

health club management

JULY 2013



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health club management

JULY 2013 No 204

TELOMERE HEALTH

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ON THE COVER

DAVID PATCHELL-EVANS

The founder and CEO of GoodLife Fitness
on creating a culture of caring

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT...

PUTTING PRICES UP

IN AN ERA OF BUDGET GYMS,

HOW CAN CLUBS RAISE THEIR FEES?

BEST FOOT FORWARD

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We paid these clubs
between £50,000 - £200,000
each to say nice things
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Trust

"Our centre is well known in the area as the premium entertainment facility for young and old. Despite this we knew there was still a segment of the market we were not capitalising on for gym membership. CFM in October/November 2012 turned this around in a traditionally slow period and now we have had one of the best starts to the year we have ever had. The numbers were important but the unexpected lift in motivation of my team was a real bonus."

Roger Davison, CEO, Brentwood Leisure Trust, Brentwood UK



Independent

"Our club is high quality and renowned throughout the community as a full service facility that produces results. Even though we have highly experienced quality staff, I wanted the experts in their field, to bring in a team that could dedicate the extra time, resources and manpower, not only to generate new members but to put us firmly at the forefront of our industry."

With no outlay, risk free, it enabled us to showcase our facility to the maximum, with maximum local media coverage, obtaining extra long term cash flow too! CFM are without doubt the only company that are able to do this professionally and effectively."

Pete Todd, Pontefract Squash & Leisure Club, Pontefract, UK

Franchise

"The intensity of the campaign that CFM ran for us really captured the attention of our local market. Awareness is all well and good but you want to turn that into action. They used over 20 types of marketing to bring members through the door and created over 300 brand new members in 6 weeks without me having to put my hand in my pocket. I would strongly recommend them as they were recommended to me."

David Webster, Owner Energie Fitness, Newbury UK



Hotel

"Sensing the rise in competition in the area and a rise in the Budget Club Model we brought CFM in to get on the front foot, after a recommendation from our sister hotel in Ireland. Over 3 years and 3 Campaigns later we are over 1500 members better off, giving our club income security and establishing a huge presence as a market leader in the area."

Cyril Patrick Baptist, General Manager, Croydon Park Hotel, Croydon UK



If we did the same for your club, wouldn't you be happy too?

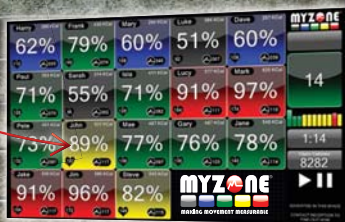
If you would like New Members with No Outlay from an Untapped Market in your area ring CFM now on 0115 777 3333 before your competition does! For more clubs talking about their experiences with CFM check out www.youtube.com/creativefitnessmkt. For free hints, tips and tricks subscribe to our newsletter on www.cfm.net

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Embracing your 'tribes'



Health club operators have a huge opportunity to engage in a very fundamental way with their members, by being far more aware of their true needs and motivations and connecting with them on a deeper level.

Although there's a logic to grouping members according to their most obvious interests and traits, in reality there are many different reasons why people join a gym or take part in a particular activity. Being aware of these differences, and letting this awareness inform the way you deal with members at every turn, can create a powerful bond that will drive loyalty and engagement. Conversely, ignoring these needs can create feelings of deep discomfort for a member, and can even act as a trigger to leave your club.

The needs of every tribe should be recognised by the operator. A raft of 'clubs within clubs' based on shared interests would be very compelling

A club's membership isn't only segmented by socioeconomic, gender or age groupings, or even by special population: disabled users, pre-natal and so on. Beneath any label we might apply, there are many more motivations at work: it's possible to understand these far better by thinking of members as being split into myriad little 'tribes'.

The 'women' label is a great example. The WSFF effectively identifies women as a special population group when it comes to fitness: the gender gap is growing, it says, with only one in five women doing enough

exercise to stay healthy. However, 'women' is far too broad a category to use as the basis for any targeted offerings. Some will prefer women-only clubs; others would rather go for a walk. Then there are the regular gym-goers, getting great results from body weight training and free weights. For this tribe, says Arron Williams of Life Fitness: "Strong is the new skinny – women are driving the market."

In a similar vein, labelling a fit, healthy, youthful woman in her early 50s an 'evergreen', and asking if she'd like to join the other over-50s ladies for tea one afternoon, will prove uncomfortable and demotivating for her – yet I was told a story only last week in which precisely this had happened.

We need to do more to understand the different tribes within our broader groupings; two initiatives launched in May aim to do this for 'women'. A £1.8m Sport England-funded pilot scheme will test what works in changing women's sporting habits, including programming for distinct sub-groups – older women, mums on the school run, etc. Meanwhile WSFF will research how different types of women participate in sport and activity – and why – and develop tools to help get more women, more active.

But care must be taken not to alienate other tribes in the process: in April, GLL was accused of gender discrimination by journalist Peter Lloyd, for ringfencing women-only hours at his local mixed-sex gym.

I don't want to be drawn into that debate, but I do believe that the needs of every tribe – whether three or 300-strong – should be recognised and, wherever possible, met by the operator. Provided they can be delivered without alienating other members, a raft of 'clubs within clubs' based on shared interests and motivations, rather than arbitrary labels, would make for a very compelling offering.

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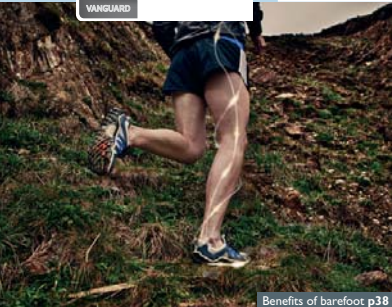
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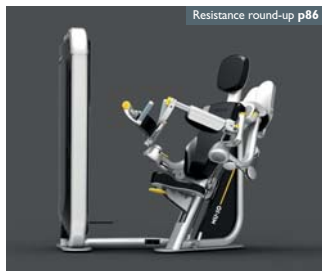
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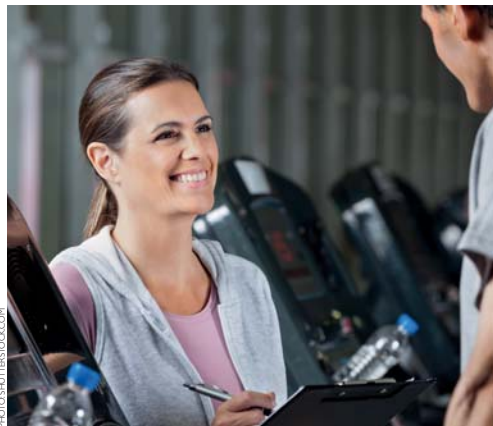
For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p88



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



Staff who can connect to new members will bring clubs greater success

The new member journey: dedicated staff are key

I read with interest the first part of Guy Griffiths' retention series, about new member journeys (see *HCM* May 13, p51).

Having implemented a structured new member journey in 2011, I fundamentally agree with the article in terms of the impact a new member journey can have. This is especially the case when emphasising the club's service for the newer members, interacting more with them and even offering them tangible rewards for achieving a set number of visits.

However, our experience has shown that this on its own is not enough. What wasn't touched on in the article is the importance of the staff's ability to build up a relationship with the new member. We have recently hired staff specifically to mentor new members

through the member journey, which has resulted in an average retention increase of 20 per cent over the first 15 months. Just having the member journey in place is not enough unless the right people are recruited and trained to implement it effectively.

The member journey is also about much more than getting people past the first four to six weeks: no matter how dedicated a member is, there are always periods of lapsing that need to be picked up on down the line. Recruiting staff who build genuine relationships with members is key, as they are much more likely to entice the member back to the gym.

Jack Bishop
Fitness manager, Synergy Health and Fitness

Clubs need to deliver better diet and lifestyle coaching

I read the article on plus-sized fitness with interest (see *HCM* June 13, p38) as I'm a strong believer that the fitness industry can do much more to reach out to those who need us most, getting better results for them by doing a better job at delivering both diet and lifestyle coaching.

Many clubs would benefit from offering the services of a registered dietitian, providing members with individually prescribed eating plans. The effectiveness of fitness programming can also be improved with lifestyle pattern coaching that helps people change their current habits to make weight loss last.

This has been our approach at Vivafit for the last two years, and we have now launched VivaSlim – a nutrition and coaching software platform for health clubs that want to launch their own branded weight loss programme. It's based on the lifestyle of the individual, helping members to identify their eating patterns: meal-skipper, midnight nibbler, emotional eater and so on. It also looks at their stress patterns – accelerator, people pleaser, procrastinator, etc. All of this is tied into an eating plan, written by a dietitian, to deliver both diet and lifestyle coaching for weight loss.

Constance Ruiz
President, Vivafit / VivaSlim



Success: Carla Felix
lost 53kgs in a year



Customers are incentivised with the offer of cheaper fees for online booking

CONNECT BOOSTS ONLINE BOOKINGS AT SPORT SHEFFIELD

The introduction of Gladstone's Connect has freed up staff and greatly improved customer service

At Sport Sheffield we have more than 13,500 active members, mostly students, staff and alumni, but we also have a public membership base that equals many of the country's leading health clubs.

We have been using Gladstone Health and Leisure's Plus2 membership management software since 2000 and launched the Connect online booking system more than six years ago. Initially the response was slow, with only 15 per cent of transactions taking place through Connect, despite repeated email campaigns and advertising in and around the Sports Centre.

