead and raise money for a good cause. The route, described as generally fast and reasonably flat, will cover much of this vibrant city, as well as taking in the coastal views in the later stage. Up to 12,000 people are expected to take part. Details: www.brightonmarathon.co.uk

Join the huskies in the Arctic



28 FEB-6 MARCH 10

dog sledding in norway

This is an open challenge in the Arctic Circle. From base camp, participants will sled over 200km into the wilds of the most northern European country of Norway. Each entrant will have their own sled, pulled by four or six huskies, and will face eight hours of activity a day covering between 25km and 60km. Each group, with a maximum of 13 participants, is supported by an expedition leader and doctor. Registration costs £350 and minimum sponsorship is £4,000. Details: www.acrossthedivide.com

22 & 23 MAY 10

bintan triathlon

The tropical island of Bintan in Indonesia provides a serene backdrop to this triathlon festival. Swimming is held in the South China Sea, with little current, while cycling and running is carried out amid lush greenery. The event, staged over two days, has five races for all ages and abilities. Categories include the Olympic Distance (a 1.5km swim, 40km bike and 10km run) and the Kids' Distance (15m swim, 6km bike and 1.5km run). For beginners, the organisers recommend the Fun Race Duo, where teams of two complete a 1.5km run, 150m swim and a dash to the finish. Additional extras include a beach party and awards dinner. Details: www.bintantriathlon.com



Kids go too: An Indonesian triathlon

NOVEMBER

10-13 | IHRSA Asia-Pacific Forum**Venue** Tokyo, Japan**Summary**

Exceptional speakers provide commentary on trends shaping the health club industry in the Pacific Rim, plus a chance to meet with suppliers.

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 leisure, gaming, sport and hospitality sectors. Keynote speakers will include the Minister for Sport, Gerry Sutcliffe MP, and Magnus Scheving, creator of kids' TV programme *Lazy Town*.

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. It will include an exhibition of disability organisations. 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, Yorkshire

Summary

A seminar looking at the importance of nutrition when exercising, plus in-depth information on compound movements.

Tel +44 (0)20 7420 8577

Web www.fia.org.uk**2 | Leisure Property Forum: The Budget Gym Sector****Venue** Jones Lang LaSalle offices,

Hanover Square, London

Summary

Exploring the trend of how budget gyms are changing the UK marketplace.



© PHOTO #1

The IFI's Inclusive Connections takes place in November

Speaking at the event will be John Trehanne, CEO of budget club operator The Gym Group, and Ray Algar of Oxygen Consulting.

Tel +44 (0)1462 471932

Web www.leisurepropertyforum.org**6-8 | Sportex Middle East****Venue** Dubai World Trade Centre,

Dubai, UAE

Summary

Exhibition for the sports, health and fitness and leisure industry in the United Arab Emirates.

Tel +971 4 3436115

Web www.sportexmiddleeast.com

FEBRUARY

6-8 | SPATEX**Venue** Brighton Hilton Metropole

Exhibition Centre, Brighton, UK

Summary

An exhibition for professionals in the pool, spa and sauna industry.

Tel +44 (0)1264 358558

Web www.spatex.co.uk**11 | Setting the Tone****Venue** University of Birmingham, UK**Summary**

An Inclusive Fitness Initiative session that will look in detail at inclusive marketing – including press releases and press contacts, content of articles, newsletters, websites and selection of appropriate imagery.

Tel +44 (0)114 257 2061

Web www.inclusivefitness.org

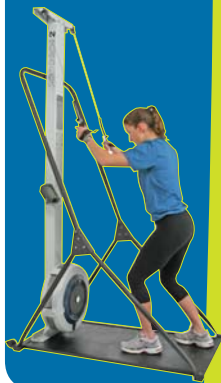
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everyone's talking about . . .

gathering evidence

Is the health and fitness industry doing enough to prove that its programmes and initiatives are meeting objectives, and that they're worth investing in? We ask our panel...

We have it pretty good at the moment. The Olympics aren't far away, the government has included fitness in a national health initiative for the first time – namely Change4Life – and is also providing funding for fitness programmes. What's more, the general public is increasingly aware of the importance of exercise.

But can we prove how much of a difference exercise and fitness programmes can make – and, if so, are we doing enough to ensure those in power are aware of these outcomes? Without evidence to prove the impact of fitness programmes, after all, we

can hardly expect to secure continued funding from the government.

Next year we face a general election and a possible change in government. While the Conservatives say they will back health interventions that include fitness (see HCM Oct 09, p28), will they still do so in the face of tough budgeting choices if we can't prove results?

Recent research by IpsosMORI for PruHealth's bi-annual Vitality Index throws more doubt on to the situation. The researchers found that nearly two million more people are leading unhealthy lives compared to six months previously: the number of people who reported that they never

exercised increased from 11 to 14 per cent, while those who reported doing 30 minutes of exercise per session fell from 64 to 57 per cent. Due to the recession, they conclude, people are working harder and are more stressed, so are eating less healthily and compromising on working out.

So how are health club programmes faring, and can we prove they're value for money? Are operators ensuring data is monitored professionally? Is there anything we're doing wrong? Would we benefit from a central database of results from across the nation to clearly show that we deliver results? We ask the experts.

WHAT EVIDENCE IS NEEDED TO SECURE PROGRAMME FUNDING? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

georgina jupp

managing director • ck academy



Collecting data and evidencing the impact of exercise has not been an industry strong point. If we are to grow, this has to be a priority.

However, I'm not convinced that those requesting data/commissioning programmes fully understand what outcomes to expect and when.

Timescales for clinical biomarkers all vary and, if you state that exercise will have a significant effect in too short a time, the programme will be deemed unsuccessful.

We're having some of our interventions evaluated independently as they must stand up to rigorous scrutiny to receive funding. We've spent three years gathering evidence to support our lifestyle modification programme 1 Great Life, for example, and estimate health savings of £230 a year per patient.

Overall it's encouraging to see the number of evidence-based initiatives increasing and, with developments like the BHF Exercise Referral Toolkit (which is still being designed), it will become easier to record the impact of interventions. So far our industry is rising to the challenge and, if we make the most of opportunities, we'll build a base of credible evidence to support our role in improving the nation's health."

carol weir

programme director • sheffield – let's change for life, nhs sheffield



The responsibility for ensuring the correct data is gathered starts with the body commissioning the service or intervention, not necessarily a health club. There should be clear guidelines on what to measure and expectations.

PCTs want more than just attendance figures. Previously we've asked for demographic data – especially participant gender, ethnicity and postcodes – so we can correlate this with areas of deprivation. There's also a need for details about height, weight, waist circumference and BMI at baseline compared to the end of the programme. Follow-up data isn't always gathered but this is important too. How many people maintain fitness or weight after a programme, and for how long? We also value qualitative data; you can't always capture things in a tick-box. Looking at self-esteem or lifestyle changes after a programme is a big plus.

My experience with the fitness industry – DC Leisure delivered a childhood obesity programme when I was at NHS Rotherham – has been really positive. They were very proactive and flexible. The quality of fitness venues and motivated staff are all strong selling points: I wouldn't hesitate to team up with the fitness industry again."



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Future funding opportunities will rely on the fitness industry gathering evidence to prove it can deliver desired outcomes

dave stalker

chief operating officer • the fitness industry association



“Collecting data is not our forte as an industry. Having been an operator, I know it’s time consuming, dull and hard to quantify on the bottom line, but benchmarking and capturing information truly is priceless. Capturing data has to be part of an operator’s DNA, whether done by trainers or smart machines. If you understand the value of data (as retailers do), then you automatically develop the necessary protocols. Data allows us to improve customer profiling and service delivery and, of course, demonstrate the value of our offering to those controlling funding streams.”

If operators want to tap into public funds, they need to work individually at a local level – with PCTs, GPs and local authorities – as well as collectively, as part of a consensus industry bid. Prove the ‘exercise medicine’ proposition and the argument is won. Win the argument and you win the ‘bid’.

A central database capable of dissecting information by demographics and fitness levels would be invaluable to public health strategists and embed our sector in the world of healthcare provision. This would be a mountain to climb, but nevertheless it’s an ambition we must pursue.”

lisa taylor

strategic partnership director • mend



“The fitness industry has generally been poor at collecting data. If it’s to become a respected partner in improving the health of the nation, it would be wise to consider adopting specialist advice in this area.”

The FIA has recognised this and recently engaged MEND to write a six-week DH-approved More Active Health Programme, as part of the MoreActive4Life campaign.

MEND is a social enterprise dedicated to reducing overweight and obesity levels worldwide. We have a 20-year research partnership with Great Ormond Street Hospital and University College London’s Institute of Child Health. In our programmes, we collect health and socio-economic data at quarterly intervals, ideally for two years. The programmes deliver measured and sustained outcomes such as reduced BMI, improved fitness and increased self-esteem, as well as decreasing health inequalities. The health impact from these programmes are continuously analysed, evaluated and published.

Our evidence-based approach to programme-writing has enabled us to mobilise over £20m of funding from the public, private and third sector partnerships.”

MIKE
CROCKETT

The MD of Soho Gyms talks to Kate Cracknell about belief in the fitness product, a long-term perspective, and the launch of the new Soho Gyms Academy

The fitness industry is great. How can you not be passionate about it when the product's so good for you?" asks Mike Crockett, MD of Soho Gyms, with evidently genuine enthusiasm.

Originally an electronics engineer in the defence industry, Crockett moved into leisure in his mid-20s, starting out in the public sector at Hounslow before moving into golf centre management and then, in 2003, joining Soho Gyms.

Soho Gyms was set up in 1994 (see information box, p28) and had grown organically since then. Crockett admits that he joined at a time when a significant overhaul of operations was required.

"We had very old systems and no structure to the training, the equipment was tired and our investment cycle,

funded by loyal shareholders, had been broken," he says. "But it was a nice time, actually, being able to start again and give the members clubs they could be proud of."

"We restructured all our debt – there are four company directors and, between us, we now own about 98 per cent of the business. We got a new finance manager and put our finances in order."

"We also managed the staff who weren't performing and recruited new people. We brought some unity to the business so the gyms sold each other rather than only themselves, we introduced a membership system, and we put our prices up to where they needed to be to allow investment in the gyms."

"Literally two weeks before I joined, the membership prices had been dropped by 25 per cent. We had loads

of members, but what matters is pound per member and we weren't making any money; in fact, it was costing me money! Now we won't go down the route of discounting or even price-matching."

"As an industry, I think we need to lose the perception that people can walk in and negotiate fees with us. You wouldn't do it in Tesco – you wouldn't take a chicken to the counter and say: 'Look, I know it says £2.20, but how about £2.00?' The only reason we have this problem is because many clubs are willing to discount. It will take a good couple of years to change that culture but, in the end, it will be better for everybody."

a people business

So is the Soho Gyms business now running as he would wish? "There are





One of Soho Gyms' USP's is the sheer volume of kit, meaning plenty of choice and a lack of queues for members

always things I want to work on, but we're in a good position and we have fun – it's really important to me that we all enjoy, and believe in, what we do.

"Opening the Clapham club in 2000 was a big win for us, as it contributes a lot to the business financially and has allowed us to grow our portfolio further.

"We now have six clubs, and they're all slightly different in terms of layout and offering, but at the same time they're very much Soho Gyms clubs: very open, honest, full of energy, with a great design and particularly friendly staff – fun and professional.

"Our staff and instructors really are one of our biggest strengths. People stay with us a long time, and I think it's because we empower them, encouraging them to see the gym as their own, to

inject it with their own personality so they really are central to it. But we're also supportive: any of my managers can call me at any time, budgets are realistic, there's no blame culture, and we accept that people make mistakes – we just ask that they learn from them. Ultimately, if people work hard and do their best, that's really all you can ask.

"There are also lots of staff events – parties, days out in the Solent on our boat, three-day camping trips and so on – which builds a real sense of team.

"We develop our staff as well, where possible bringing people up through the ranks rather than in from outside, so they know there are opportunities for them. We won't always have the perfect next step for everyone, but I've always worked on the basis that, while our

employees are with us, we should make sure that they not only have a good time in their day-to-day jobs, but that they also get everything they need to move on to the next level in their career."

seal of approval

In line with this belief, Soho Gyms is launching a new training arm: the Soho Gyms Academy. A CYQ-approved centre, the Academy will also offer Soho Gyms' own REPs-endorsed CPD courses. Run within the Soho Gyms clubs, it will nevertheless be open to everyone, not just to Soho Gyms staff.

"This is something we've always wanted to do," explains Crockett. "We've put a lot of effort into staff training and getting our own service levels up to a good standard over the



Building a team: Soho Gyms organises regular staff events, including days out in the Solent on the company boat



The cardio zone at Soho Gyms' Waterloo club – an example of the brand's funky, urban design philosophy

► years, but we feel there's a gap in the market: we see too many qualified personal trainers, rather than quality personal trainers. There are some very good personal trainers out there, don't get me wrong, but unfortunately there are also a lot of bad ones.

"Part of the issue is that they don't understand service. Maybe they haven't had enough time in the industry, or between Levels 2 and 3. Whatever the reason, they need to realise that having a qualification doesn't automatically make them a good personal trainer.

"We want the Academy to act almost like a finishing school that raises the game, ensuring that, when our students come out into the industry, they're polished fitness professionals."

So, if the idea is that graduation from the Soho Gyms Academy acts as a seal of approval – a sign to employers that their new recruit can really hit the ground running – how does Soho Gyms'

delivery of qualifications differ from other training providers?

"You have the core syllabus to follow, but you can add to it, put your edge on it. Soho Gyms has a good reputation for both fitness and service – there's a lot of energy in our gyms and the people who work within them, which I think rubs off.

"Qualifications won't take longer with us, but I think we can add more practicality to the training. We'll add extra sessions, perhaps bolt-on modules that students can do, both as part of the qualification and afterwards to keep progressing.

"They'll also get a chance to work – under supervision – with clients, rather than simply using each other in role play situations. This will help them understand the reality of working with actual members so that, when they're on their own in their first job, putting together a programme for someone on the gym floor, they won't freeze.

"Our first Level 2 and Level 3 courses will start in January, and training professionals have proactively approached us to be involved in the Academy – they really like the ethos at Soho Gyms and can clearly see the difference between our staff and those in other clubs, so they understand what we're trying to do."

balancing act

That would seem more than enough to keep someone busy, but Crockett has more plans up his sleeve. "We're going to try to open a new club late next year, but these are strange times and we need to be a bit cautious. We also have to find the right location. It doesn't matter how good we are, or how good any club is, if the location isn't right.

"I'm not interested in growing too big, but 10 to 12 gyms would be nice. If we're going to self-fund it, we can probably open a club every two to three years; we're not going to borrow loads of cash, so we're quite happy to pick and choose as it suits us.

"I'd like to try a larger club, too, with a swimming pool; none of our clubs have a pool at the moment. I also think we could go outside London one day – to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Brighton – but for now we're just consolidating things here.

"So we have all sorts of things going on, but it's important to have time to enjoy it as well. Every penny's important, but it's not the be-all and end-all of everything. We just want a product that people aspire to be part of."

united we stand?

What, then, are Crockett's thoughts on the wider industry?

"We're not supporting each other properly," he says. "There are a lot of organisations that, to me, don't seem to be working to the same blueprint.

"Standards and unity are key, and we need to work together on these. For example, we could look at how to enforce standards. Could we do this through insurance, perhaps – if you don't meet the agreed standards, you can't get insurance?"

"I also think we need more role models, but not just athletes, because that's quite elitist. It's glamour that tends to reach people, whether we like it or not. If Cheryl Cole were to promote going down the gym, for example, I guarantee it would get people's attention and, I think, help persuade today's youngsters to make the gym part of their everyday life.

"Paying for people like this to endorse our industry would be expensive. But if we all shared the cost between us, it would become more affordable – and it really would be in all of our interests.

"In the end, the industry as a whole is a business, and we need to learn to think longer term. We all need to work together to invest in helping to bring more people into exercise."



kate cracknell
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

SOHO GYMS

COMPANY HISTORY

Soho Gyms was set up in 1994 by Jeremy Norman, Derek Frost and Richard Taylor. Norman had previously been involved in the world of nightclubs, setting up venues including Embassy, Heaven and Leopard Lounge, and saw the opportunity to merge gym with nightclub, creating a modern, urban environment with DJs etc.

1994: Opening of the first Soho Gyms club in Covent Garden

1997-8: Opening of the Earls Court and Camden clubs, the former an acquisition and the latter a new build

2000: Clapham club opens

2006: Opening of the Waterloo club

2008: Borough club opens

There are now four directors: Norman, Frost, Taylor and Mike Crockett.



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* C.P. Gerba. The Occurrence of Heterotrophic Bacteria, Coliforms and Staphylococcus Aureus in Liquid Soap Samples from Public Restrooms. Unpublished observational study. University of Arizona. 2006

pure pilates

A NEW PILATES STUDIO IN THE COTSWOLDS COMBINES
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TRAINING IN ONE PURPOSE-BUILT FACILITY.
KATH HUDSON INVESTIGATES.

Officially launched at the beginning of September, mbodies is the latest venture from Chris Onslow, director of Pilates Solutions – the UK distributor of STOTT PILATES equipment and training.

This is a particularly significant project for Onslow as he has been able to create it from scratch, bringing to fruition the idea of a wellness concept that's been germinating for several years: a combination of pilates with physiotherapy and sports specialists to create an

offering that's relevant and focused for a number of different target audiences.

"This is the first time I've had the freedom to design and build a pilates studio, rather than having to make use of existing rooms or space," he explains. "This has allowed me to choose suitable lighting, heating and room sizes, which makes this outlet special from the moment you walk in."

"The offering has also evolved from our previous model to focus on wellness. The decision to employ physiotherapists and sports specialists

with STOTT PILATES training means we can offer a fully-integrated wellness and pilates offering."

The location chosen for this unique centre is Witney, in Oxfordshire. A traditional Cotswolds market town, Witney has a population of around 30,000. It's also a thriving and growing town with significant investment in its retail centre. A new complex – including Marks & Spencer, Debenhams and a multiplex cinema – opened at the end of October 2009, complementing the existing Waitrose and Sainsbury's superstores which were already magnets for those living in surrounding towns. The new complex is expected to draw 2,000 additional shoppers from the surrounding towns every day, and the likelihood of this is increased by the council's commitment to free parking in the town.

The mbodies centre has prime location in the town, within five minutes' walk of the new retail complex.

multi-studio offering

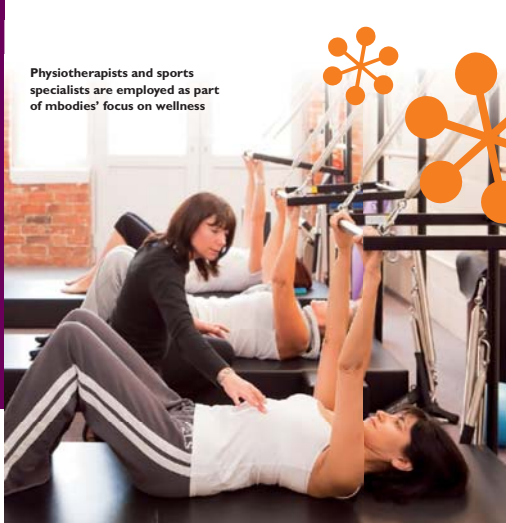
The 560sq m (6,000sq ft) centre has three large studios, each measuring around 93sq m (1,000sq ft): the Performance Studio, the Reformer Studio and the Equipment Studio. Each is equipped to cater for groups of between 12 and 15 people.

The Performance Studio has STOTT PILATES stability chairs and spring walls, as well as a range of kit supplied by another of Onslow's companies,

mbodies has been designed from scratch, resulting in a purpose-built facility that's "special from the moment you walk in"



Physiotherapists and sports specialists are employed as part of mbodies' focus on wellness



Powerblock Fitness, including dumbbells, kettlebells, gravity bars and stability balls.

The Equipment Studio has a range of pilates equipment including cadillacs, raised matwork stations with wall-mounted cadillac-inspired frames, ladder barrels and arc barrels. This studio is used for pilates matwork classes where specific equipment is required for niche groups – 'active ageing' classes catering for the grey market, for example, and pre-natal sessions for mums-to-be.

The Reformer Studio is the main studio for the Classic and Cardio Pilates sessions. Classic Pilates is taught at a slow pace, focusing on form and body positioning; individuals are expected to take part in cardiovascular activity elsewhere. Meanwhile, Cardio Pilates classes involve bursts of cardiovascular exercise along with controlled blocks of toning exercises. The machines in this studio are Group SPX Reformers and have a host of accessories, including the jumpboard which creates a high-intensity cardio workout for participants.

In addition, two treatment/private pilates rooms offer the wellness programme, which is designed to focus on common medical conditions using a combination of traditional physiotherapy and pilates exercises.

money where your mouth is

Onslow has funded the whole mbodies project himself. The infrastructure was brought in from the company's former studio at Oxford Airport, which closed

in August, and this helped to keep costs on the new development down.

Nevertheless, £100,000 was spent on the Witney build and building, £60,000 on the equipment, and £40,000 on the IT systems and office infrastructure.

"The recession was seen as an opportunity as much as a threat," Onslow explains. "It allowed much more negotiating power in labour and material costs for building, and the ground rent paid for warehousing was significantly more competitive than it would have been 18 months previously."

He now aims to break even in month three. A key strength of the business plan, he adds, is the fact that revenue from classes and private sessions is complemented by the on-site delivery of instructor training during afternoons and weekends; mbodies is the main UK licenced training centre for STOTT PILATES instructor training. This is carried out by Pilates Solutions' training division, Active Training, and contributes substantially to offsetting the centre's overheads.

There are no memberships on offer at mbodies – Onslow has elected

for pay and play exclusively, with a maximum commitment of one calendar month to gain discount pricing. Sessions cost £12 per group class on a 'pay as you go' basis, while five sessions in a month cost £50, 10 sessions cost £80, and £100 will allow you to attend 15 group classes in a month. A 60-minute private session, one-to-one with a pilates instructor, costs £60 for a single session or £255 if you purchase a block of five sessions.

Based on existing staffing levels, there's capacity for 60 private wellness sessions each week – this in addition to the 430 small group weekly class places. Onslow predicts that they will be at 33 per cent capacity by this Christmas, and 60 per cent capacity by the end of spring 2010, with a need for additional staff by next autumn.

"Two months in, we've exceeded all expectations for private wellness sessions. However, class numbers are behind targets by 15 per cent as a result of poor internal marketing letting down a robust external marketing programme, so this is being addressed," he adds. ▶

The recession was an opportunity: it allowed us to negotiate much more throughout the build project



Members of the public can attend either small group pilates classes or one-to-one training sessions on a 'pay as you go' basis



Complementary kit, such as stability balls, is used in the Performance Studio

The model could be used as a template for others wanting to integrate fitness and wellness

point of difference

Competition from freelance matwork-only pilates instructors in the area is strong, but Onslow is not overly concerned by this potential challenge: "Any growth market segment, which pilates clearly is, is attractive to instructors, plus the barriers to entry as a freelance pilates instructor are low.

"However, we've established a wellness centre with the credibility to tie in effectively with local GPs and hospital wellness programmes, as well as to run commercial classes for target groups such as stroke patients and sufferers of conditions such as ME, MS and Parkinson's. We also offer mainstream back clinics and sessions addressing women's health concerns, such as pre-natal classes. All of these things require resources that most freelance instructors lack."

where next?

Obviously the first challenge is to prove that the concept can work, but so far the signs are positive and Onslow has high hopes, saying: "At this point, the wellness programme is performing more robustly than predicted.

"Once proven, development could potentially move along several fronts.

It's possible, for example, that the model could be promoted as a template for other pilates instructors, or club operators, keen to integrate fitness and wellness in existing facilities" – previous studios to which Onslow has provided equipment have been located within, or adjacent to, traditional health club facilities, and it's becoming evident that both parties benefit from the association.

As well as being a success in its own right, Onslow hopes – particularly if it does become a template for future sites – that this project will feed his other businesses: Pilates Solutions, Proactive Health and Powerblock Fitness. "It's clear that success in this project will improve the potential for sales of STOTT PILATES equipment and instructor training," he says. "Our students will clearly see where their training can take them outside of the traditional health club or boutique studio models.

"Proactive Health and Powerblock Fitness, meanwhile, will benefit at the performance studio end of the business, where the gravity bar, kettlebell and dumbbell products are an integral part."



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THE BOTTOM LINE

In the third part of his series, Melvyn Hillsdon outlines ways to estimate the financial benefit of improved retention

In the two previous parts to this series, we've looked at the different ways of measuring retention and attrition, and at how to use these measures to develop and evaluate interventions. In this final part, we will focus on the different methods that can be used to estimate the financial benefit of improved retention.

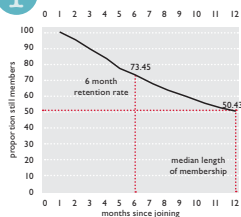
All estimates of the financial impact of changes in retention are an extension of

the methods used to measure retention described in part one of this series. As a reminder, the best way to report retention is graphically, as shown in Figure 1 (below). From Figure 1, we can determine the retention rate for any given period up to 12 months after joining. For example, the six-month retention rate can be taken from the red vertical line reading up from six months to the point on the retention line where

the black line meets it – in this case, 73.45 per cent of members retain their membership for at least six months. We can also estimate the average length of membership (the median value). To do this, we locate the 50 per cent point (the median point) on the vertical axis and read across horizontally to the point where the red line meets the black retention line, then read off the corresponding value on the horizontal axis (months since joining). We can see that, on average, members retain their membership for 12 months.