With increasing complaints about our busy reception desks and telephones not being answered due to busy staff, in summer 2007 we decided to reconfigure our products and offer different 'online' and 'in person' prices. People booking at reception saw a 50 pence increase to all facilities, while online prices were frozen, effectively offering a 50 pence discount for booking online.

In anticipation of complaints we created two terminals (one at each

reception), which had the online site permanently loaded, allowing people to book online at the actual centre, as well as from home.

The impact was immediate and within just a few months we increased our online bookings percentage to around 35-40 per cent. Within 12 months just under half of all bookings were being made online. The number of users booking online continues to increase steadily year on year.

reducing queues

Fitness class bookings now make up around 78% of all online bookings. We



There is now less waiting time for customers calling the centre

targeted the fitness class users more than any other, as, with mass amounts of relatively small transactions they caused the biggest problem at reception, taking a lot of staff time to process payments, ultimately leading to big queues.

Connect has had a huge impact on our business. We have been able to consolidate the two receptions into one and have redeveloped the old reception area into a new cafe, creating a great secondary spend opportunity too.

The benefits of online booking have been numerous; staff time saving, reduced telephone waiting times for customers, and most of all an overall improvement in customer service - meeting the expectations of members.

Customers now expect and sometimes demand to do things online, including booking their sporting activities. Providing this service improvement that customers have come to expect, coupled with the benefit of savings in staff time, makes online bookings a must for us. ●

Lee Beckett, Sport Sheffield,
The University of Sheffield

'Storytelling' platform Gymtopia launches

The altruistic capacity of the fitness industry is being harnessed to help the wider community with the launch last month of Gymtopia. The digital storytelling platform is designed to capture the social impact of projects powered by gyms and gym-goers worldwide.

Gymtopia encourages health clubs to collaborate with their members in fundraising, collecting food, donating shoes and clothing, and many other projects that create a positive social impact. It is the brainchild of health club industry consultant Ray Algar. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Y5G6Y>



The awards dinner will be held during LIW

Shortlist announced for Health Club Awards 2013

The official shortlist has been now announced for the third annual Members' Choice Health Club Awards, in partnership with *Health Club Management*.

The awards aim to find out which clubs offer the best all-round customer experience based purely on ratings from members. This year, 350 clubs entered and 40,000 votes were cast between 1 February and 30 April.

In total, 170 clubs and leisure centres made the shortlist across 14 regions.

Each region has been split into three categories – Budget, Mid Market, Premium – giving every club a fair chance to compete against its peers. There are also national Grand Prix categories for best club in category and best budget, small, medium and large chain categories.

The winners will be announced at the third annual Health Club Awards ceremony at LIW on Tuesday 24 September. The black tie event will be held at the National Motorcycle Museum, Birmingham, and will include an exclusive after-party for guests.

To view the full shortlist and to buy tickets, go to www.healthclubawards.co.uk

Battle of budget clubs heats up

Low-cost fitness chain The Gym Group has secured £50m of venture capital to expand its club portfolio – less than a month after rival Pure Gym announced it too would be spending £50m on new sites.

The Gym Group now has the backing of two private equity investors – Bridges Ventures and Phoenix Equity Partners. While it is the first time Phoenix has invested in the company, Bridges Ventures has supported the chain since its inception in 2007. It is the latest sign that competition between the UK's low-cost gym operators is heating up.

Just weeks ago, in May, Pure Gym announced it would spend £50m on new sites following its takeover by US private equity firm CCM Capital Advisors. Pure Gym currently has 45 locations in the UK and has plans to add



The Gym Group has announced plans to open up to 30 clubs a year

40 new sites over the next 12 months, including 15 in London alone.

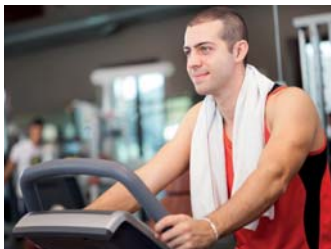
The Gym Group operates 36 sites, with plans to open 20–30 new gyms each year. CEO John Trehan says: "This combination will allow us to fully capitalise on the opportunities in the rapidly growing low-cost gym sector."

UK fitness industry valued at £3.9bn

The market value of the UK's fitness sector has been estimated at £3.92bn – an increase of 1.5 per cent from the year before.

According to the 2013 *State of the Fitness Industry Report* from The Leisure Database Company (TLDC), the industry has experienced improved growth over the last 12 months, with increases of 2 per cent in the number of fitness facilities and a 4.5 per cent rise in the number of members.

The sector is still expanding despite the economic slowdown. Since 2009, the fitness industry has grown its total market value by 4 per cent, the member base by 8.3 per cent, and the number of fitness facilities by 3.9 per cent.



The fitness sector is still expanding, despite the economic slowdown

David Minton, director of TLDC, says: "Despite another year of economic slowdown, the fitness industry is continuing to stand strong in both private and public fitness sectors." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=613A4>.

£2.85m Sleaford Leisure Centre revamp 'on schedule'

The multi-million pound refurbishment of Sleaford Leisure Centre in Lincolnshire is going well and is 'on schedule', according to the team undertaking the work.

The £2.85m (US\$4.3m, €3.3m) refurbishment, which saw the leisure centre

temporarily close down in October 2012, will see a larger gym facility, splash pool and new changing rooms built among the plans.

Contractors RG Carter of Lincoln is carrying out the work. When complete, the centre will be managed by Leisure Connection.

CIMSPA plans business review

The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) has announced plans for a business review of the institute, in preparation for its new governance structure as required by its new charter.

CIMSPA, the professional development body for the UK's sport and physical activity sector, has been looking at ways of sustaining the institute financially, originally looking at a tender to procure an organisation capable of delivering an aspect of the institute's operations.

The tender plans were later scrapped after the trustees of CIMSPA decided that the long-term interests of the institute would be best served by launching an internal review.

CIMSPA trustee David Stalker will conduct a review of CIMSPA's function and ambition,



CIMSPA is currently based at SportPark, Loughborough University

aiming to build a sustainable three-year business plan. The review will last initially for three months, during which time Stalker will also put in a series of measures to improve service to current members.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=P1w6Z>

DLL: UK launch of Orangetheory concept

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) will introduce the Orangetheory Fitness group training concept at its high street David Lloyd Studio sites in the UK.

DLL has signed an exclusive deal with US-based Orangetheory Fitness which will see DLL roll out the interval group training concept later this year. The first club to host the classes will be the DL Studio in Islington, due to open in August.

Orangetheory Fitness has expanded its portfolio rapidly on a franchise model in the US and recently opened its 100th site. The workout concept is based on a 60-minute session comprising intervals of cardiovascular and strength training, and can accommodate up to 24 adults at a time.



DLL will be the first chain to introduce the method to the UK market

The programme features three components – treadmills, rowing machines and weight training blocks – with sessions set to upbeat music. It also uses heart rate monitors to track performance to optimise cardio training. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N6X5m>

£14.2m health and leisure centre for West Norwood

Lambeth council has announced a new £14.2m (US\$21.8m, €16.6m) health and leisure centre, which will be the third complex to gain a new swimming pool in the Lambeth area, scheduled to be completed by spring next year. Lambeth council is aiming to deliver three

pools in the space of two years. One opened in Clapham in February last year, while another is part of the Streatham Hub development, which will see a new ice rink, 250 homes and a supermarket built and is due to open in November. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=vs07s>

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Leisure Connection announces £1m investment

Fitness and leisure provider and facilities management company Leisure Connection has announced an investment of more than £1m in improvements and upgrades on 11 UK leisure centres.

In addition to a full overhaul of gyms at Downham and Willesden, Leisure Connection is also refurbishing gyms in Bourne, Peele, Grantham, Carnival Pool, St Crispin, Mountfitchet, North Kesteven, Worcester and Perdiswell. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=BouIT>



Both of the centres have fitness facilities

Two leisure centres in Worcester saved from cuts

Two leisure centres in Worcester have been saved from cuts after being handed over to a county-based trust to run their affairs.

If given council approval, Wychavon Leisure Trust will take over from Wychavon District Council this October in a two-year deal, with an option to extend for an additional year after this period.

Under government rules, trusts get an 80 per cent discount on rates, meaning the running costs of St John's Sports Centre and Nunnery Wood Sports Complex would fall by £89,000. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=J5V5r>

SLM secures Cotswold leisure and culture contract

Sports Leisure Management (SLM) has won the contract to run leisure and cultural services owned by Cotswold District Council. The 10-year deal includes leisure centres at Cirencester, Chipping Campden and Bourton on the Water, plus cultural services at the Corinium Museum in Cirencester and a resource centre in Northleach.

To be operated under SLM's Everyone Active brand, the new additions bring the number of venues managed by SLM to 81. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=9L4r4>

Sharp increase in child obesity

There has been a four-fold increase in the number of children admitted to hospital for problems related to obesity in England and Wales between 2000 and 2009.

According to research conducted by Imperial College London, nearly three-quarters of the admissions were to deal with problems complicated by obesity such as asthma, breathing difficulties during sleep, and complications of pregnancy, rather than obesity itself being the primary reason.

In 2009 there were 3,806 children admitted to hospital for obesity-related conditions – compared with a mere 872 in 2000.

Imperial College's Dr Sonia Saxena, who led the study, says: "The burden of obesity is usually thought to have serious consequences in adulthood, but we now see it



The number of kids with obesity-related issues has quadrupled since 2000

manifesting earlier, in childhood. It's clear that rising obesity levels are causing more medical problems in children, but the rise we observed probably also reflects increasing awareness among clinicians, who have become better at recognising obesity."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Asgd2>

Woking centre unveils £2m redevelopment

Woking Leisure Centre in Surrey has opened its doors following an eight-month transformation of its facilities.