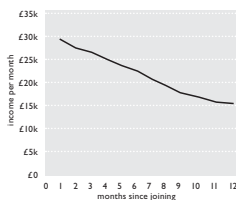
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Retention rates



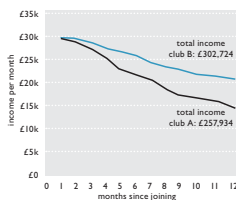
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Estimated income from members

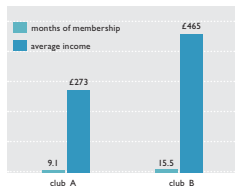


3

Estimated income – comparing the two clubs



4 Average length of membership (median months) and average income



► calculating income

This simple graph (Figure 1) can also provide us with information about income. The area under the retention curve represents the total income from membership dues over 12 months for a given set of members – say 2008 joiners. Because we know how many members retain their membership each month after joining, we can multiply this figure by the monthly fee to get an income figure for each month.

As with retention, the easiest way to present this is in a graph. The amounts shown each month in Figure 2 (see p35) represent revenue from a sample of 1,000 members: for each month, we simply multiply the retention rate by 1,000 and by £30 (monthly fee). For example, at month six, 73.45 per cent of members retain their membership. Therefore, $0.7345 \times 1,000 \times £30 = £22,035$. If we add up each month's income, the total income from 1,000 members – based on the retention rates in Figure 1 – is £262,146.

On its own, this may not be that interesting. However, when comparing groups of members with different retention rates, we can see how the difference in retention translates into differences in income. In Figure 3 (see p35), we have employed exactly the same method as that employed to produce the values in Figure 2, but this time for two different clubs with

different retention rates. Again, we have estimated the incomes based on 1,000 members at each club paying £30 a month. (Although the actual number in each club would be different in practice, we need to estimate the income based on the same number of members, otherwise the differences observed would simply represent the difference in the number of members rather than the difference in retention.)

Figure 3 shows a difference of £44,790 in income between the two clubs over 12 months, based on a relatively small difference in retention and only 1,000 members. If there were 10,000 members, then the difference in income would be nearly £0.5m. Also, if these members were followed for longer than a year, the differences in income would continue – after, say, two years of membership, the difference in income would be even greater.

This type of income estimate can also be used to compare the same club's performance by year, as well as to look at the difference in income between, for example, members of different ages or gender.

member value

Using data from the same club, we can also use the average length of stay shown in Figure 1 to estimate differences in income per individual member. Figure 4 (above left) shows that members at Club A retain their membership, on average, nearly 6.5 months less than

members at Club B. By multiplying the average number of months by £30 (our monthly fee), the average income per member can be estimated. We can see that Club B yields an average of £192 more per member than Club A. Again, the estimates in Figure 4 can be used to compare members against a range of characteristics, including whether they had an induction or not, whether they paid a joining fee or not, and so on.

In part one of this series, we described the attrition rate – the rate of cancellations per thousand members per month. We can also use this information to estimate the financial gain from different types of members or retention interventions. For this example, we will consider the difference in attrition between members who received at least four fitness staff interactions during the life of their membership, compared to those who had fewer. Table 1 (below) shows the attrition rates for each group of members. The second row shows that, for every 1,000 members who receive fewer than four interactions, an additional 43 members leave each month compared to members who receive at least four interactions.

Based on these figures, we can do some further computations – too much algebra to describe here – to estimate what proportion of membership cancellations would be prevented if all members received at least four interactions. The third row in Table 1 calculates that, if all members received

table 1

	fewer than four interactions	at least four interactions
attrition rate (cancellations per thousand members per month)	75.0	31.6
difference in attrition rate		43.4
% of cancellations attributable to lack of interactions		42.8%
number of members needing to receive ≥4 interactions to prevent one cancellation		23

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Saving money: Retention analysis can estimate the rewards of member interaction

at least four interactions, 42.8 per cent of cancellations would be avoided.

it's good to talk

The figures in Table 1 are based on a business with 22,749 members who joined in 2008, 31 per cent of whom had received at least four interactions by the spring of 2009. During this period, 8,100 of the 22,749 members cancelled. We can estimate that, if all members received at least four interactions, 3,466 members would not have cancelled (42.8 per cent of 8,100) and would therefore not need to be replaced. That would be a considerable saving. Most clubs will have a rough estimate of the cost of recruiting one member. Once you multiply that by 3,466, the costs are considerable.

We can add to that the lost income from membership payments by estimating the difference in average length of stay between members who do or don't receive four or more interactions. In this example, it equates to seven months, meaning that a potential 3,466 members would pay seven months extra each if they had all received at least four interactions. That is a lot of lost income as a result of not talking to members.

We can extend this analysis further and estimate how many members would need to receive four or more

interactions to prevent one member from cancelling. Table 1 shows that, for every 23 members who receive four or more interactions, one cancellation is avoided. If we estimate that each interaction takes five minutes, then the instructor time for four interactions is 20 minutes. If we multiply that by 23 members, then we can estimate that it takes around 7.5 hours of instructor time to save one membership. At £10 an hour in instructor salary, that's about £75 per member saved. As mentioned above, each member who receives four or more interactions yields an average of seven months extra of membership dues, which at £30 a month is £210. So the net benefit of interacting with people can be estimated at £135 per member.

Hopefully, this article has shown that there are a variety of ways of estimating the financial impact of different retention and attrition rates, and these can be used to provide a justification for investing in retention solutions. What should also be clear is that all of the estimates described here are based on accurate and appropriate measures of retention and attrition, as described in part one of this series.

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**KATE CRACKNELL TAKES
AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT
THE SUCCESS OF
RE:FRESH, BLACKBURN
WITH DARWEN'S FREE
FITNESS INITIATIVE**



Success In year one of re:refresh, a massive 17,745 beez local authority leisure cards were issued

Doing nothing was not an option, according to Claire Ramwell, head of healthy living and sport at Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

"It was three years ago that the local strategic partnership identified what we called the Three Killer Facts: three of the most shocking of our poor public health statistics," she says. "One was that people in the borough die eight years earlier than in other parts of the country" – Blackburn with Darwen is ranked 340th and 346th for male and female life expectancy, respectively, out of a total of 352 local authorities. "We also had high levels of people drinking alcohol to a level that would harm their health, and we had the third lowest [physical activity] participation rates in the country."

The local residents were, however, blissfully unaware of these dire statistics, with a huge gap between their perception and reality. "When we spoke to people, they would all say: 'We're quite happy with our health,'" says Ramwell. "We knew we needed to be bold, do something big, think differently."

BREAKING THE MOULD

The response was a groundbreaking initiative developed and funded by Blackburn with Darwen PCT and the borough council. Designed to increase levels of physical activity in the borough, £6m was allocated to fund the initiative across three years – £1m each from the council and the PCT for each year.

Known as re:refresh, the initiative was launched in July 2008. It consists of two

interlinked strands: free leisure and an 'engaging and enabling' element, aimed at building awareness and offering support.

The free leisure element of re:refresh is delivered within the borough's leisure centres, as well as within community venues, and encompasses a wide range of activities. "We have seven local authority leisure centres open at the moment, all of which are offering free access to activities such as swimming, group exercise classes and gym workouts," says Ramwell. "There will also be an eighth centre coming on-stream soon: a £12m replacement for our largest centre, which closed three years ago, which will open in January."

"In addition to that, we have the activities being delivered within our 11 community centres, as well as by our outreach health and fitness development teams. We have more than 50 sessions going on in church halls, for example. We have healthy weight classes taking place in local schools. We have guided walks, cycling, even chair-based exercise and allotment gardening. There's a huge range of options covering the full spectrum from getting people interested in healthy eating, through very light, low-level physical activity, all the way up to group cycling and Step classes."

"Meanwhile, enabling and engaging starts with awareness, and we've had a high profile marketing campaign around re:refresh, with local advertising and PR."

"There's also a support mechanism built into the programme, as our research suggested this was key. In Glasgow's free swimming initiative, for example, participation dropped off after an initial massive spike – but in the one area of the city where they'd had an outreach worker, participation levels were sustained."

"The national Health Trainer Programme was the obvious route for us to take: it has the commitment of the Department of Health, plus we had an established network in the borough that we could build on and strengthen."

"We now have five paid health trainers as part of re:refresh – one for each of the five neighbourhoods within the borough – supported by 30-plus trained volunteers. Health trainers work with

ACTIVE ADULT BEEZ CARD MEMBERS

	2008/09			2009/2010		
	Q1 (apr-jun)	Q2 (jul-sep)	Q3 (oct-dec)	Q4 (jan-mar)	Q1 (apr-jun)	Q2 (jul-sep)
total adult members	48,800	54,240	56,764	61,483	69,695	75,178
active adult members	3,146	7,195	10,298	14,376	13,236	19,297
% active adult members	6%	13%	18%	23%	19%	26%

Total number of active adult members since 1 April 2009, compared with the same period last year.

All figures are cumulative from 1 April.



Get moving Ron Hill (front left) and Daley Thompson (front right) take part in a re:refresh walking group

those people who probably wouldn't get off their couches and do it on their own, but who, if they have somebody who can get their confidence going – who will support, motivate and point them in the right direction – are then able to take up the opportunities available to them.

"The health trainers are on-hand to meet one-to-one with these people. They also lead group education sessions which are based around the

benefits of physical activity, healthy eating and leading a healthy lifestyle. The health trainers guide people through the early stages of changing their behaviour, working with them around motivation, using goal diaries and increasing confidence.

"And the data that's coming through shows that the people who are being supported by the health trainers are precisely the people with the highest

health inequalities in the borough, which is exactly what we were aiming for."

COMMUNITY APPROACH

Ramwell continues: "The team of health trainers and volunteers is continually expanding, but the assistance of our Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) teams is also vitally important.

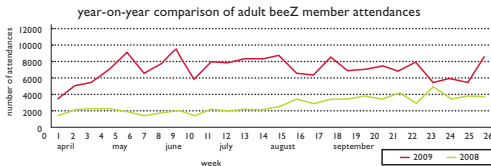
"HCP is an evidence-based model that we've used over the past four years. It's ►

► been proven that, by working at a local level, with community volunteers supported by professionals, we can make a difference to health: successes already demonstrated through this partnership include a reduced incidence of falls, an increased uptake of diabetic services and improved medicine management.

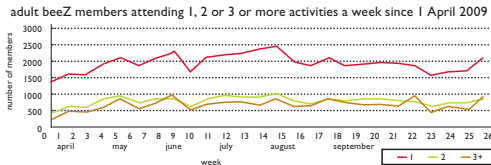
"As part of re:refresh, we expanded this HCP from three teams to five – again, one for each of the five neighbourhood areas. Their role is to take a social marketing approach, understanding the needs of each community and packaging the re:refresh offering in ways with which their communities can identify. For example, in one area they carried out some questionnaires and found there was an interest in dance, so they set up a community dance programme: taster sessions in community centres of salsa, line dancing and so on. For a lot of people, the social side is as important as the fitness aspect; that dance initiative worked well, so we'll now roll it out to other areas of the borough.

"Essentially our Healthy Communities Partnerships are little hothouses to see what works, what communities engage with, and we then take that learning and

MORE PEOPLE, MORE ACTIVE...



... MORE OFTEN



try it on a bigger scale locally, and then on a borough-wide scale."

Launched in three phases, re:refresh is now accessible to all adults who live or work in the borough, as well as anyone who's in full-time education in the borough or who's registered with a Blackburn with Darwen GP.

"Phase one went live on 1 July 2008, giving the over-50s access to free leisure, as well as launching new free family leisure activities at weekends and extending holiday free swimming for juniors to the weekends. On 1 September, we opened up the range of free leisure to 16- to 24-year-olds and then, on 1 April 2009, phase three kicked in, targeting 25- to 49-year-olds as well as extending the government's free swimming initiative to the under-16s all year round.

"There have been challenges for the leisure centres – staff rotas have had to be looked at, as well as cleanliness in buildings, with additional investment in cleaning staff, chemicals, heating and lighting. And we couldn't have anticipated the popularity of the programme, so there's been a massive learning curve as far as managing the scheme goes.

"But I think the leisure centres now see the benefit of busy centres. Within our funding, there was an allocation for the free leisure strand: the leisure centres

are reimbursed on a pro-rata basis – on a proportion of their throughput."

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

The initiative has clear performance targets. The first is a 4 per cent increase in adults taking exercise three times a week – starting from a base of 16.3 per cent – which equates to an additional 4,232 people.

The second is an 8 per cent reduction in inactive adults. "Flip that around and we want there to be an additional 8,500 adults doing something active over the next three years," says Ramwell.

"Before we started re:refresh, 58 per cent of adults in the borough were doing no physical activity at all."

At this stage, due to the sheer numbers of people taking part, performance is being measured purely in terms of participation data. This is being monitored through the beeZ card – the local authority leisure card – and across public, private and community sectors via Sport England's Active People survey.

So what have been the results to date? "I think the key successes have been two-fold: the ownership and engagement that we've managed to get at community level through the health trainers and the HCP; and the increased participation, attendance and throughput we're seeing, which have exceeded all estimations. At the moment, we're on course to meet our three-year target in a year and a half."

Increasing participation Free leisure activities for families have been launched at weekends

TOPLINE RESULTS

NEW MEMBERS...

- In year one, a total of 17,745 new beeZ cards were issued
- In the first six months of re:refresh year two, 15,658 cards were issued

PARTICIPATION...

- In year one, re:refresh recorded an additional 5,878 adults participating, against a target of 2,116
- By the end of the first half of year two, re:refresh had exceeded its full year target of additional adults participating (5,190 achieved, compared to a target of 3,174)
- 12,102 more adults have been active at least once since 1 April 2009, compared to the same period the previous year

For a summary of the results to date, please see charts on pages 38 and 40.

SUSTAINING THE IMPACT

"Ultimately, of course, re:refresh is looking at health improvements, and you're not going to see massive changes in indicators such as life expectancy in the space of three years," Ramwell continues. "re:refresh will be just one part of the jigsaw of new initiatives and enhanced services contributing to an improvement in the long term. However, increasing participation is key, and that – tracking new participants and frequency of participation – is something we can monitor and tie back specifically to the re:refresh programme.

"But ultimately we're looking at sustainability, and we've commissioned an independent evaluation to review our data and identify which elements of the programme have the greatest impact. Is it free leisure that's driving increased participation, or is it the grassroots work of the health trainers and the HCP?"

"The findings of this evaluation will influence decisions going forward. Is there sufficiently strong evidence to retain the current level of investment from both partners, for example?

Are the health benefits sought by the PCT being brought about by specific elements of the programme, and should we focus investment in these areas?

"It's very likely that the exit strategy, at the end of three years, will maintain

an element of free leisure. However, sustainability will predominantly come from local commitment, especially volunteer-based activities in community settings outside the four walls of leisure centres."

Will people not simply drop out once participation fees are re-introduced? "That's always a risk, but I think, if you can instil the sense of value and benefit – if people feel they've gained from improved self-confidence, from the social network and social support – then you have a far better chance of getting them to continue," says Ramwell.

GOING PRIVATE

Are the private health clubs also involved in the initiative? "We did correspond with the private sector to try to engage them, but we got very little response," says Ramwell.

"However, because re:refresh is driving awareness generally, anecdotally we've heard that the private clubs are happy because they've seen an increase in membership as well.

"Activities in private clubs aren't funded, but it's about choice. People may not want to do free leisure with everybody else; they may choose to join a private gym. As long as re:refresh – the enabling, engaging side – increases

participation levels and improves health, the bottom line is that it doesn't matter where people are participating. If people are choosing to be active outside of re:refresh free leisure, that's fantastic.

"We would, however, really like to increase our engagement with all sectors – the community, voluntary and private sectors – to see how the umbrella awareness is benefiting them and how we can work more closely together in the future.

"One of the things we've talked about with the private clubs, for example, is the opportunity for them to use and acknowledge the re:refresh branding, because re:refresh is about improving your health and wellbeing no matter where you choose to do it.

"There's also a lot we can learn from the private clubs. Their systems record the number of members coming in, where those members live and so on, which is useful data. We could put that together with our information to work out how well, between us, we're covering the borough, to identify if there are still any gaps in participation, and then to look at who's best placed to address those gaps."



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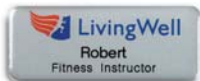
Community activities re:refresh works in leisure centres and the community to foster the social side of fitness

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PERSONAL SERVICE

Sarah Owen looks at how equipment service providers can work with independent operators to ensure their individual needs are met

Guaranteed to sink the hearts of gym managers and clients alike, an 'out of order' sign on a piece of equipment is never good news – but for independent operators, the knock-on effect can be far-reaching.

Scott Gledhill from Cheshire set up his own gym, Ultimate Fitness, three years ago. With a background in

bodybuilding, the former Mr Britain is no stranger to the fitness industry and understands how much gym members rely on their club providing a consistently good service.

"My members have shown great loyalty to me, and so I have a responsibility to ensure the facilities I offer are as good as any big chain or group," he explains.

MINIMISING DOWN-TIME

Gledhill continues: "For example, I have four treadmills; if one were out of order for a day or two, it would be a disaster. My members expect to come here and be able to get straight on with their training programme. If they weren't able to do that, it wouldn't take long for them to look elsewhere. I have to make sure all my equipment is in perfect working

Keep in touch Palm pilot technology helps engineers see instantly where clients need help

► order and that any repairs are done with minimum disruption to my members."

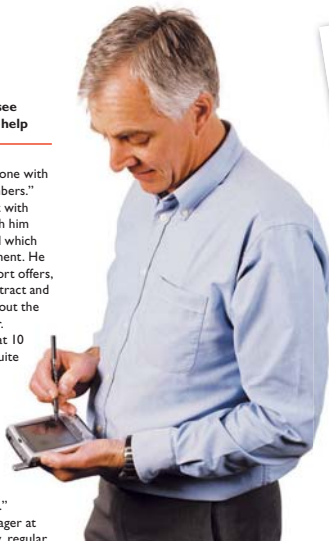
Gledhill has a service contract with Servicesport, which worked with him during the set-up of the gym and which continues to maintain his equipment. He believes the flexibility Servicesport offers, both in terms of the type of contract and the time slots available to carry out the work, makes his job much easier.

He explains: "My gym opens at 10 o'clock, and the engineers are quite happy to come in at eight to get the majority of the work done before clients turn up. They're also very good at coming out straight away. I don't have the time or the expertise to do the work myself, so I need to know I can leave that side of things completely in their hands."

For Gideon Coe, fitness manager at Wentworth Golf Club in Surrey, regular maintenance is key to providing a full service to his 2,400 members. "We've made it gym policy to keep all our equipment in good working order, and to do everything we can not to have 'out of order' signs on machines at all," he explains. "As a small but very busy club, we just can't afford to take pieces of equipment out of use."

"In the past six years, we've only had an 'out of order' notice up once, which is down to the joint effort put in by us and the Precor service team which we've worked with for the past 10 years. Like any piece of machinery, gym equipment doesn't usually break down with no warning, so we're really hot on checking out any suspect noises or symptoms."

"We always work with the same service engineer, who knows us and



Prevention Companies such as Pulse issue routine maintenance sheets to help clients prevent problems

including product manuals and explanatory machine diagrams.

Mick Martin, service support manager at Pulse, says: "We know how much our customers rely on their gym equipment being in perfect working condition, and we pride ourselves on doing all we can to make this achievable. Although we invest a lot in our team of engineers, we realise that providing our customers with good working knowledge of their equipment – and with the means to carry out minor work – can only be a good thing. It helps ensure our customers have all the resources they need to get problems resolved as quickly as possible."

Daniel Kearney, manager of Iveagh Fitness Club in Dublin, agrees: "We carry out daily checks on all our equipment to make sure any potential problems are nipped in the bud. We've worked with Pulse for 10 years now and, in that time, have been able to keep disruption caused by equipment not working to a minimum."

"As well as being able to do small jobs ourselves, the big benefit for us is the speed of response we get to a call-out and the excellent relationship we've built with their regional engineer and service department. Their knowledge, not only of the product but of our specific issues with layout and infrastructure, helps provide a quick, practical solution to most scenarios."

the way we work. He and the rest of the Precor service team make sure any faults are diagnosed and repaired promptly and effectively. They're also flexible enough to help us carry out minor repairs ourselves, like changing pedals or seats, if the need arises."

DO-IT-YOURSELF

Indeed, it seems that many service providers are happy to let their clients take the reins for day-to-day maintenance and straightforward repairs, provided they feel confident in doing so.

PTE has a next-day dispatch policy for simple service items such as pedals, pedal straps and saddles. MD Graham Bertrand explains: "We're very conscious that down-time is costly – even more so for independent clubs that have a small volume of equipment – so we're happy to direct them in carrying out easy maintenance jobs."

"We also guide our customers through actions that should be carried out on a weekly and monthly basis to keep the machines in top condition between services – dust is a devil to treadmills."

Self-maintenance is seen as a big part of Pulse's dedicated service contracts. As well as providing a call-out service all 365 days of the year, its engineers take all new customers through a special maintenance training programme and provide a comprehensive toolkit,



Friendly service Service engineers, like those at Precor, build a good relationship with their local clients



JUGGLING ACT

Flexibility is a key factor for independent operators. Just as their services are individual and personal to their members, the service they require from their supplier must be equally bespoke, allowing them to balance maintenance and repairs against usage and budgets.

Dave Haslam, sales executive for Servicesport, says: "Independent operators know their club, their budgets and their clients inside-out. They have a completely different set of expectations from groups and chains, so we offer them a range of service contracts that work with this."

"Regardless of how many annual visits their service contracts allow, we produce a detailed report that grades maintenance jobs into three priority

categories. This allows managers to pick and choose what repairs they want to have done, and when. Where possible, we also try to fit maintenance slots around them. They trust us to do our job and we trust them to tell us the best time to come and do it."

Chris Hope, UK service manager for Precor, agrees: "Building a personal relationship with our clients and working with them to mix and match their service agreement to accommodate their requirements is key to doing our job well. For example, an operator might choose to have different maintenance contracts on different pieces of equipment, or to take out a combination of financial plans."

"By being flexible in the service agreement we offer, and by only using

our own service engineers, we're able to develop good, personal working relationships with the clubs – something independent operators in particular really seem to value."

Bertrand knows just how important flexibility is to his customers at PTE too. "As well as a warranty of up to two years on all new and remanufactured equipment, we offer service agreements on fitness equipment from other companies too," he says. "This means an independent club can choose equipment that's most suited to its members' needs, in the knowledge that its one-stop service and call-out contract will ensure the kit is in optimum working condition at all times."



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research round-up

run with it

A study involving more than 100,000 people shows that long-distance runners are less likely to have metabolic syndrome. We find out more

People who regularly run long distances can help prevent the onset of metabolic syndrome – a group of medical disorders that can increase the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease – according to study published in *Medicine Science in Sports & Exercise*.

The study, by the University of California, was based on more than 62,000 men and 45,000 women. It looked at high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes – the triad comprising metabolic syndrome – and found that improvements in these conditions correlated with increases in the average number of marathons run each year.

It was also suggested that even those who didn't run marathons, but who included longer runs in their exercise regimes, were less likely to have the three conditions of metabolic syndrome.

gathering data

Data for the study came from surveys filled out in 1991 and 2000 for the US National Runners Health Study. The surveys solicited details on demographics, diet, running and weight history, and



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Running long distances can lower your risk of diabetes and heart problems

medications for blood pressure, thyroid conditions, cholesterol levels or diabetes.

A total of 31.7 per cent of men and 29.1 per cent of women said they ran between 0.2 and 0.8 marathons a year; 8.6 per cent of men and 4.4 per cent of women between 1.0 and 1.8 marathons a year;

and 3.8 per cent of men and 1.5 per cent of women two or more marathons a year.

the results

As the average number of marathons ran by men increased, the likelihood of them taking medication decreased compared to non-marathon runners. The biggest difference was in men who ran two or more marathons a year: they had 41 per cent lower use of anti-hypertensive medication, 32 per cent lower use of cholesterol-lowering medication and 87 per cent lower use of anti-diabetic medication. There was insufficient data to calculate the difference among women.

Data was also gathered on marathon and 10km finishing times. The slower the men ran marathons, the greater their odds of using high blood pressure and cholesterol medication. This significance was lost when times were adjusted for 10km performances. Slower women were more likely to use anti-diabetic medication.

longer runs can make a difference

The good news from the research is that people don't necessarily have to run marathons to make a difference to their health – but the longer the weekly run, the better.

Compared with men whose longest weekly run was 5km or less, those running over 15km had 39 per cent lower odds of needing anti-hypertensive medications, 34 per cent lower odds of needing

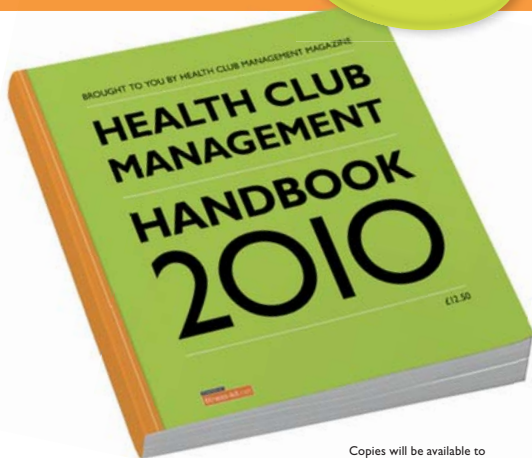
cholesterol lowering medications, and 65 per cent lower odds of requiring anti-diabetic medications.