The £2m project was funded by Woking Borough and the centre is operated by Freedom Leisure in partnership with the council.

The gym, which was relocated to give users views over Woking Park, has been completely refitted with 131 stations. The new equipment includes 45 new cardio machines including treadmills, cross-trainers, crossovers and steppers.

An extensive range of plate-loaded and free weights equipment, including Olympic benches and Smith machines, have also been added alongside other resistance machines.



The work included the installation of a new 131-station fitness suite

The project also seen two new studios developed to hold classes for up to 35 people, including Les Mills Body Pump and Body Balance, Zumba, Kettleercise and JustJhoom. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=j5J9o>

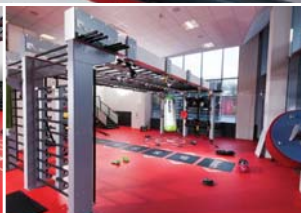
Leisure centre in Ellesmere Port given the go-ahead

The first images of a £15m leisure centre in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, have been revealed after plans were given the go-ahead.

The project was given unanimous backing by members of the Cheshire West and Chester (CWA) Council, along with a similar project,

which is set to be built in Northwich. However, Labour group leader at CWA, Justin Madders, questioned whether the authority was getting value for money after reports that Crewe is getting a 50m pool and lifestyle centre for just £10m. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c8G8r>

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Virgin Active launches new member benefit scheme

Virgin Active has launched a new online-based member benefit scheme.

Entitled Hot Stuff, the initiative offers members of Virgin Active clubs discounts to other Virgin-branded products and services – such as Virgin Trains and Virgin Holidays – as well as exclusive access to Virgin-sponsored events, including the Virgin Active London Triathlon and Tour de France. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=13Rui>



The Crawley club is the latest opening for Anytime

Anytime Fitness expands portfolio with Crawley club

Health club operator Anytime Fitness is set to open a new club in the heart of Crawley in June. The 2975sq m (3,200sq ft) gym, located in Crawley town centre, will be equipped with Precor gym equipment and open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with a security-access key allowing members to enter the club even when it is not staffed. The club will be operated by franchisee James Usher. Anytime Fitness is currently ranked number six in *Entrepreneur* magazine's 2013 Franchise 500 list. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=10t6x>

Council to invest in low-cost fitness centre

Sobell Leisure Centre in Islington, London, is to undergo a major refurbishment in a bid to provide low-cost healthy activities for all residents.

In July 2010, Islington Council agreed a programme of refurbishment to help extend the centre's life. The first stage included improving the main hall, which came in time for the centre to be used as the official venue for Olympic volleyball training in 2012.

Now a further investment of close to £1.4m will see the installation of two new artificial, floodlit football pitches, followed by improvements within the centre itself.

The new football pitches, with hi-tech surfaces, will be constructed over the course of the summer, with work expected to be completed in August. Once this work is done, a programme of internal work will begin from



The Sobell centre in London will house a low-cost fitness element

August until December. This will involve: new gymnastics equipment; increasing the size of the fitness gym by a third; the creation of a new boxing gym; an upgrade of the training room; and improvements to the junior gym. Other improvements will include the installation of retractable spectator seating and a redesign of the existing changing rooms. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=G8q7N>

Contractor sought for Sunderland project

The £11m redevelopment of a leisure centre in Sunderland is a step closer, with council bosses considering the appointment of a new contractor for the scheme. Pelikaan Construction, which specialises in designing and building sports facilities, is the preferred bidder for the replacement leisure centre.

The proposed construction is slated to be built next to the current centre, which will

be demolished on completion of the new centre in 2015. Facilities at the replacement centre will include a six-lane, 25-metre pool and learner pool, a four-court sports hall and sauna and steamrooms. The funding was initially announced as part of a £60m capital programme by Sunderland City Council earlier this year, which has seen investment in new and improved sport and leisure centres.



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LGBT gym opens in Birmingham

Birmingham's LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community has opened a new sports and fitness studio at the Health and Wellbeing Centre in the Holloway Centre, in Birmingham city centre. The Big Lottery Fund awarded the project almost £500,000 over a four-year period.

The project, named The Vault, has been introduced to tackle the barriers that prevent LGBT communities from accessing mainstream sports facilities, such as discrimination, stereotyping, lack of inclusion in policies, procedures and marketing, and fears for safety.

Birmingham's LGBT team says it is also working with mainstream service providers to address health inequalities within the LGBT community, such as high rates of smoking and drinking, self harm, depression and attempted suicide. A range of services are on offer from



Director Steph Keeble and health and wellbeing manager David Viney

the centre, including yoga, pilates, fitness groups, alcohol support and advice, weight management, smoking cessation, counselling and sexual health services.

Some of the classes at the studio will be funded through Birmingham City Council's Be Active scheme. The Vault will also have a changing facility with dedicated transsexual changing space. *Details: <http://lei.sr7a=p7X90>*

Fivey to open three new training studios



Dan Fivey: Each studio will be located above units operated by specialist retailer Up & Running

Personal trainer and entrepreneur Dan Fivey is expanding his studio portfolio by setting up three more training sites in Oxford, Aylesbury and Chester. The three new studios will join an existing club in Cheltenham, and each of the new sites will open above specialist clothing retailer Up & Running stores.

Fivey says: "We hit the ground running when we opened in Cheltenham and it has been a huge success – partly due to the location and partly because of the unique, NASA-engineered Alter G treadmill we have on offer.

"It makes perfect sense to have an established fitness facility above the Up and Running stores, as we share the same clientele and the

two businesses nicely complement each other. Expanding this offering across the other stores is a no-brainer"

Jonathan Midwood, managing director at Up & Running, adds: "It makes perfect sense to utilise the space above our shop floors and turn it into working gyms. It's a great add-on to offer our customer base. Dan's business model, never faltering drive, as well as his passion for recruiting local personal trainers is a business we are very proud to partner with."

Fivey first opened the personal training studio at the Cheltenham site two and a half years ago, and then expanded with the launch of the gym at the location last October.

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VP of Group Fitness, 24 Hour Fitness

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Life Fitness partners with referral expert

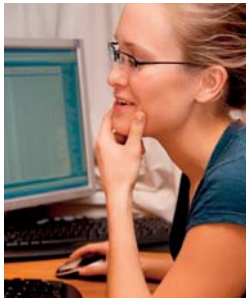
Equipment supplier Life Fitness has struck up a partnership with online offering Referral as part of efforts to provide K:A Leisure in North Ayrshire with an improved GP referrals system.

Referral will provide K:A Leisure – which provides sport and leisure services in North Ayrshire – with an integrated approach to the management of referral schemes, by tracking participants' exercise activity. Each activity will then be reported to GPs and the referral team at K:A Leisure in real time.

K:A Leisure currently receives more than 1,000 referrals each year at its centres.

Andy McLaughlan, public sector account manager for Life Fitness, says: "We're committed to providing long-term support and service to our customers, and the already thriving exercise referral programme will be taken to new heights with the new Life Fitness equipment that we're installing."

The service is part of a new contract secured by Life Fitness, which will also see it supplying its latest equipment to four of



The partnership will help track GP referral data

the trust's leisure sites – the Magnum Leisure Centre, Auchenhavie Leisure Centre, Garnock Swimming Pool and Vikingar. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=gsX4C>

PTI and BMF announce new partnership

Health and fitness training provider Premier Training International (PTI) has announced a new partnership with British Military Fitness (BMF). As part of the new deal, PTI will offer all graduates who are either ex or currently serving members of the armed forces a guaranteed opportunity to interview with BMF.

BMF provides outdoor fitness classes in over 50 public parks across the UK, with classes run by former or serving members of the British armed forces with recognised fitness training qualifications.

Victoria Branch, global marketing director for Premier Training International, says: "We're thrilled to be working with BMF and delighted to be able to secure this opportunity for our graduates."

Rob Love, managing director of BMF, adds: "Our relationship with Premier Training International is a real positive for both companies. Premier will be able to offer



BMF currently operates in more than 50 public parks

learners a clear employment pathway, while we can be confident that the candidates we interview have received excellent initial training and have the potential to continue their professional development with BMF."

ASA calls for PE funding to be focused on swimming

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) has called for PE funding to be focused on swimming after a survey revealed that half of the UK's children aged between seven and 11 years cannot swim the length of a standard pool.

The survey, conducted by the ASA with support from Kellogg's and the Institute of Youth Sport at Loughborough University, collected data from more than 3,500 primary schools across England, and gathered opinions from more than 1,000 parents.

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Problems still dominate Portuguese market

The total number of gym members in Portugal rose 15 per cent in the first quarter of 2013 compared to the same period last year, according to data from the third industry barometer conducted by local trade association AGAP.

However, 30 per cent of clubs reporting growth in customer numbers failed to report revenue growth. And across the country, 76 per cent of respondents observed a decline in gross turnover (including VAT) – an average drop of 23 per cent.

Nevertheless, the study suggests the sector as a whole may have recovered 60,000 lapsed customers in Q1 2013; around 100,000 are thought to have lapsed during 2011–2012.

Black Box Fitness – online knowledge sharing

BlackBoxFitness, an open platform for fitness professionals to share information, was launched last month.

The founders – researchers Dr Johan Steenberg and Dr Jan Middeldkamp, and online marketer Peter van der Steege – devised the platform as a forum where fitness professionals can share industry knowledge and practical tools, from scientific studies to presentations, training programmes to job descriptions, marketing campaigns to sales tools. The idea is that people can share whatever they feel will be most useful to colleagues across the sector.