Study author Paul Williams says: "All forms of regular exercise provide health benefits, but these data suggest there may be heightened benefits for those who make exceptional effort and commitment. Not everyone is going to run marathons, but most can probably exercise a lot more than they are currently doing."

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WORDS FROM THE WORKFORCE

Liz Smith outlines the key findings of this year's Working in Fitness survey

Overall, the fitness industry shows signs of resilience to the current economic climate, with a stable workforce and continued investment in training. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of pay, which remains low, and career progression opportunities, which are still poor.

These are the topline findings of the sixth annual Working in Fitness survey, developed by SkillsActive and REPs and conducted between May and July this year – findings that correlate with the 2009 FIA State of the UK Fitness Industry report, which also pointed to continued growth in the industry.

PAY & PROGRESSION

In spite of the economic downturn, four-fifths of fitness workers questioned for the survey were positive about remaining in the industry for a minimum of five years, with Northern Ireland and Scotland particularly positive.

This may reflect, in part, the stability of the industry in the face of the downturn, but it also highlights the personal value gained by the fitness workforce from their work: three-quarters of UK fitness respondents were prepared to recommend the main organisation they worked for to a friend. Chains of private fitness clubs were less likely to receive a recommendation, with 36 per cent of workers not willing to refer them. Multi-sports clubs/centres and education and training establishments (eg universities) fared better, with 87 per cent and 89 per cent of workers respectively willing to recommend them.

An insight into what influences a recommendation is gleaned from examining levels of satisfaction. Figure 1 below highlights

a particular discrepancy in the areas of promotion/career development and remuneration package: when fitness employers do not meet the expectations of their workforce in these areas, employees are particularly unlikely to recommend them.

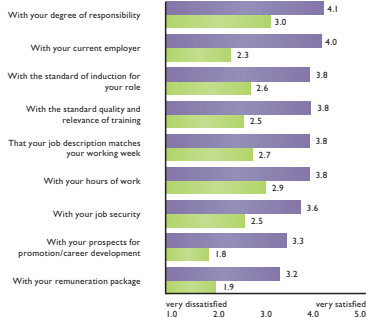
There is further evidence to support the findings of dissatisfaction with pay and career prospects when examining the factors that would persuade people to leave the industry. Nearly half of the workforce reported low pay as a reason to leave (48 per cent), while better career prospects in other fields was noted by 37 per cent.

Low pay is particularly noted as a factor by those respondents with the shortest expectations of remaining in the industry: 86 per cent of those expecting to stay up to one year and 69 per cent of those expecting to stay up to three years identified low pay. The occupations most commonly citing a lack of remuneration were club/duty managers (69 per cent), studio or fitness managers/team or group leaders (63 per cent) and gym instructors (60 per cent).

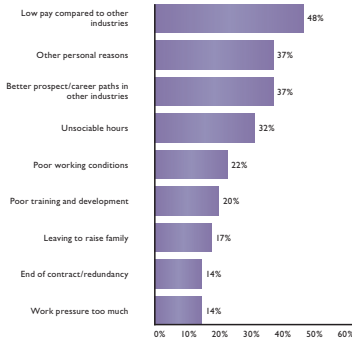
Gym instructors are the lowest-paid role, earning less than £13,000 a year, while club/duty managers and studio or fitness managers earn an average £21,200 and £18,100 respectively. Just over one-third of the workforce reported receiving a pay rise in the last 12 months, lower than the previous year where half had an increase. The majority saw no change in pay. The private sector had a notably low figure reporting a rise (only 22 per cent).

Positively, factors such as leaving the industry due to an end of contract/redundancy was only reported by 14 per cent of the workforce, while self-employed/freelance workers citing a lack of work or rising costs accounted for only seven per cent

1 LEVEL OF SATISFACTION AND WHETHER AN EMPLOYER WOULD BE RECOMMENDED



2 FACTORS CITED AS REASONS TO LEAVE THE INDUSTRY





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While most employees remain positive, the issue of low pay must still be addressed

and five per cent, respectively, of respondents. This is further indication of a stable industry during the economic downturn.

TRAINING NEEDS

A common concern in times of recession is that cutbacks will be made in key areas such as training and development.

However, the findings from *Working in Fitness* indicate that this is not the case, with a reported average six training days per worker – consistent with previous years.

Training spend did not increase this year, with an average £484 spent per trainee. This training is mainly funded by the trainee (58 per cent), while just over one quarter (27 per cent) report employers paying for it all. The public sector and charity/voluntary/community sector are significantly more supportive, with half and two-fifths of workers, respectively, receiving full employer support. The private sector workers,

however, report mainly paying for their own training (72 per cent, compared to 65 per cent last year).

Generally, managers receive much more support from their employer: 75 per cent of club/duty managers, 64 per cent of exercise referral/clinical exercise/active programme managers, and 50 per cent of senior management have their training paid for. Overall, however, fewer trainees report employers contributing to training than was seen in the last two years: just 27 per cent, compared to 40 per cent in 2008 and 31 per cent in 2007.

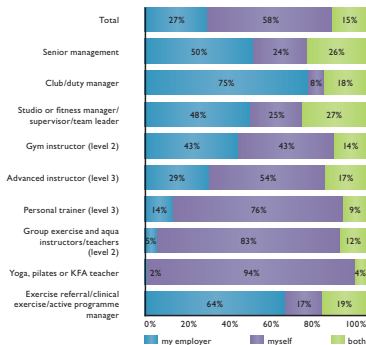
It's important that organisations continue to train their staff, as the survey results indicate a connection between staff development and their recommendation of an employer, as well as a link to the planned long-term future of workers in the fitness industry. Nearly two-fifths of the workforce (37 per cent) who had undertaken no training would not recommend their employer, while 81 per cent of staff who had spent 11 or more days training would refer their employer. This is further evidenced by the 46 per cent of workers who felt they had been given insufficient training and would not make a recommendation; 81 per cent of those saying they had received enough training would recommend their employer.

Interestingly, as expectations of remaining in the industry rise, so do the average training days received. Those who intend to stay for up to one year received an average 3.6 training days, up to three years received 4.6 training days, up to five years 4.7 days, and more than five years 5.9 training days.

The survey suggests there has been a small improvement in the proportion of workers receiving enough training to do their job properly: 75 per cent are satisfied, compared to 70 per cent last year. Only nine per cent of the workforce did not attend any training, but 17 per cent reported a lack of training, which suggests either a problem with the relevance of training or a perceived need for more training hours than they received.

The full results of the *Working in Fitness* Survey 2009 can be found at www.skillsactive.com

3 WHO PAYS FOR THE TRAINING UNDERTAKEN, BY OCCUPATION



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LIW'S HAPPY 21ST

Leila Dukes rounds up the news from Leisure Industry Week

LIW welcomed many top athletes: Zac Purchase, Ian Rose, Katherine Merry, Louis Smith, Daniel Keatings and Dani King were some of the familiar faces who came along to the NEC to meet fans.

an all-over body workout, and can also target the upper body.

- Trixter introduced the X-bike Interactive, an exercise bike that integrates with the Sony PlayStation2. Offering 'total body gaming', whereby the handlebars effectively become a joystick, the new bikes give users a gaming experience as they work out.
- Octane Fitness showcased its Pro 3700 IFI model – the only elliptical cross-trainer accredited to IFI Stage 2. Also launched was the Octane xR6000 seated elliptical, which promises a more varied workout than traditional recumbent bikes.
- Escape launched the new Reebok professional range, designed to cater for all studio activities. The range includes ladders, speed belts and cones in a fresh citrus colour palette. This colour scheme is the result of extensive research into women's exercise habits and motivations, commissioned by Reebok, which discovered a desire for fun and varied exercise. Escape also launched colour-coded polyurethane dumbbells with increased durability and enhanced aesthetics to fit in with its Move It studio zones concept – interlinking zones covering everything from speed and agility to power. The TRX professional suspension trainer was also demonstrated on the stand to tie in with the launch of Escape's new TRX group training initiative.

product news

The event presented suppliers with the opportunity to unveil their latest product launches. Here we round up just some of the highlights:

- Cybex International UK showcased the latest additions to its Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) Stage 2 accredited cardiovascular range, the 750 series. The four new pieces are the Arc Trainer, treadmill, recumbent cycle and upright cycle. The range includes features appropriate for both disabled and non-disabled users, such as raised iconography, colour coding and large buttons and text.
- Concept2 showcased its new SkiErg trainer, with many of the show's visitors testing out the equipment. Inspired by the tough discipline of cross-country skiing, the SkiErg is based on the same mechanics and electronic monitoring systems as the well known Indoor Rower from Concept2. SkiErg provides

This year's Leisure Industry Week took place at the Birmingham NEC from 22 to 24 September, with more than 350 stands. The total attendance was 12,899 with 10,819 visitors – an 11 per cent increase on the previous year (pending ABC audit).

All this, combined with the first ever outdoor exhibition area and the introduction of the Gatorade Sports Beach, helped make 2009 one of the biggest in LIW's 21-year history.


Memorable moments included stunning performances in the British Gymnastics demonstration zone, all of which drew large crowds. So, too, did the Gatorade Sports Beach, with its regular demonstrations of various beach sports and games. Even British champion sprinter Simeon Williamson and 400m freestyle world record holder Jo Jackson took time out to have a go at the beachside activities.



Beach games Fun and games on the Gatorade Sports Beach



Product launches Garod Thomas and Steve Boshier from GymGuard with the company's new product, an anti-bacterial foam sanitiser (see page 52)



Live shows Demonstrations formed a major part of the LIW spectacular

CONFERENCES

iou

This year's LIW had a strong independent operator focus, thanks to the launch of Independent Operators Unite (IOU) – a free programme developed specifically for operators of independent gyms and health clubs. Creative Fitness Marketing put together two days of seminars and events, including a talk by Dave Wright on business-boosting tips. A business breakfast and networking lounge were also offered. To top it off, a party at the Jam House, Jools Holland's live music venue in Birmingham, was thrown for IOU participants and supporters.

wright foundation

The Wright Foundation hosted the UK National Exercise Referral, Rehab and Activity Conference at LIW. The non-profit charity is dedicated to developing the relationship between chronic medical conditions, their prevention and their rehabilitation through activity and exercise.

A schedule of seminars was headed by Dr Kenneth Cooper's talk on the world's largest child obesity project, in which he revealed interim results from the study – led by educational and research body the Cooper Institute – that aims to reduce obesity levels among children in the US. The study highlights the link between healthy bodies and minds: fitter pupils mean improved academic achievement, less drug/alcohol abuse and less violence and truancy.

The Wright Foundation also announced the launch of two similar pilot studies in England and Scotland, which will encourage 10,000 primary school children to partake in three hours of physical activity a week. The organisation is now enlisting primary schools to

help deliver exercise sessions along with local/regional authorities and NHS PCTs.

moreactive4life

A significant seminar in the Health and Fitness conference was the official launch of the MoreActive4Life fitness initiative results, presented by the FIA's Dave Stalker.

Launched in June 2009 and rolled out across the UK, the MoreActive4Life campaign attracted more than 200,000 participants, most of whom had a healthy living index (HLI) of average or below average. More than 80 per cent of participants opted for the six-week gym programme; around 45 per cent of these then converted into full-time members. The campaign yielded some unprecedented results, including significant improvements in HLI scores and high praise from visiting MPs. The campaign will now be rolled out as a year-round programme in 2010.

national sports conference

The opening address at the National Sports Conference was given by Duncan Goodhew MBE, Olympic swimming gold medalist, who spoke about being the best you can, every day. This year, the conference set speakers the challenge of finding innovative solutions to deliver the 2012 legacy for community sport.

Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP), youth sports participation research experts, presented findings showing a drop-off of 30-50 per cent in sports participation after the age of 16 – and gave suggestions on how this could be avoided, including practical and challenging sports development, facility development and strategic planning.

Fitpro's new ViPR The weighted rubber tubes can be used for a variety of exercises and provide a full body workout



- ▶ Matrix launched its 7 Series CV kit, G7 strength series, MyRide 3wave and the MX circuit. The 7 Series CV equipment is available in two models: 7xe (with a 15-inch integrated screen) and 7x (with a 7-inch integrated screen). The G7 strength series offers lower profile weight stacks designed to improve line of sight in a gym; seven items are currently offered as part of the range, which will expand to 19 by the end of the year. Showcased on the latest Tomahawk S Series bike, 3wave is the latest MyRide training system, using personalised on-screen workouts. And the MX Circuit offers a safe workout for users of all abilities: each piece of equipment replicates natural everyday movements and starts at very low resistance, making it ideal for older or deconditioned users.
- Fitpro's much-hyped new offering, the ViPR, was also launched at the show. Standing for Vitality, Performance and Reconditioning – the key concepts for the inventors, who strived to harness whole body integration away from fixed weights – the sturdy, moulded rubber tubes can be used for a wide array of exercises and are available in seven weights, from 4kg to 20kg.