Corporation Fitness launches VivaSlim

Corporation Fitness in Lisbon, Portugal, has launched the VivaSlim programme.

The 2,500sq m club, whose membership is typically aged 25 to 40 years, charges an average of €52 a month; VivaSlim will be charged as a premium add-on.

With personal training already accounting for 20 per cent of revenues, co-founder and director Sandra Caldeira believes there is an upsell opportunity among existing members, as well non-members through referrals and publicity.

Physical Company – new European distributors

Physical Company has signed a deal with Romanian fitness equipment supplier Mens Mentis Group to act as sole distributor in Hungary and Romania.

Yoga at the Top for Burj Khalifa

At the Top, Burj Khalifa – the world's highest observatory deck with an outdoor terrace, located on Level 124 of Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the world's tallest building – has been playing host to a unique fitness concept aimed at promoting physical wellbeing.



Exercisers have been enjoying views of Dubai's skyline

'Yoga at the Top' sessions have been taking place in the venue on Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings, running from 13 June through to 6 July.

The one-hour sessions have been offered in collaboration with Fitness First – a franchise owned and operated under license by the Landmark Group in the MENA region.

Conducted by instructors from various Fitness First clubs across Dubai, tickets for the early morning yoga sessions have been available for purchase through the At the Top, Burj Khalifa online booking system – subject to availability, with the maximum capacity for each session set at 30 people. Discounts were made available to Fitness First members, who have been paying AED 125 per session (£22), compared to AED 150 (£26) for non-members.

Each session has been beginning with sun salutations, followed by a series of yoga postures, and ending with a relaxation module designed to allow participants to take in the ambience of the venue, complete with the impressive backdrop of Dubai's skyline.

Artis for Reebok and Thermes Marins

Two high-profile health clubs have recently completed installations of Technogym's new Artis range: the Thermes Marins in Monte Carlo, and the Reebok Sports Club in Madrid.

The 1,200sq m Reebok Sports Club Madrid installed the equipment as part of a comprehensive restyling of the club, completed in April. It is the first club in Spain to offer Artis. The Thermes Marins also selected the new range as part of a full refit, completed in May.

Artis encompasses a full complement of premium CV, resistance and functional training equipment designed with high-end clubs in mind.



The Reebok facility in Madrid has been restyled

Merger creates Scandinavian giant

The formation of a new company, set to be one of the largest fitness companies in the Scandinavian region, has been announced.

The company will bring together a number of fitness brands operating across the Scandinavian region – SATS, Elixia, SAFE, Metropolis and Fresh Fitness – and will have over 2,000 employees, 181 locations, more than 500,000 members and combined revenues of approximately NOK2.5bn (£278m). The clubs will continue to operate under the SATS, Elixia, Fresh Fitness, SAFE and Metropolis brands.

"The fitness market is undergoing change due to new competitors, changed customer

preferences and demographics, new technologies and new ways of training. This merger will allow us to bring customers a wider range of training options, to invest in and lead changes in new technology and products to support our customers' training preferences," says Olav Thorstad, CEO of TryghedsGruppen's Health & Fitness Nordic, a private equity firm that is partnering with Altor Equity Partners.

Altor Fund III and the Elixia shareholders will own 51 per cent of shares in the combined entity; TryghedsGruppen will own 49 per cent. The two owners will operate as equals, and are said to share the same vision for the region.

Flagship studio for Pure Yoga



The Pure Yoga studio in Hong Kong will offer yoga practice, healthy food and meditation under one roof

Pure Yoga, part of the Pure Group in Asia, is set to open a new, 930sq m yoga studio in central Hong Kong in August – its sixth site in Hong Kong, and 12th for the group.

The new studio will offer yoga programmes in five main class categories: hot yoga, hatha and vinyasa, therapeutic and healing, stylistic and themed, and 'other', which includes yoga for special populations such as pre-natal.

It is the first Pure Yoga location to offer new feature classes: Wall Rope Yoga, using a yoga wall system with ropes, pelvic swings and bars to enhance extension in the various poses; and Yoga for Athletes, designed to enhance athletic performance, assist recovery, focus the mind and improve endurance. Private yoga classes using a pilates reformer will also be available.

The studio will also launch a new food concept, NOOD FOOD, providing 100 per cent organic, ready-to-go nutrition: superfood smoothies and a raw food menu.

Martina Lee, Pure Yoga's country manager for Hong Kong, says: "This will be the first Pure Yoga location to offer a holistic programme that covers yoga practice, diet and meditation all under one roof."

The Pure Group encompasses five Pure Yoga studios, five Pure Fitness centres and two Pure Dining locations in Hong Kong. There are also two Pure Yoga studios and two Pure Fitness centres in Singapore, plus two Pure Yoga studios each in Taipei and New York. The first Pure Yoga in Shanghai is also scheduled to open this year.

Trump Hotels launches Trump Wellness

Trump Hotel Collection – the US-based, family-run luxury hotel brand – announced the launch of its new Trump Wellness programmes last month.

'Nourish' looks to enhance in-room dining menus with a range of options, providing guests with vegan, gluten-free and organic selections with complete nutritional values. A Healthy Kids Menu by Trump is also available. Minibars will be overhauled to offer healthier snacks, and at least one-third of all choices at each hotel will be in a health food category.

The second programme is designed to accommodate busy lifestyles. 'Quick Bites' is an

express, in-room menu that includes healthy, tasty options – all with a guaranteed delivery time of 15 minutes or less, and all available to be eaten on the go if necessary.

The third programme, Travel Fit, encourages guests to maintain their workout regime while travelling, whether they choose to exercise in their room – items such as yoga mats, stretch bands and light weights are available on request – or in the Technogym-equipped hotel gyms. Workout apparel and footwear can be provided, along with iPod shuffles pre-loaded with the guest's personal music preferences, as detailed in their guest profile.



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The VA Team will aim to get Britons more active

Virgin Active reveals VA Team group of athletes

Health club operator Virgin Active has announced its new team of athletes that will look to strengthen public awareness of the Virgin Active brand.

Known as Team VA, the 'squad' includes Olympic silver medallist gymnast Louis Smith MBE, taekwondo gold medallist Jade Jones MBE, boxing gold medallist Nicola Adams MBE, and Paralympic sprinter Sophia Warner.

Team VA will represent Virgin Active at key outdoor sporting events this summer as they encourage Brits to get active and try something new.



Van der Meer is the new Vibrogym MD

Vibrogym appoints Van der Meer and Tempelaars

Vibrogym has announced the appointment of industry innovators Guus Van der Meer and Jelte Tempelaars to its management team, in their respective roles of managing director and operations director.

Both join the company from Power Plate International, and bring with them years of technical and commercial experience within the vibration training market. The pair will work together with the existing management team, backed by Amsterdam-based private equity fund NPG.

YMCAfit adds regional managers

Fitness training provider YMCAfit has recently appointed four new regional managers as it expands its programme into three new regions in the UK: Sheffield, Bristol and the north-east.

Robert Hall has been selected as the Midlands regional manager, Christine Minchella will be responsible for the north, and Roy Scott and Lesley Smyth will manage the south-east and south-west respectively.

YMCAfit has an ambitious growth strategy for 2013 and beyond, with aims to provide training to more people in more locations across the UK. The new training centres in Sheffield, Bristol and the North-East will offer a full programme to both individuals and businesses looking to train their staff.

The regional managers will be responsible for ensuring that the programme delivered in their region meets the specific needs of the individuals within it.

Head of YMCAfit, Denise Page, says: "Moving into new regions marks an exciting new era for YMCAfit. Over the past three

decades we have grown and developed our courses to meet the changing needs of the fitness industry.

"We are delighted to be in a position where we can expand our programme and deliver the same excellent level of service to more fitness professionals in the UK."



Smyth: New regional manager for the south-west

John Gamble joins Star Trac as sales MD

Star Trac has hired John Gamble as its new managing director of sales for Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Gamble will be based in the UK and will be responsible for driving revenue in his regions,

by working closely with all sales channels and all areas of the business.

Gamble is a fitness industry veteran and has spent the past 30 years in the sector. Prior to joining Star Trac, he was MD of Fitness First for five years. That position required him to oversee over 200 health clubs in Italy, France, Spain and the UK. Before Fitness First he was the managing director for Technogym in the UK for three years, and prior to that for Life Fitness for approximately nine years.

Gamble says: "At both Technogym and Life Fitness, I was able to build and lead a team that gained the number one position in the UK for market share, as well as delivering very high levels of customer service."

"I'm excited about my new role at Star Trac. I intend to utilise my experience as MD of leading equipment brands, and as a multinational health club operator, to build Star Trac's market share and brand position and perception."



John Gamble is a 30-year fitness industry veteran

Leisure sector features heavily in Queen's Honours

A number of people working in the leisure industry have been given awards in the annual Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Dr Jennifer Dixon, chief executive of Nuffield Trust was given a CBE, as was Richard Lewis, chair of Sport England.

Andrew Finding, CEO of the British Equestrian Federation, was given an OBE following the sport's record-breaking medal haul at London 2012; other OBE recipients included Keith Walters, president of the Amateur Boxing Association, and Leonard Hatton, chair and president of SportsAid.

New associate director for SLM

Local authority partnership leisure brand Everyone Active, which is operated by Sports and Leisure Management (SLM), has appointed Ben Beever as associate director.

Beever will be working closely with the board to plan the company's future development and formulate appropriate strategies to maintain the company's market position. He will also work with group managers and operational teams to ensure implementation in a consistent way across the organisation.