- Power Plate's inventor, former Olympic coach Guus van der Meer, was at LIW to provide insight on the UK launch of the pro-motion cable resistance technology. Flexible cables provide resistance and transfer the vibrations from the plate during acceleration training workouts, meaning specific muscles can be targeted without having to stand on the platform to get the benefit of vibrations.
- Pulse had a successful experience at LIW, winning the Best Stand 2009 award and achieving its largest ever number of sales leads. The stand showcased the entire Pulse portfolio, including new developments such as the latest version of the AbSolo machine and updated

software for its dance mats, iDANCE v2. World dance champions attracted the interest of the crowds on Pulse's Dance Machine systems, reaching impressive speeds of up to 25 steps a second.

- Dynamic Activity, an independent distribution company, showcased its bodycore Functional Training Platform on the Gatorade stand. The open platforms are the only whole body vibration products to feature purely vertical movement.
- Revolutionary Products launched its innovative rock climbing trainer, the Freedom Climber. A circular panel rotates around a fixed central point, adjusting to the climber's climbing speed and ability. Because the trainer functions solely from the climber's weight and gravity, it does not require a motor or electricity. Furthermore, a safe distance from the floor is always maintained, thus avoiding the need for high ceilings, ropes and other safety/supervision requirements.
- PilatesMAD, located in the Pilates, Body and Mind Zone at LIW, launched both the new Pilates-Effect range and its own range of pilates studio equipment – the first from a UK brand and available from UK stock, complete with spares and after sales back-up. The 'sensibly priced' ranges are said to have excellent build quality and materials and fuse classical looks with innovative functionality; the equipment is designed to be intuitive to use and adjust.
- Aquasphere showcased its new Kayenne goggle, with Aquasphere's Quick-Fit™ technology allowing for quick adjustments, even underwater. It also launched its new Aqua Gym range, for use in aqua aerobics classes, which included Hydro Gloves, Dumb Bells, Ergo Bells, the Ergo Belt, Flotation Belt and Foot Floats. ▶

FEEDBACK FROM THE SHOW FLOOR

The general consensus was that attendees at LIW 2009 were there to buy, with many suppliers reporting large numbers of high-quality sales leads.

"We used LIW 2009 to showcase our new product and launch Freedom Climber into the UK, and we couldn't have hoped for a more enthusiastic response. We had a phenomenal number of high calibre visitors to our stand, from a broad range of market sectors, so we definitely chose the right event to launch our product. The show for us was a resounding success." **Andrew Bagnall, Revolutionary Products**

"I've been impressed with the right people to get this new site off the ground, adapting the show accordingly. LIW was more focused and vibrant this year, with a really interesting mix of exhibitors." **Roger Eldergill, Matrix**

"Leisure Industry Week has once again surpassed our expectations and targets – 2008 was a huge success for Pulse in terms of generating good quality leads and raising the Pulse profile; we never expected that 2009 would be even better!" **Linda Forster, Pulse**

"I've had lots of interest from the right people to get this new site off the ground. Next year, I'd even consider taking two stands to make sure I catch visitors attending other shows within LIW." **Daniel Ranson, sportegg.com**



AROUND THE SHOW

survival of the fittest

Fit for Sport welcomed Olympic silver medalist Roger Black MBE to speak at LIV as its schools services ambassador. Children from the Fit for Sport programme showed off activities from the 2009 Fitter Schools and Fitter Families UK Challenge, and winners were presented with sports equipment prizes – the Fitter Schools challenge calculates a score for every school based on fitness level tests. The winning schools were Brownedge St Mary's Sports College and Lasswade HSC, Gossops Green Primary School, and Hobbayne Primary School.

inclusive fitness

The Inclusive Fitness Initiative managed the Inclusive Fitness Zone at LIV this year, to coincide with the launch of its Recognised Products project, which identifies products that accommodate disabled users. As part of the project, the IFI assesses quality inclusive products, gives guidance on inclusion and helps with promotion via the IFI website. The IFI team was also on-hand to give

advice about the IFI mark of excellence, which demonstrates the delivery of inclusive fitness.

sporting bodies

Visitors to the Sport Show had the opportunity to meet a range of national governing bodies and key associations in the Sports Networking Village.

Organisations in the village were: Amateur Rowing Association, Association for Physical Education, British Cycling, British Gymnastics, British Judo, British Universities & Colleges Sport, English Short Mat and Bowling Association, International Rock-it-Ball Federation, Rugby Football Union, Sport England, Sports Coach UK, Sports Leaders UK, UK Athletics, UK Footvolley, Volleyball England, and Women's Sports & Fitness Foundation.

something for nothing

KKP joined forces with Edge Architects to provide a consultancy advice clinic to give free advice on facility design, business planning, funding support and sports development planning.

We're fit! Fit for Sport kids demonstrated activities from the 2009 Fitter Schools Challenge



Giving it a try: Power Plate's new pro-motion cable resistance technology uses flexible cables to target specific muscles

ACTION STATIONS

The Gatorade Sports Beach Festival and its impressive indoor beach within the Sports Show attracted a buzz of activity throughout LIW.

The festival's highlights included sessions with Volleyball England, Beach CrazyBall – a new invention centred around high-rebound nets – and Roger Black's talk on behalf of Fit for Sport. The biggest crowd-pleaser was undoubtedly the moment when GB Olympians Simeon Williamson and Jo Jackson challenged Worcester Warriors rugby stars Miles Benjamin and Alex Couse to a friendly game of volleyball, under the watchful eyes of top international volleyball players.

The Lucozade arena, meanwhile, was home to an array of energetic demonstrations throughout the event. Fitpro showed how its new ViPR product can be incorporated into exercise regimes; Urban Rebounding – with its cardiovascular workouts performed on mini-trampolines to music – invited the Fit for Sport kids to take part in mini-trampoline workouts; and SHOKK showcased its training products with the help of Gladiator star Atlas.

The Health & Fitness area had an increased number of demonstration zones compared to last year, including pole fitness, personal training and small group training. Sports Leaders UK showed how sports activities can be an enjoyable way for teenagers to learn important values through sports leadership; and Katherine Merry, Olympic 400m bronze medallist, launched the organisation's new teaching tool. The resource, a free download, provides activities, worksheets and game cards in line with the spirit of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Meanwhile, the Astral Skypool was the centrepiece of the Pool & Spa area. RLSS UK, ASA and Aquasphere's regular displays included children's life-saving demonstrations and synchronised swimming shows.



What's going on: Synchronised swimming displays at the Astral Skypool (above) and, below, Trixter's stand where the new X-bike Interactive was launched



- **BODYcarver** – with a specially designed treadmill, skis on wheels and personal screen showing ski courses – simulates skiing or snowboarding on real slopes. Its inbuilt sensors relay the movements of the skis/snowboard to the integrated screen, providing an exciting interactive experience, as well as a full body cardiovascular workout. This combination gives the product broad appeal: snowsport novices can be given an introduction to the sport, experts can stay in shape out of season, and gym users looking for versatility can add a new dimension to their personal routine.
- Gym Guard launched its Total Gym Hygiene Solution: an anti-bacterial foam sanitiser designed to tackle bacteria, viruses and mould, and reduce cross-contamination in gyms. Available from dispenser units designed to create 'sanitising stations' within gyms, the

product is intended for use on gym equipment. Gym Guard claims the foam forces itself into small areas where bacteria proliferate, and continues to work after it has dried.

- ZigZag showcased its interactive Espresso bike, aimed at children and teenagers aged nine to 15 years. The interactive Espresso S3y Upright Youth Bike has an LCD screen with advanced technology and graphics that provide 30 different scenarios to ride in – all appealing to the youth market. Scenarios include games, chases, and attractive landscapes to cycle through. All the bikes can be connected to the internet, so riders can compete in real time with their friends.

- www.sportegg.com is a newly launched website which uses the technologies of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter with extra features. Sportegg allows schools, sports clubs and groups to have their own website, where members can exchange news, events, results, photographs and video content.



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DEVELOPMENT

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It is ideal as a proven way of introducing new users to supplementation.

The sports cap and bottle makes this the most convenient and familiar format available for first time users.

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FOR MUSCLES, FOR BUSINESS.

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breckon jones

Unilever's health and vitality manager talks to Kath Hudson about the company's new wellness programme

Unilever has a legacy of looking after its staff: the company has gyms at seven of its 16 sites in the UK, all of which are kitted out with a full range of fitness equipment, and some of which also offer group exercise classes in multi-use areas.

Most of the gyms are free to use for all staff, but even those that charge membership fees are very affordable as they're run on a not-for-profit basis. Staff are also actively encouraged to join via incentives and what Breckon Jones,

health and vitality manager for Unilever in the UK and Ireland, calls "compelling communications".

The company's latest employee wellness scheme – Fit Business – builds on this offering, using expertise from across the company to assess the health of the workforce, provide them with opportunities to get fit and educate them on healthy choices.

Here, Jones talks in detail about the new programme, including initial results and some of the ways in which staff are being encouraged to take part.

Q what is fit business?

It's a pilot programme for our wellness provision. It's a bit different from wellness schemes we've run in the past because it pulls in other areas of in-house expertise, including occupational health and nutritionists, as well as the expertise we have in our brands and the health messages they promote.

Q what are the messages being promoted?

There are four quarterly themes, all selected to be in line with what the government is promoting at the time to give them extra impact. The first theme, at the start of this year, was nutrition and GDA (guideline daily amounts). The second was physical activity, the third was heart health and the fourth, running now, is salt and blood pressure, in line with the Food Standards Agency TV advertising campaign about healthy salt intake.

Q when did it launch?

The pilot started in January 2009 at two of our sites: Leatherhead, an office-based site, and Port Sunlight, near Liverpool, which is predominantly a factory site. Unilever employs 7,500 employees across the UK and Ireland, and there are 2,000 employees between those two sites alone. A number of evaluations are being carried out, including by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), so we can make informed decisions when we roll it out next year to our other sites.

Q what does the programme comprise?

There are five components. The first is the environment you create: we've tried to make this as conducive to exercise as possible, as well as to make a healthy lifestyle accessible. For example, staff have access to nutritional information in

the canteen and easy access to fitness facilities and activities on-site.

The second component is engaging the individual, which is all about inspiring people to act healthily by giving them information and opportunities – for example, the 'lunch and learn sessions' that involve guests speakers coming in to talk about the current theme, to try and pique people's interest.

Empowering people is our third component: we've tried to provide practical tools and resources – for example, health checks looking at things like cholesterol levels – so people can understand and manage their own health. In 2007, a health check we carried out showed there was a disparity between how healthy people thought they were and their biometrics, especially in the factories. Part of the message is that, even though you think you might be healthy, it's important to have these



Health checks Results show staff often think they're healthier than they actually are

"Nuffield is monitoring the frequency of usage at the gym. We currently have 500 active users – a big percentage of the 1,260 workforce"



Keep track Breckon Jones talks through health check results with staff

health checks because you can't see what's going on inside your body and may not know until something goes wrong.

Evaluation is next – we measure as much as possible, constantly monitoring and feeding that back into the process.

And finally there's encouragement, which is the reward component for taking part – for example, if you buy five yoga sessions, or 10 massages, or five salads, you get one free. Also, new gym members are given a kit bag.

Q what else are you doing to encourage staff to take part?
We have a detailed communication strategy and a range of different interactive components to get the message across, including informative posters in the canteen.

One of the most significant changes we've implemented, and are most proud of, is the work we've done with our in-house caterers, Sodhexo, to put GDA information on all the meals in the canteens. Now, next to each dish, we list the salt content, total fat, saturated fat, sugar and calorific value.

We've tried to make it as easy as possible for staff, too. For example, for the health checks, we brought nurses to the production line; employees only had

to step off-line briefly to have their cholesterol and blood pressure checked and were then straight back to work.

Also, we have a sports and social club that offers activities like golf, football groups, a running club and a walking club. We've given out pedometers for people to use, too – so it's not all about the gym. We've found that the factory workers enjoy these schemes.

Q what results have you had so far?

We have the interim results from the IPPR and the rest will come through by the end of the year. So far, people are reporting an increased amount of physical activity and say they feel much better. And the surveys have shown that staff have a positive attitude towards Unilever, both in terms of engagement and job satisfaction.

Leatherhead has a younger workforce with a lower health risk, but we've had comments that suggest the health checks gave the staff there a real wake-up call. After the second round of checks, there was a surge of lapsed members coming back to the gym, as well as more new members joining.