"As the company gets bigger, effective implementation and consistency become even more important," says Everyone Active managing director David Bibby.

"This new role will play a big part in the next phase of our growth. Ben knows the business extremely well and has built outstanding relationships throughout the company, so he was the perfect candidate for the new position."

Beever has previously been group health and safety quality manager at Everyone Active for six years, taking care of health and safety



Beever: Promoted within SLM, to associate director

– as well as training requirements – across the operator's 80+ sites. "We've seen a huge amount of progress and success in the last six years," says Beever. "I'm very proud to take on this new role and further support the exceptional team at Everyone Active."

Sean Holt steps down as CEO of CIMSPA

Sean Holt has stepped down from his role as chief executive of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA). Holt was appointed in 2009 as the CEO of the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM) and oversaw the historic merger with the Institute for Sport, Parks and Leisure (ISPAL) to form CIMSPA.

Holt says: "It has been a privilege to be the first CEO of the newly formed Chartered Institute. I would like to thank the team at CIMSPA, the board, stakeholders and members, plus the army of volunteers across the UK who have worked so hard in difficult times to establish the institute for the benefit of the sector's workforce."

Marc Newey, chair of CIMSPA, adds, "On behalf of the trustees and the membership, I would like to thank Sean for his commitment over the past four years. He has worked tirelessly to promote CIMSPA's vision. The board is now working on the next three-year business plan



Sean Holt has been CIMSPA CEO since its launch

to build on the foundation created by Sean and the team, which we are confident will ensure the long-term sustainability of the institute."

• The news comes as CIMSPA is set to undergo a business review. *For more information, see page 11*

Matthew Pengelly joins Performance Health Systems

Matthew Pengelly has been named senior vice-president for UK and EMEA at Performance Health Systems (PHS) – the company which recently acquired vibration training equipment supplier Power Plate. Pengelly is one of four new appointments at PHS.

Emma Scargill has been made regional commercial sales manager for the Midlands, while Paul Dunn will take up the same role for the Northern regions.

Meanwhile, Julian Taylor is the new regional manager for EMEA, joining from Star Trac.

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New report: Key consumer insights

• Melissa Rodriguez • Senior research manager • IHRSA

Conducted in partnership with the Leisure Trends Group, the quarterly *IHRSA Trend Report* analyses health club consumer behaviour among Americans aged 16 years and older. The latest edition focuses on attitudes and perceptions surrounding health clubs by gender and generational groups.

More than one quarter of women (27 per cent) cite access to group exercise classes as a reason for continuing to use their health club. While more than one in five men belong to a health club, fewer than 20 per cent of men select group exercise as an incentive for remaining health and fitness club members.

In comparison to men, women more frequently identify group exercise classes, the variety of equipment, and the need to get their workouts in as motivators for continued club attendance.

The report also provides data on why people join health clubs, along with barriers to becoming members. The top five reasons men and women give for joining clubs are:

- Men**
1. To stay healthy
 2. To stay in shape
 3. To feel better about myself
 4. To maintain strength
 5. To build muscle



The women surveyed were more sensitive than men regarding the price of health club membership

Women

1. To stay healthy
 2. To feel better about myself
 3. To look better
 4. To lose weight
 5. To maintain strength
- Cost is the number one barrier to joining for both genders. However, women are more likely than men to select this reason.

Distinctions between genders and across generations provide operators with potential programming alternatives. For example, those aged 66 and over are more likely than any other generation to cite "variety of equipment" and "convenience" as reasons for continued club use. To attract this group, operators can offer user-friendly equipment and ensure club locations are accessible.

Ask the experts: Marketing a club that's come under new ownership

How can an operator aggressively market a club that's under new ownership, to let consumers know changes are being made at a previously mismanaged facility?



What type of advertising is recommended?
Joe Cirulli, president and owner of the Gainesville Health & Fitness Center in Florida, US, offers his insight on this topic:

"The strongest marketing you can do is creating the right environment inside your centre. First, it means changes to the physical plant (cleaning every part of the centre and making sure all equipment is in perfect working condition). This means nothing is broken down. If something is out of order, remove it from the floor.

"A second priority is the re-training of staff. In order to do this, you have to make sure your vision, mission, core values, culture and core purpose are perfectly defined. If the current staff don't buy into it, you have to find people who do.

"As you do these things, regularly update your members with signage inside the centre and via email.

"When everything is going at full force, have a large, grand re-opening party for your members, their friends, and Chamber of Commerce members. That's the point at which I would do advertising on TV, in the local paper and via email. But word of mouth will become your most powerful advertising tool."

Read more answers to this question at www.ihrsa.org/industryleader



Keep updating members on any changes via email

Lindkvist to headline European Congress

Author Magnus Lindkvist will be the keynote speaker at the 13th Annual IHRSA European Congress, in a session entitled 'When the Future Begins: Trendspotting, Opportunities, Future-Thinking & the Attack of the Unexpected'.

Lindkvist is a trendspotter and futurologist who weaves together the most important and exciting current trends to forecast what life, society and business might look like in the future. With a uniquely energetic speaking style, his talks are a multimedia-infused boost of intellectual inspiration, about topics ranging from trendspotting and innovation to future-living and the business world of tomorrow.

He is a graduate of Stockholm School of Economics and UCLA School of Film, Television and Theatre, and has made a career out of fusing the measurability and tangibility of the business world with the imaginative storytelling of Hollywood.

With a background as a management consultant and brand strategist, he founded his company Pattern Recognition in 2005 to help companies make sense (and money) out of the future. He has also built a reputation as one of Europe's most sought-after speakers on trends, trendspotting and futurology.

In 2008, he created the world's first academically accredited course in



The 'futuresologist' has an energetic speaking style

Trendspotting and Future Thinking at the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship. Lindkvist is also a member of renowned conference TED (technology, entertainment and design).

The European Congress will be held at Meliá Castilla in Madrid, Spain, from 17–20 October 2013. Visit www.ihrsa.org/congress for details and to register.

2014 awards: Application process now open

Each year, IHRSA offers the Julie Main Woman Leader Scholarship and the Outstanding Community Service Award to recognise excellence and to discover and share industry best practices.

IHRSA is now accepting 2014 applications for both the scholarship and the award. Recipients will be publicly recognised at IHRSA's 33rd Annual International Convention and Trade Show in San Diego, US, next March.

Visit www.ihrsa.org/awards to learn more, to view 2013 recipients' video presentations, and to apply.

Staffing changes at major US companies

May was an eventful month for the US fitness industry, with several key personnel changes being announced.

Wellbridge, a chain of 19 premier clubs in seven states, announced that Michael Meehan would take over as COO. Meehan comes to the position with 30 years' experience in all areas of club management.

Club One, a recognised leader for award-winning fitness and wellness solutions, announced that president and COO Bill McBride will step down from his post effective 31 July. McBride's departure is part of a strategic shift for Club One to expand its fitness and wellness management offerings and portfolio.

Carl Liebert, president and CEO of 24 Hour Fitness, announced he was leaving the company as of 17 May to become president of USAA Capital Corp.

After 28 years at Precor, 13 of them as president, Paul Byrne announced his retirement in May. His accomplishments include helping build a US\$350m company from a US\$20m manufacturer of home rowing machines.

About IHRSA

Founded in 1981, the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association is the only global trade association, representing more than 10,000 health and fitness facilities and suppliers worldwide.

To learn how IHRSA can help your business thrive, visit www.ihrsa.org
Locate a quality IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

Events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

11 July 2013

Enhancing the Member Experience: Lessons Learned from the World's Most Successful Brands (Webinar)

5–7 September 2013

14th Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show – São Paulo, Brazil

17–20 October 2013

13th Annual IHRSA European Congress – Madrid, Spain

12–15 March 2014

IHRSA 2014: The Annual International Convention and Trade Show – San Diego, California, US

Benefits of short, intense workouts

One of the most popular excuses for people looking to avoid working out is "not enough time" – but that's now being challenged by the boom in high-intensity interval training.

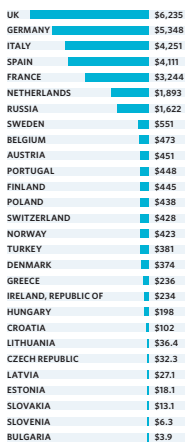
Norwegian researchers have found that short, intense workouts as little as three times a week brought about significant changes in adult men who were slightly overweight.

"We have a worldwide obesity epidemic and, even though people are told they should exercise for around 30 minutes at least five times a week, only about 15–30 per cent of people do this," says Arnt Erik Tjønnå, from the KG Jebsen Center for Exercise in Medicine at Department of Circulation and Medical Imaging in Trondheim, Norway. "Our study suggests that around 15 minutes of exercise, three times a week, may have significant benefits, as long as just a few minutes include intensive endurance training."

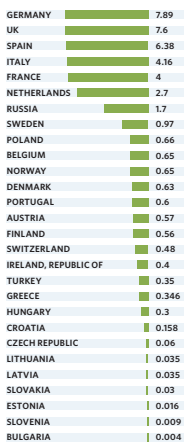
Europe & Asia Pacific statistics

Kristen A Walsh highlights key statistics from The 2013 IHRSA Global Report: The State of the Health Club Industry

1. Europe: Industry revenue (USD in millions)

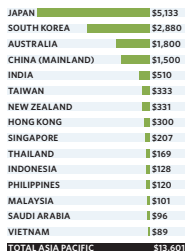


2. Europe: Number of members (in millions)

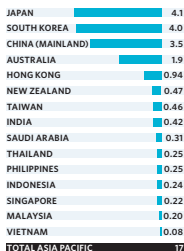


Sources: The 2010 European Health Club Report; The 2011 IHRSA International Report; The Leisure Database Company; DSSV; Estimates by industry experts

3. Asia Pacific: Industry revenue (USD in millions)



4. Asia Pacific: Number of members (in millions)



Sources: The 2011 IHRSA International Report; Fitness Australia; The Australian Fitness Industry Report (2012); Fitness New Zealand

Last month, this column provided an overview of *The 2013 IHRSA Global Report: The State of the Health Club Industry*, which was published in late May. This month, we'll look more closely at the European and Asia Pacific markets.