The gym at Leatherhead is a new facility run on our behalf by Nuffield, which also runs the Port Sunlight gym.

Nuffield is monitoring the frequency of usage at the gym, and we currently have 500 active users – people who have been to the gym in the last month – which is a big percentage of the 1,260 workforce.

Sodhexo, meanwhile, has been tracking till sales in the factory and office sites to see whether the diet- and health-related communications have engaged people and encouraged them to make changes.

During the first campaign, for example, we had a big poster in the canteen listing 'swap' recommendations made by our nutritionists: we didn't tell people to buy a wrap rather than a baguette, but we showed them the calorie comparison and there was a significant increase in wrap sales and a decrease in baguette sales. Now, with the salt theme, sandwich fillings have been ranked in terms of salt content, and we will see if people are swapping their fillings to choose lower salt options.

Once we have the results from this phase of the scheme we'll have a round table discussion. We've had many other companies show an interest and we're perfectly happy to show them what we do; we think it's in everyone's best interests to share things externally.



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surfing lessons

Nicholas Mann reviews a selection of health and leisure operator websites and offers his thoughts on best practice

WEBSITES REVIEWED

LA FITNESS – www.lafitness.co.uk
VIRGIN ACTIVE – www.virginactive.co.uk
DAVID LLOYD LEISURE – www.davidlloyd.co.uk
ESPORTA – www.esporta.com
FITNESS FIRST – www.fitnessfirst.co.uk
HARPERS FITNESS – www.harpersfitness.co.uk
BANNATYNE – www.bannatyne.co.uk/fitness/
CHAMPNEYS – www.champneys.co.uk

Health club websites vary widely, but the needs of their audiences tend to be consistent throughout the sector: visitors to these websites are likely to be looking for information about the facilities and classes offered at the club or leisure centre, the opening times, costs and terms of membership, and online joining and bookings.

It's therefore essential that these details are very easy to find, especially for new users and prospects – yet it's surprising how many of the websites of popular health club brands make it quite difficult to access this information.

Here, we review a selection of health and leisure club websites to identify some best practice examples and provide suggestions as to how clubs and leisure centres might better shape their online presence.

identifying with users

LA Fitness and Harpers Fitness demonstrate how effective a health club's online presence can be, with each of their websites featuring easy to find, clearly labelled navigation menus that are reinforced by big, bold buttons in the centre of their home pages that clearly indicate where to find the information.

Make life simple Easy navigation of a website is vital, yet it's surprising how many health clubs make information difficult to access

Additionally, and rather cleverly, the LA Fitness website has a menu that seeks to directly target the more prominent needs/motivations found among a typical health club's membership – 'More Energy', 'Lose Weight', 'More Muscle Tone' and so on – which encourages visitors to associate LA Fitness with their own personal goals. In so doing, not only will they feel as though this particular health club empathises with and understands them, but they're also likely to be drawn into the website to find more information about achieving their ambitions – and the more time they spend interacting with the brand, the more likely they are to go on and join the club.

Image selection can also assist in this sense of identification with the club: operators should ensure that the photos used on their websites reflect their member demographics while simultaneously delivering an encouraging and approachable, yet dynamic and inspiring, vision.

Operators will also want to present their facility as an accessible, welcoming club to any and all other potential members – this could encompass the grey market, families, ethnic minorities



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Lifestyle info David Lloyd Leisure offers website visitors recipes and diet information

Picture perfect Make sure the images used on your website reflect your club's membership profile – but without alienating other possible target markets

and so on – and all potential target markets should ideally be able to identify with the photos used on a club website.

keeping it fresh

Given the role that health clubs play in people's lives, you might naturally expect their websites to be bright, vibrant and energetic. Yet in general, health club websites are surprisingly pallid. Again, by far the best of the bunch are LA Fitness and Harpers, both of which use bright colours against light backgrounds to create a feeling of energy and vibrancy – not what you'd want from a serious corporate website, but exactly right for a lifestyle brand such as a gym.

Another website worth a mention is that of Bannatyne Fitness, which has a 'randomised' main image at the top of each page that varies on each log-in. This is a well-used but nonetheless effective technique that helps keep pages interesting, not just for unique users but more importantly for returning visitors.

information navigation

Another really important factor when building great websites is good information design – ensuring that the layout of all content is easy for visitors' eyes to organise and comprehend. Grid-based layouts help enormously in this respect, and by far the best in this sector is the David Lloyd Leisure website which, in spite of its slightly dark and foreboding colourway, is very well laid-out, making it easy to digest.

It might sound a little too simple, but being able to search an entire website for content featuring certain keywords is a great way to put users in touch with content. That's pretty easy to do nowadays, and it works very effectively on the Virgin Active, Esporta, David Lloyd Leisure and Fitness First sites. Surprisingly, though, it's not a universal feature and is absent on websites such as LA Fitness, which otherwise offers exemplary navigation tools for the user.

Looking beyond aesthetics and functionality, another key requirement of visitors to health club websites is to find general information, for example about health and fitness. Health club brands that satisfy this quest are again likely to generate credibility and affinity for their brands, and are likely to attract members as a result.



© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CHRISTIAN SEBASTIAN

David Lloyd Leisure excels at this, providing encyclopaedic levels of health advice ranging from diets and fitness regimes through to vitamins and minerals, and even foods and recipes. It's all very informative, well laid-out and an excellent resource for anyone looking for this sort of help. It even has a series of video content in its 'Video of the Week' feature, enabling the website to step out of merely being a gateway to the gym to offer its own unique set of services to the user.

website functionality

Online registration and bookings are other important features for any health club website. Fitness First, Harpers, LA Fitness and David Lloyd Leisure all allow users to join online, with the latter three also enabling members to book classes online. This sort of functionality can greatly increase revenue by ensuring that, once the user is engaged with the website, their interest can be converted into an immediate sale.

However, such online booking systems can be complex and even prone to crashing: if this happens, clubs risk losing the users' attention, money, and arguably

their trust – it is the health club brand they are trying to purchase from that will bear the brunt of the frustration, not the 'invisible' software provider.

Spa operator Champneys is a very good example of a website that combines extensive booking and online facilities while still managing to communicate large amounts of information about the different sites and services. The clean and engaging design, together with a voucher and online booking system, all help to make the website a highly successful enterprise for the Champneys brand.

could do better

In general, the quality of websites offered by the fitness and leisure sector is far from perfect. Given the relatively low cost of developing and maintaining websites compared to other forms of marketing (and indeed of running a gym), as well as the constantly evolving nature of online marketing, there's certainly still plenty of room for improvement.



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PLATES HERMITAGE CORPORATION

Gym products expand

During the past couple of years, ProActive Health has seen increasing interest in accessories designed to improve stretching, flexibility and mobility. This increase has been down to teachers purchasing for use in one-on-one work as well as for group fitness sessions.

The heightened interest is attributed to instructors becoming more aware of the benefits of stretching thanks to workshops and courses designed for postgraduates, in addition to stretching-specific REPs modules.

Furthermore, DVDs aimed at instructors and bundled with products such as the GoFit Stretch rope and GoFit Foam roller have also helped to encourage the incorporation of stretching into workouts.

fitness-kit.net keywords
proactive health

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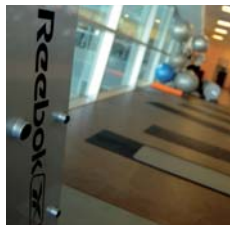
For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to www.fitness-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'

Stretching comes back to Swiss Cottage

Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre has installed two dedicated stretching zones from Escape Fitness.

The installation came about because the centre's management company Greenwich Leisure (GLL) was concerned with the growing number of clients who were not stretching before and after exercise.

Gary Dark, Camden Partnership Manager for GLL, says: "We wanted to re-emphasise the importance of stretching to our members as it had become a forgotten part of a workout. The area is in constant use now and has exceeded our



fitness-kit.net keywords
escape fitness

expectations." The areas have been equipped with Pavigym's body mind flooring and with accessories including medicine balls and Swiss balls.



Introducing the Chirotractor

Designed by German orthopaedic specialist Dr Eduard Chen, the Chirotractor CT-L is designed to relieve lower back pain in gym goers.

The device is said to allow the user to safely mobilise, self-adjust and stretch the lower back.

This can then assist in prevention and treatment of locked intervertebral joints in addition to helping to relax tight back muscles.

The machine mobilises the sacroiliac joint, situated at the junction of the spine and pelvis, which is said to be less stressful than chiropractic manipulation.

Most effective before and after a back strengthening circuit training programme, the overall time spent on the CT-L is recommended at just five minutes.

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chirotractor

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Escape's boxing range

Escape Fitness has launched a range of Reebok-branded boxing and training equipment.

Among the new products are technique bags, boxing gloves, hook and jab pads, and Thai bags and maize bags, used for practising footwork for kick boxing.

The company is also now offering boxing ring installation. Three styles are available – a rectangular training platform, a square training ring or a square competition ring that is more elevated. All formats can be custom branded.

As well as its products, Escape has launched a boxing instructors' course in association with Optimal Life Fitness. It will teach instructors how to incorporate boxing into both individual and group training.

fitness-kit.net keywords
escape fitness



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For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to www.fitness-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'

Fit-Equip providing boxing framework

Fitness manufacturer Fit-Equip has unveiled its Multi Use Boxing Frame, designed to house a range of equipment and attachments.

Described as a boxing set-up that can be made to measure, the frame can be constructed to any size, in any axis, with the potential to hold up to 20 bags at a time.

Attachments that can be fitted include chinning bars, dipping frames and leg raise stations. Furthermore, internal ropes can be provided to create a floor boxing ring for sparring work. Wind down



fitness-kit.net keyword
fit-equip

wheels can also be fitted to allow the frame to be easily moved with punchbags still in place.

Fit-Equip is also soon to launch a Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) range.

Boxing with Life Fitness

Life Fitness' boxing range is supplied to a wide variety of sectors, from health clubs and spas to hotels and schools. With products such as the vertical punchbag (pictured), the boxing series has been included as part of the company's Life Fitness Journey™ concept, designed to create a variety of workouts and exercises for people of all fitness levels. The emphasis is to make boxing a fun part of exercise, especially for those who wouldn't normally use boxing equipment.

The boxing range has been in continual development since 2005 with recent installations at Fitness First Cardiff and the Copthorne Millennium Hotel at Sheffield United FC.

fitness-kit.net keywords
life fitness

INDEPENDENT
OPERATOR FOCUS

opening the DOORS



Kate Godber takes a look at the refurbished British Aerospace fitness centre in Blackburn, which has specifically targeted the over-60s to fill the gym during off-peak times

By 2033, according to the Office of National Statistics, 22 per cent of the British population will be over the age of 65. No wonder, then, that health clubs are tapping into this growing market and providing fitness facilities suited to older members.

The Canberra Fitness Centre in Blackburn is doing precisely this, and yet it's far from being your typical fitness facility; it's a corporate gym located within British Aerospace (BAE) – an organisation that deals with

the development, delivery and support of advanced defence and aerospace systems in the air, on land and at sea.

making an entrance

The Canberra Fitness Centre underwent a £30,000 refurbishment in April, funded by Samlesbury Sports and Social Club which owns both the gym and the building in which it's located.

Prior to the refurbishment, the majority of members at the centre were BAE staff. The general public tended to be unaware the gym was even available ▶

Helen Fletcher, who runs the senior classes at The Canberra Fitness Centre, says she has seen a real improvement in the older members' fitness and mobility during her sessions, since the classes began in April this year.

"Our over-60s classes are designed for participants of all ability levels: some have never exercised before, while others have heart problems and bad joints," she says. "Through our variety of gentle toning exercises, which include a warm-up on the treadmills followed by free weights, cycling, squats and floor work, there has been a significant improvement in flexibility and even in confidence levels."

"Some people who joined when we first started the classes could barely get out of a chair and were unsteady on their feet, but now they're a lot more mobile."

"We have a great time with our seniors and have some real characters who come along – we've even started doing our warm-up to a George Formby CD, which was brought in by one of our members. We find they really enjoy the benefits of exercise, and the classes are going from strength to strength as more of them bring their friends along."

for them to use – indeed, before the refurbishment, getting into the site involved entering restricted land, which put customers off. One of the main objectives of the refurb was therefore to make the site more accessible and welcoming in order to attract new members, fill the gym at quiet times and, ultimately, increase revenue.

"The centre has always been open to the general public, but it was never advertised or pushed," says Louise Shaw, Canberra fitness supervisor. "The advertising we decided to do in the local area [after the refurb] was therefore to increase awareness that the gym was not just for British Aerospace employees, and subsequently to increase membership and turnover."