The health club industry shows potential in a struggling European market, and in a growing Asia Pacific region, according to the report.

Europe

In Europe, Germany posted notable growth in 2012. The number of clubs increased by 262 units, from 7,304 in 2011 to 7,566 in 2012. Memberships rose from 7.6 million to 7.9 million.

Chart 1 shows 2012 industry revenue (US\$ in millions) for Europe. Total industry revenue for all European countries combined was reported at just over US\$32bn. The UK, Germany and Italy led the continent in revenue terms.

Chart 2 shows the number of members (in millions) broken down by European country. European clubs served 41.96 million members last year, with Germany, the UK and Spain serving the highest number of individuals.

"The health club industry shows potential in a struggling European market, as well as in a growing Asia Pacific region"

Asia Pacific

In Asia Pacific, China attracted nearly 3.5 million members to more than 2,600 health and fitness clubs. Hong Kong alone has approximately 600 clubs.

In addition to the strong performance in China, Asia Pacific is also home to key leading club operators in other markets. Central Sports, Renaissance and Konami Sports & Life – all in Japan – often rank among the top 25 club companies worldwide in terms of revenue, club count and number of memberships.

Chart 3 shows 2012 industry revenue (US\$ in millions) for the Asia Pacific region. The markets of Japan, South Korea and Australia led the region in revenue terms, bringing in US\$5,133bn, US\$2,880bn, and US\$1,800bn respectively.

Chart 4 shows the number of members (in millions) broken down by country across the Asia Pacific region. Japan served a total of 4.1 million members, while South Korea served only slightly fewer at 4 million. Mainland China was home to 3.5 million health club members in 2012.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The 2013 IHRSA Global Report (112 pages) is available in print or as a PDF – please visit www.ihrsa.org/ihrsa-global-report. The report is priced at US\$139.95 (or US\$69.95 for IHRSA members). Please contact store@ihrsa.org with any questions.

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Activity advice



NICE guidelines and the ukactive Research Institute point towards new opportunities for the sector. David Stalker, CEO of ukactive, reports

What are the new guidelines?

On 29 May, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published updated guidance for GPs, health visitors, midwives, pharmacists and practice nurses to do more to identify adults in their care who are not active enough, and to encourage them to do more physical activity.

The term 'brief advice' is used in this guidance to mean verbal advice, discussion, negotiation or encouragement, with or without written or other support or follow-up. As brief advice is not mandatory, and by its nature a little more informal, it usually has a modest but consistent effect on physical activity levels.

What is the purpose of the ukactive Research Institute?

The ukactive Research Institute was set up to develop an evidence base for exercise. It aims to bridge a research gap between clinical trials and community settings like leisure centres.

In 2012, the Research Institute held a pilot study with Impulse Leisure in Thurrock, Essex, with the aim of measuring the effectiveness of three different types of intervention: unstructured exercise, structured exercise and physical activity counselling. A total of 105 participants began the trial; 97 completed it. While body mass decreased and cardiorespiratory fitness improved across all three interventions, only structured exercise intervention saw a sustained and linear progression throughout the 12-week process.

How does this tie into NICE's recommendations?

NICE advice supports exercise as prevention, while findings from the Research Institute support the type of expertise that can only be delivered from within the sector.

The pilot in Essex proved that all types of intervention could have an

impact on physical health within a relatively short time scale of 12 weeks. So an objective study delivered in a transferable community environment proved that structured, unstructured and physical activity counselling could have a positive impact on health.

This complements recent advice from NICE because it means any type of activity is beneficial, provided the individual does it regularly.

What does this mean in practice?

The role of exercise in managing chronic conditions is widely acknowledged, as is the fact that physical activity can help prevent a host of potential health complications such as diabetes and high blood pressure. But the key to NICE's advice for adults in primary care is its informality: it's not compulsory to supply written recommendations or follow-ups. Neither does the advice support exercise referral in the traditional sense. Health experts of all kinds are expected to identify someone who could benefit from meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines

(150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of higher intensity a week) and advise them accordingly.

This advice should be tailored towards each individual, taking into account not just their physical condition – ie if they have a chronic condition or disability – but also their personal motivations, goals, current level of activity, ability, circumstances and so on.

The health and fitness industry has a role to play here. The Research Institute is currently focused on sedentary people – people who may encounter primary health representatives still unaware that many day-to-day complaints can be aided by becoming more physically active. We therefore have the knowledge and expertise to help get this population group more active, and must communicate with the broader primary care profession – not only GPs but also pharmacists, midwives, etc – to educate them in giving advice, and ensure they are aware of our offering and able to signpost people in our direction.

So what do we do now?

Primary care practitioners can only advise accordingly if they're aware of what's going on in their local area. With responsibility for public health having been transferred to local authorities, this is a great opportunity to notify and engage individual practitioners of the type of services on offer. There's never been a better time to make physical activity a core business of the NHS.



The fitness industry has a key role to play in helping primary health representatives advise on exercise

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The International Conference on Kinesiology takes place in Athens, Greece

JULY

**2-3 | ukactive
FLAME Conference**Venue Telford International
Centre, Telford, UK

Summary

This is ukactive's biggest networking and educational event of the year. It kicks off with a golf and spa day on 2 July, with the conference and FLAME Awards on 3 July. The keynote speaker is Jim Steele, a leadership coach for many FTSE 100 companies including Disney and BT.

Web www.ukactive.com**29-1 August | 9th Annual
International Conference on
Kinesiology & Exercise Sciences**

Venue Athens, Greece

Summary

This conference is designed to bring together scholars and students from a wide range of applied and integrated health sciences.

Web www.atiner.gr/fitness

AUGUST

**7-11 | IDEA World
Fitness Convention**

Venue Los Angeles, US

Summary

Claimed to be the world's largest, longest-running international fitness convention with a diverse educational offering from world-renowned presenters.

Web www.ideafit.com/world

SEPTEMBER

3-5 | BASES Conference 2013

Venue UCLAN, Preston, UK

Summary

This is the annual conference of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences, the professional body for sport and exercise sciences in the UK. Keynote speakers will include Professor Peter Cavanagh from the University of Washington, and Dr Rod Corban of High Performance Sport New Zealand.

Web www.bases.org.uk**5-7 | Annual IHRSA / Fitness
Brasil Latin American
Conference & Trade Show**

Venue São Paulo, Brazil

Summary

Latin America's premier health and wellness event, featuring three days of seminars and networking opportunities. There is also a trade show with more than 100 exhibitors and over 10,000 visitors expected.

Web www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil**8-11 | SPATEC Fall,
North America**

Venue San Diego, US

Summary

An appointment-based event that brings operators of leading hotel, resort, destination, athletic, medical and day spas together with leading domestic and international suppliers.

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EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

Putting prices up

Plenty of other industries are bullish about putting their prices up, pointing to inflation and rising costs to justify their decision. But with the advent of budget clubs in the health and fitness industry making it harder than ever for other operators to get their share of the 12 per cent of the population who will pay for a health club membership, it has become a price war.

In this economic climate, and with consumers ever more price-sensitive, how can a health club operator raise prices? Is it possible to introduce an increase in membership fees without adding value in some way to justify this?

Will even the budget operators have to consider price rises in the future?

Are you charging the right price at your club? How do you know when is the right time to put prices up, and how much should they increase by?

One has to question quite how long they can sustain rock-bottom membership rates with rent and energy prices rising – but does a price increase go against the very ethos of a budget club?

Another consideration is whether a price increase will even improve the profitability of a club. There's a chance that a letter informing members of a price hike could prompt sleeping members to cancel their memberships, while price-conscious or unhappy

members might go elsewhere. If this is the case, will attrition – and the cost of replacing lost members – negate the benefit of the price increase?

If you're going to raise memberships, how do you go about it? Is a letter enough, or does there need to be face-to-face discussion with members?

Should price rises be universally implemented, or should loyal members get preferential treatment? And what research needs to take place prior to a price increase? Are high satisfaction levels a vital prerequisite, and should clubs first survey members for their thoughts on the service and facilities?

What about the competition? How much do your fees depend on what others are charging locally? We ask the experts.

TELL US YOUR EXPERIENCE OF PUTTING UP MEMBERSHIP FEES – EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

GILES SHAPLEY

Network Research • Customer development director

"Prior to a price increase, it's critical to understand the local competition and what other clubs are charging for a comparable membership, so that a price increase does not render your club uncompetitive.

However, it's also very important that the club is fulfilling the expectations of its members at the current price. If not, it becomes very hard to justify a price increase. The only real way of knowing if members are satisfied is continuously asking for feedback. You need to know what your customers are thinking and saying about the business before progressing.

Members should ideally be informed before any price rise, perhaps notifying them in writing some time in advance. This should outline the increase and emphasise the benefits members are getting from the club, specifically those that differentiate it from other gyms in the area. Managers must also be equipped to deal with any isolated complaints.