The refurbishment work included improving access to the gym via a new entrance, while Matrix Fitness Systems provided 13 new pieces of fitness equipment. Attention was also paid to the overall look and feel of the site, which was essentially tired – patched up time and time again – leading to several complaints about poor facilities.

targeting a new market

Although on the face of it a small refurbishment at a small facility, it is the strategy behind the project that makes it particularly interesting: The Canberra Fitness Centre took the decision to make the site more suitable for senior

members – until then an untouched market in the local community.

While the centre is free to use for all BAE staff, non-BAE members pay £17.25 a month. However, pensioners pay just £10.50 a month to attend the gym in an off-peak membership – very affordable for most – and there's also an option to simply pay each time they come to a class. The membership allows retired members to use the gym between 9am and 3.30pm, filling the gym's capacity during the previously quieter daytime hours.

New equipment was selected from the Matrix 5 Series – including treadmills, step machines, ascent trainer and hybrid cycle – because of design elements that make it easy for older people to use, including step-through entry and comfortable, pivoting arm rests.

The centre has also put on special 30-minute classes for the over-60s, including stretching and light weight exercise classes. These have been deliberately scheduled at quiet times in the gym to get more people using the equipment on the gym floor.

"No re-training was necessary, as instructors are simply running less strenuous versions of classes we already hold, but we always have two instructors in each class, so one can demonstrate the exercises while the other can help the members," says Shaw.

"These classes are going very well and the response has been very positive."



Classes on exercise equipment are scheduled for quiet gym times (left), and (above) instructors are on-hand to show how it's done



Getting out more: Older members who joined for the social aspect are finding they even enjoy the exercise!

Elderly people, who never thought they'd use fitness equipment, are doing precisely that. In fact, they're actually enjoying the exercise as much as the social side of the classes" – tea and biscuits follow the classes, offering an opportunity for socialising.

"For some older members, this is an ideal time to get out of the house and make new friends," Shaw continues. This social aspect also encourages people to keep coming to the classes every week. Memberships have increased as a result,

while numbers in the classes have gone up by a third since they started.

However, while the obvious success story has been the centre's appeal to the grey market – almost 20 per cent of new memberships sold since the refurb have been to older members – this has been done carefully so as not to disrupt the BAE members and peak membership non-BAE members. The new equipment, while suitable for older users, is nevertheless appropriate for all user groups, and the centre also puts on a

range of more traditional group exercise classes in the evenings.

A number of BAE staff, who left the centre due to its run-down nature, have returned. But crucially, the general public has also been drawn to the club; where previously membership was heavily weighted in favour of BAE staff, now the split is fairly equal, with 372 BAE members and 320 non-BAE members.



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Free Weights

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Benches

Performance

JEFF DAVIS

The commercial sales director of Power Plate UK talks to Kath Hudson about Acceleration Training, medical accreditation and catering for all population groups



Q When was Power Plate set up?

Vibration has been used to improve human performance as far back as ancient Greece, but the Advanced Vibration Technology™ concept behind Power Plate® equipment was developed for the Soviet aerospace programme in the 1960s, to help cosmonauts combat the weakening effects of zero gravity conditions in space.

This new form of training was unknown in western Europe until the 1990s, when Dutch sports expert Guus van der Meer refined the technology so that people of all abilities could benefit from training on the Power Plate machine.

Q How did you become involved?

I met Guus van der Meer while I was sales director at Technogym and, as a sports scientist myself, immediately saw the far-reaching benefits of Power Plate equipment – we used it for my wife's rehabilitation after spinal surgery. Power Plate was already established as a brand, but not really known in the UK.

In 2003, I set up my own consultancy, recognising that vibration training was a unique, niche product that would make a great impact on the future of fitness. In 2004, I joined Power Plate International as commercial sales director.

COMPANY BY NUMBERS

Head office: Primrose Hill, London. The Power Plate Training Academy, which has 3,500 students each year, is also based here

Number of offices: UK, Holland and US (Los Angeles)

Number of employees: 40

Law of physics: Power Plate equipment uses Newton's law of motion, applying acceleration to increase stability, strength and power





Q What's the company philosophy?

To dominate the global Acceleration Training market (see details below) by helping people understand that the Power Plate machine can achieve results for everybody.

Q What is Power Plate?

Power Plate equipment is a premium vibration device that uses the principles of Acceleration Training to stimulate the body's natural response to vibration. These vibrations transmit waves of energy throughout the body, activating muscle contractions between 25 and 50 times a second, enhancing overall performance in sessions as short as 15 minutes a day, three times a week.

Q What is Acceleration Training?

It's about creating instability in the body. With each vibration, the body is forced to perform reflexive muscle actions, multiple times each second. These contractions must work in multiple dimensions, as the Power Plate machines oscillate in all three planes, exactly as the body is designed to do. The result is an incredible improvement in force production, or strength and power.

The principle of Power Plate equipment lies in Sir Isaac Newton's law of motion – that the force of an object is equal to its mass multiplied by acceleration – meaning that one can improve stability, strength or power by either applying more mass or more acceleration to the body.

Many forms of training and conditioning – such as weight machines – use mass, but Power Plate machines use the second half of this equation, applying acceleration while keeping mass (the body weight) the same.

Created to help cosmonauts combat the weakening effects of zero gravity, Power Plate equipment is now used for general fitness and rehab



Q What benefits does it have for the user?

Acceleration Training offers a wide range of benefits. It can help improve blood circulation, increase muscle strength and flexibility, improve range of motion, decrease cellulite, increase bone mineral density, enhance core conditioning and stability, and reduce pain and soreness.

Q How can the product be used?

The Power Plate machine is endlessly versatile. You can perform any standard stretch, tone or strength exercise on the machine, and it can also be combined with the use of equipment such as kettlebells, Swiss balls and medicine balls.

Q Does it constitute a workout in itself?

Yes, you can do a full body workout in as little as 15 minutes.

JEFF DAVIS FAVOURITES

Book: *It's Not About the Bike* by Lance Armstrong and *Fathers, Sons & Football* by Colin Shindler

Music: All music, especially music that I can sing to!

Place: Home

Food: Italian

Season: Summer/autumn. I have twin daughters, named Summer Darcy and Jade Autumn.

Leisure activity: Family, basketball (I was assistant coach at Sheffield Sharks Basketball Club for seven years), golf, cycling and the gym

Q Does it lend itself to group exercise classes?

Yes. Certain gyms – including David Lloyd and Virgin Active, where there is more than one machine – offer group exercise classes led by Power Plate trainers. There ▶

► are also independent Power Plate studios nationwide, run by private operators.

Q Who is the target market?

Men and women, of all ages and abilities, aged over 16. The Power Plate machine is a highly inclusive piece of kit – both the pro5 and pro5 AIRdaptive models are IFI Stage 2 accredited.

Q Is it beneficial for special populations?

Yes. It can help patient groups such as people with MS, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia and Parkinson's disease. It's also used to rehabilitate those with injuries and to help reduce falls among the elderly. In addition, it's good for people who are overweight or obese.

High performance athletes also train with Power Plate equipment – for example, the GB Snowsport/Ski Team, GB Basketball and European Golf Tour Physio Unit, as well as a number of football clubs including Manchester United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Fulham, Liverpool and Everton.

Q How can it help with weight loss?

An independent study has shown that exercise on a Power Plate machine can help reduce the percentage of body fat more effectively or faster than traditional exercise.

In May this year, a study was presented at the European Congress on Obesity which showed that those who exercised for six months on a Power Plate machine, in conjunction with a low calorie diet, lost twice as much visceral fat (fat around the organs in the abdomen) compared to those who did traditional cardio and weights workouts and dieted, and those who simply dieted. This decrease remained at the same level after 12 months, while the diet and traditional fitness groups returned to their baseline levels.

Researchers hypothesised that this might be related to hormonal changes that may be caused by exercising on a Power Plate machine; a study on mice showed that vibration caused the



Working together: David Lloyd and Virgin Active offer group Power Plate classes

adipogenesis (creation of fat cells) to drop by 27 per cent. More research is being conducted into this.

Q What is the medical accreditation you have been awarded?

In September, Power Plate International received certification as a Medical Device Manufacturer within the European Economic Area, from the British Standards Institute. We're the first specialised vibration exercise equipment manufacturer to have its full range of products certified as medical devices.

The United Kingdom's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency has classified the full range of Power Plate machines as class IIa Medical Devices.

Q Who are your health club customers?

Major health club chains, including Virgin Active, David Lloyd, Esporta, DW Sports Fitness, Fitness First, LA Fitness, Bannatyne, Greens and Nuffield Health.

Q Are you selling to other sectors as well?

Yes. Our clients include hotels such as De Vere, Marriott and Hilton; spas including Chewton Glen and Loch Lomond; and direct sales to consumers for home use, as well as through retail partners. With the medical certification, we now plan to move into the healthcare sector.

Q Are there any other products in the pipeline?

At LIW in September, we previewed the Pro-Motion Upper Body Device (see p52). There are also a number of patents held or applied for pertaining to Power Plate technologies that may result in new products, or even a whole new category.

Q How do you intend to take the company forward?

We will continue to provide education to the market to reinforce credibility and understanding of the technology. Ongoing research will assist with this. The fact that, in September, a three-day conference in Rome focused on the application of vibration is a big step in the acceptance and acknowledgement of vibration technology.

Q Where would you like to be in five years?

I would like the company still to be the leader in Acceleration Training exercise equipment, setting the standard for others to follow. My aim is to reach the point where every fitness or wellness facility installs at least one Power Plate machine. Continued education and awareness, combined with an ageing population, will move the market towards Power Plate equipment.

Q What should the industry do to improve retention?

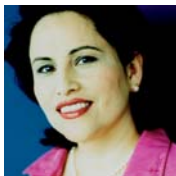
I participated in the recent FIA strategy meeting entitled: How do we break through the glass ceiling of 12 per cent of the population being members of fitness clubs?

I think we need to continue to invest in equipment, staff training and education to get more people, more active, more often. With increasingly busy lifestyles, people have less time to devote to their health and fitness, and the industry has to respond to this trend by offering accelerated classes. That's where Power Plate technology can really help.

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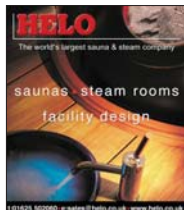
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lightweights

DOH! HOMER GETS FIT FOR GOVERNMENT

The Department of Health is spending £640,000 on sponsoring TV show *The Simpsons* as part of its Change4Life health campaign.

The campaign has been designed by Aardman Animations, the creators of Wallace and Gromit, and will see cartoon characters pretending to be the Simpson family sitting on the sofa at the beginning of each episode tucking into fast foods and unhealthy snacks, which will then suddenly disappear and be replaced by more nutritious foods such as fruit and vegetables.

The campaigns started on Monday 12 October on Channel 4, which runs the cartoon series, and will air until Christmas Day.

Public Health minister Gillian Merron says: "We are serious about tackling obesity. The Simpsons provide a popular way to get the message to real-life families about simple ways of improving their diet and activity for a healthier lifestyle."

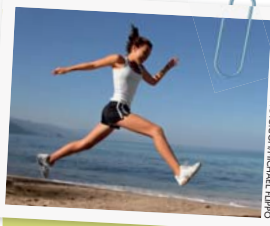


'ON YER BIKE' SAYS LIVERPOOL TO STUDENTS

Thousands of secondary school pupils in Liverpool could be given a bike instead of a free bus pass under new local authority plans.

Liverpool council is considering a fat-busting proposal, which it hopes will also reduce crowds at school gates. Around 5,000 children qualify for a free school bus pass – they are given to pupils aged over eight-years-old who live three miles or more from school or whose family are on income benefits.

The idea is the brainchild of the city's former education boss councillor Paul Clein and his wife and fellow ward councillor Jan Clein.



RUNNING FIX IS A HEALTHY ADDICTION

People who work out regularly can often feel restless or agitated if they can't get to the gym, and now scientists have confirmed that extreme fitness fanatics who miss their exercise fix could experience the same withdrawal symptoms as heroin addicts when they go cold turkey.

Researchers from Tufts University, US, have shown that intense running in rats can release brain chemicals that mimic the same sense of euphoria as opiate use and the same feelings of withdrawal. They also feel that if excessive exercise is addictive, then perhaps drug addicts could work out moderately to feel good instead of taking drugs.

britons even too lazy to have sex

We're too tired to play with our children, balk at the idea of climbing two flights of stairs and regularly choose sleep over sex, according to a report which shows just how idle our nation is.

One in six say that if the TV remote control was broken, they would watch a programme they didn't like rather than get up to change the channel. These were the findings of a poll carried out on behalf of Nuffield Health.

Lazy ways are taking their toll on our sex lives. Three-quarters of couples questioned admitted to having trouble mustering enough energy at the end of the day for a night of passion. More than half (58 per cent) of those blamed their barren sex lives on a lack of fitness.

This follows a promotion at NHS Sheffield outlining the benefits of having sex, including reducing pain caused by migraine, arthritis and back trouble.

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