Chains have the choice to implement price rises nationally, locally or to a specific group of members, such as new members. It's vital to monitor the impact of raising prices and the resulting membership churn, which could be ascertained through single club trials before rolling out to the rest of the estate."



JOHN TREHARNE

The Gym Group • Founder and CEO

"When setting membership fees for our sites, we use data from demographic and postcode analysis pricing software and map this against local markets to ensure our pricing remains competitive. As a result, our membership fees vary geographically and even from site to site.

There's less scope for a price rise in the budget sector. It's interesting to note that Germany's largest low-cost operator, McFit, has only increased prices by €1 in its 16-year history.

If the demographic in an area were to change, or the business were to be hit by significant and uncontrollable cost increases, we might be forced to consider a marginal price increase for new members. However, we believe in rewarding loyalty, so increasing the membership fees of existing members will always be a last resort for us.

Through experience gained when operating the chain of 22 Dragons Health Clubs in the 1990s, I'm conscious of the fact that the short-term financial gain achieved by a mandatory fee increase across the board is often offset by an increase in member attrition. The decrease in membership income and the increase in marketing costs associated with attracting new members often cancels out the benefits of the price increase."





Are high satisfaction levels among members a vital prerequisite to any price rise?

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/WILLIAM PERUGINI

TIM BAKER

Touchstone Partners • Director



“Clubs shouldn’t be frightened about price increases: it’s a perfectly reasonable thing to do and everybody’s aware that price increases are a fact of life. However, it’s important to understand the membership and the local competition first.

Clubs must be aware of why their members come to them and what they’re saying about them. However, if you don’t already know your members, don’t do a survey right before a price increase; it will make them wary of any future surveys. There’s more scope for a price increase with loyal members, although it’s important not to exploit them. Clubs must also do a competition audit to see how they compare.

A one-off 5 per cent rise works better than nominal annual increases. Members should be sent a letter explaining the reasons for the rise. Options for member retention could also be offered, such as freezing their membership at the current rate if they pay for a year upfront.

It’s important to monitor the impact. Members should be classified into active, sleepers, reasonably active and so on. If too many leave from one group, they could be tempted back with some special offers. One downside of a price increase is that sleeping members are more likely to leave.”

BAARD WINDINGSTAD

Evo Fitness • CEO



“Only monopolies and the public sector can easily implement a price increase. In a competitive market like health and fitness, it’s important to balance the costs and margins of your business against what the competition is offering. Prior to an increase, clubs should know about each of these points.

Another issue for the health and fitness industry is that historically the business is known for its binding contracts, so clubs don’t actually know much about the loyalty of their members. Evo Fitness is built on a non-binding contract, so people can leave when they like. This means we have to keep standards high, and we also have to know our members.

At Evo Fitness, we have written into the contract that we can increase the price on an annual basis by up to 3 per cent, without any notice. This means that we can easily implement a price increase, because our members have agreed to the terms and conditions. Despite this, we have not increased the cost of memberships since 2010 because of the local competition. Our costs have gone up in this time, so our margins are being squeezed. As a result, we’re planning to introduce a less than 3 per cent rise next January. It’s a small increase because the market is tough, but we’re not expecting members to leave.”



The founder and CEO of GoodLife Fitness talks to Kate Cracknell about putting an ethos of caring at the heart of the business



DAVID PATCHELL-EVANS

“For a fitness industry veteran like David “Patch” Patchell-Evans – founder and CEO of Canada’s largest health club chain, former chair of IHRSA and long-time industry stalwart – being in a situation where he’s doing something in his business for the first time must come as something of a novelty. Yet that’s what was happening when I interviewed in May: his company, GoodLife Fitness, was that very day announcing plans to open its first ever in-airport club, at Toronto Pearson International Airport. Due to open in September, the 1,115sq m club will not offer group

exercise, but there will be a fully-equipped gym, luggage storage, lounge area with massage chairs, changing rooms with private showers and lockers, and a towel service. Workout apparel will also be available to purchase.

“There are 40,000 people working in the airport, so there’s plenty of demand for this new club,” says Patchell-Evans. “In addition, members of any of our 300+ clubs across the country will be able to use the facilities. Our vision is to give every Canadian the opportunity to live a fit and healthy good life. Providing a club at Toronto Pearson is another great way we can work toward this vision.”

Talking to Patchell-Evans, it’s clear that this vision is a genuine one: that at the heart of his business lies a desire not just to make money, but to make a difference to people’s lives. “The company runs on core values, and the strongest core value is caring,” he explains. “That’s quite unusual in a world where things are run on numbers.

“Of course, you absolutely need to know your numbers – you have to be accountable – but at the same time you have to understand why the numbers work, what the numbers mean. I think there’s a real failure in a lot of organisations in that respect: they know numbers mean profit and loss, but they don’t talk about what the numbers mean in terms of lives changed, relationships built, happy staff, etc. They don’t get into what the numbers really represent.

“There’s been a delusion of purpose in the industry, and I think our strength lies in the fact that my focus is on understanding and caring about what lies behind the numbers. Passion is the real driver in this industry.”

A personal journey

For Patchell-Evans, the passion for fitness stemmed from an event in his own life: just two weeks into his first year at university, he was involved in a serious motorcycle accident that led to

GoodLife Fitness, Canada’s largest health club chain, currently has over 300 clubs across the country





Patchell-Evans says that the GoodLife vision is to enable all Canadians to experience a fit and healthy life

"I UNDERSTOOD HOW HARD IT IS FOR THE AVERAGE PERSON. I CHANGED THE CLUBS AND ATTITUDES, SO CARING BECAME THE FOREMOST THING"

eight months of rehabilitation. Watching elite athletes going through rehab around him, he was inspired to follow suit and push his own body to train harder, becoming inspired by the healing properties of exercise and subsequently switching the focus of his studies from business studies to physical education.

He also took up rowing to strengthen his shoulder after the accident and quickly took to the sport, going on to join Canada's national rowing team. As part of this, he trained at the first fitness club in London, Ontario – while at the same time studying for his Masters in Exercise Physiology – and an interest in the health club industry was born.

"I looked at how that club was being run and it was obvious they were just going through the motions: they didn't really understand their members. The fact that I was an academic in the field of exercise, as well as an athlete, meant people used to ask me a lot of questions, and one day the club owners approached me and asked if I wanted to buy the club.

"I had a successful snow ploughing business while I was studying. It allowed me to put myself through university, but it also meant I had some money to invest, so I bought the club in 1979. It was a small facility – 200sq m – and it went on to become the first ever GoodLife Fitness Club.

"At first I was driven to train everyone as if they were athletes, but after a while I realised that didn't suit everyone. I started to adjust the training, treating members as normal people. But it wasn't until I developed arthritis seven years later – for a long time I couldn't function, couldn't even open the door – that I felt an empathy for the majority of the population who aren't athletes, and who just want to look and feel good.

"I finally understood how hard it is for the average person. As a result, I changed the clubs and the attitudes: caring became the foremost thing."

Caring comes first

That culture of caring now lies at the heart of the GoodLife philosophy.

"Culture in my company is everything," says Patchell-Evans. "That's why it's hard for other companies to compete against us: I know how to create culture and how to keep it, which is something most people can't do. Most people focus on creating a business – something they'll ultimately sell; I focus on creating a culture for staff and for members.

"My arthritis led me to develop a slogan for myself: focus on what you can do, not what you can't do. Then, about 14 years ago, I discovered my daughter was autistic, and I found the same approach was needed there: to help an autistic child to develop, you have to focus on the positive and look for what's working.

"The culture of my company is the same: we always look at what's working. You'll find the culture in most companies is about how to fix problems. We focus on how to grow our strengths."

High quality staffing is one of those strengths. Patchell-Evans continues: "I actually view my staff as my members, and the company is built around giving them the best opportunities, with a



GoodLife Fitness has been on the list of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies for the past decade

► consistent opportunity for personal growth. We believe in letting great people develop, and as a result GoodLife has been on the list of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies for 10 years, and has been named as one of the country's 10 Most Admired Corporate Cultures."

Caring is also embodied in the high levels of charity and community initiatives in which the company gets involved. Running alongside that is GoodLife Kids Foundation, a private foundation set up by Patchell-Evans in 1998 with a view to addressing the issues of overweight and inactivity among Canada's children. The vision is for every Canadian child to have the opportunity to live a fit and healthy good life, inspiring parents, role models and mentors to deliver the message to kids that being active is not only good for their body and mind, but also a lot of fun.

So far, so good. But in an industry where customer service is often found lacking, how does caring manifest itself to members? How do they ensure every member feels personally looked after? "Ours are clubs where people care about you. That's our USP. I know we don't do it perfectly – no-one in the industry does – but it starts with me. If I don't lead the way properly, if I'm not excited and enthusiastic and energetic, why would my staff be? I've even got

"I view my staff as members and the company is built around giving them the best opportunities"

back into teaching classes – I teach at least one BODYFLOW class a week and am just starting to take yoga training.

"Delivering better fitness results is also key. Fitness means different things to different people, and when I started out in this industry I realised we had to focus more on identifying the needs of each individual. That's still my driver – I still think we can deliver even better fitness results for our members – but we're going in the right direction."

Growth plans

Given that better results for members tends to mean better retention levels, it's not hard to see how the GoodLife culture – and its founder's focus on the story behind the figures – still translates into a very healthy bottom line.

Already with over 300 clubs – "probably more like 320 by the time you publish this" – the GoodLife estate has grown particularly rapidly in recent months via a number of acquisitions: 13 Extreme Fitness Sites in the Toronto area, 11 former Gold's Gyms in Alberta and Ontario, and

Women Only – a ladies-only operation in Vancouver – to sit within GoodLife's existing portfolio of For Women Clubs.

"But we're actually building more clubs than we acquire," says Patchell-Evans. "We built about 15 new clubs last year and we'll build about 20 this year."

"I always look 100 clubs ahead: it used to be an objective to open 100 clubs in 10 years, then it became 100 clubs in five years. Now we're at the stage where we'll probably open about 100 clubs in the next two and a half, maybe three years. We're not bound by the timeframe though, and I don't have a board of directors I have to respond to: if market conditions allow it, great; if we can go faster, we do; and if it doesn't make sense, we go slower."

"There are about 6,000 clubs of different kinds in Canada, so we still account for a small percentage of the total. One in every 39 Canadians is currently a GoodLife member, but I think we could get a lot bigger."

Would he also consider branching out into new markets, either geographically ►

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Increasing penetration: GoodLife has plans to open around 100 clubs across Canada in the next two to three years

► or in terms of user groups? "If I look forward a year, five years, 10 years, I see the business going in the same direction as it is now, only bigger and stronger."

"Although you never say never, my focus has always been Canada – I don't have any plans to expand internationally. In terms of new user groups, I did once consider opening clubs for older people, but in the end I'd rather be the best at one thing than trying to do everything."

That 'one thing' is nevertheless a broad offering: an estate of over 300 clubs, of which around 75 are For Women Clubs, with For Women areas in another 75 facilities; clubs located within Loblaws retail outlets as part of a partnership agreement; and a strong corporate offering, from workshops to web-based wellness to walking programmes. "We have more corporate members than anyone else in the country because we pay attention to what they say. They just want to keep it simple and be looked after."

There are also in-house health centres, but even here, Patchell-Evans' focus on keeping things simple is evident. "I just regard it as part of the package: you should do cardio, you should do flexibility, you should do strength, and you should do stress release and mobility. Having a massage is just part of looking after yourself. We're not operating a spa though – we offer pretty

"One in 39 Canadians is currently a GoodLife member, but I think we could get a lot bigger"

straightforward stress-release, make-you-feel-good, functional massage."

He continues: "We're differentiated by culture rather than price or even facilities: ultimately somebody else is going to have a better box at a better price point."

"Membership at our clubs costs C\$30–60 a month, depending on the size of the club and the area, so we're kind of middle of the road. Marketers will tell you it's not good to be in the middle, but we're doing well there, even though there have always been plenty of budget offerings in Canada to cater for those looking for a cheaper deal."

"For me, the opportunity is to offer what a very high-end club has, but at a reasonable price. That's my strategy. Most people don't think it's a good strategy, but then most people wouldn't agree with IKEA's model either."

Technological innovation

Where GoodLife is notably experimenting is in the area of technology. Steve Groves, the company's head of IT, has long been an

advocate of social media, cottoning on to its potential many years before it hit the mainstream, and GoodLife is also currently trialling virtual classes through the Wexer Virtual system.

"The key is to look at technology as an asset, not a threat. You have to look at how things like Wexer reinforce the club experience. People still want classes run by live instructors, but we can now give members access to classes at any time of day. We employ every bit of technology we can – we're always looking for an edge, provided it's an edge that enhances the member experience. The whole purpose of technology is to allow for more, not less, human interaction."

Patchell-Evans is equally unfazed by what others see as the threat of fitness apps. "People have always been able to exercise outside on their own, for free. It's no big deal. We can't keep up with the speed of apps, but in any case we should just enjoy it. Ultimately, the more reasons people come up with to motivate themselves to exercise, the better it is for us." ●

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Back to NATURE

Barefoot running is meant to be the natural way, so could it keep our bodies in better alignment and thereby prevent injury? Or does it create a whole other set of issues? Kath Hudson reports

The jury is out on barefoot running. Those who have converted report a feeling of freedom, euphoria and improved performance. But while barefoot running has its supporters, there are many others who take issue with it. Meanwhile lots of experts are sitting on the fence, mainly because there isn't enough data available at the moment to form a definitive view.

Although some people actually run barefoot, most barefoot runners use minimal shoes, which are flat and provide only a small amount of cushioning and protection. Barefoot currently only accounts for a reported 10–15 per cent of the running shoe market, but it's getting trendy.

Avoiding injury

Advocates say that barefoot running encourages the correct technique in

runners, minimising actions such as heel striking, which causes a shock to run up through the body and which can lead to injury. When running barefoot, people shorten their stride length and avoid hitting the ground with the heel first, as it hurts. However, many trainers are built up around the heel, which can exacerbate the heel strike action.

"An estimated 79 per cent of people give up running because of an injury, which is due to 75 per cent of shod runners heel striking," says Lee Saxby of barefoot running specialist VIVOBAREFOOT. "Heel striking generates a significant shockwave up through the body via the skeletal system and will eventually lead to injury. Barefoot running is more focused on the technique than the equipment."

Physiotherapist and running technique coach Louise Nicholetts agrees: "For regular runners, getting an injury at

some point is inevitable. Lots of people become interested in barefoot running because they have running injuries."

So does this mean that switching to barefoot running will reduce the number of injuries? Barefoot running coach Rollo Mahon, from the Barefoot Performance Academy, believes so. He has managed to avoid knee surgery by realigning himself using barefoot running. "The knowledge of barefoot has given me the tools to prevent and deal with injury," he says. "I used to chase injuries around the body – I'd have an injury somewhere, fix it, but then the problem would move somewhere else – but by understanding the biomechanics of barefoot running, I can avoid them. I teach people to run more efficiently."

He continues: "The blueprint of our architectural design is barefoot. The further we get away from that, the more likelihood there is of injury. If we



have good movement skills from the beginning, we can avoid injury."

However, there are some major caveats to this argument. Unless runners are taught to run barefoot, they are likely to end up with a different set of injuries, partly because it's a different technique and partly because we are so used to wearing shoes. According to osteopath Nick Potter, in the West we are anthropologically ill-equipped for barefoot running. He treats a lot of running injuries; the ones he most commonly sees for barefoot are issues with the achilles tendon, caused by taking the load in the mid-foot.

Improving technique

Converting to barefoot running requires a gradual build-up, as well as coaching in the proper technique. "It takes time for the muscles and neurological system to adapt to barefoot running," says

Nicholettos. "The new movement needs strength and the nervous system needs to become efficient at controlling the movement. There are certain adaptations that need to be made: in barefoot running the foot is flat, it lands closer to the centre of mass and the posture remains upright. The calf muscles are also used differently."

According to Saxby, in order to convert, you should live barefoot 80 per cent of the time.

He recommends learning to walk again: heel, ball, toe, then engaging the big toe, muscles, tendons, nerves and bones that haven't been used correctly for years. "There are three barefoot milestones that must be learned and perfected before progressing to the next stage: walking and squats, jumping, then running," he says. "Gain your strength slowly and refine the motor skills, perfecting walking as well as

Most barefoot runners use minimal shoes, which are flat and provide only a small amount of cushioning

jumping and squatting. Film yourself running and build up very slowly."

However, others argue that no-one should convert to barefoot, but that people should just have technique coaching to improve their running style in trainers. "I don't believe in barefoot running, full stop," says Richard Coates, running coach at Full Potential. "The reason certain individuals can do it is because they've done it from a young age. Maybe if you're 10 stone and biomechanically perfect you can get away with it, but if you're 14 stone with weak knees, it's not a good idea.

"I'd rather teach people to improve their running technique and make them more effective while wearing trainers. ►

Practitioners say barefoot can feel fun and euphoric



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/COMPTONSHOCK

- ▶ If I took my clients the barefoot route, we'd be setting them up for injuries, as they wouldn't have the cushioning of trainers. You're putting more strain on joints and risking stress fractures."

Research findings

Experts therefore don't yet agree on whether barefoot is the way forward, not helped by the fact that the data available is conflicting and typically involves small samples.

According to The University of Kansas Hospital in the US, cushioned heels promote a heel strike, which distributes more energy to knees and hips than flat-soled shoes and so is more likely to cause injury. But researchers at Brigham Young University in the US found that making the transition too quickly can increase injury risk to the bones of the foot, with a higher chance of stress fractures.

Sports scientists at National Taiwan Normal University claim the way you run is more important than whether or not you wear running shoes. Their study, based on just 12 people, found that runners can gain more shock absorption by changing their striking pattern to a forefoot strike, whether in shoes or barefoot. However, the study also found that runners who are used to wearing shoes may be more susceptible to injury when they run barefoot and continue to heel strike.

What should operators do?

So is there a way for gyms to tap into this trend and offer a service to members, keeping them running without injury and improving their performance? Deborah McConnell, global master trainer for Life Fitness Academy, recommends that any clubs wanting to run this type of programme use a trainer who is qualified

in biomechanics of running and able to provide gait analysis: "It would also be best to have a waiver form that states any potential risks, to educate the member and to protect the trainer and the facility."

For facilities interested in taking this further, advice is available. VIVOBAREFOOT offers a certification through Premier Training, while Mahon is preparing to run workshops – designed with instructors and PTs in mind – on movement skills in gyms.

Whether or not you are an advocate of barefoot, technique training is a sensible option to offer members: it can potentially improve the performance of seasoned runners, and might just turn would-be runners on to the sport. As Saxby says: "Most people are never taught how to run correctly. However, running is a skill that must be learned in order to run efficiently and injury-free."

"Efficient, injury-free movement is built on a foundation of correct posture and rhythm and adequate sensory feedback of environment. Whether you're running barefoot or minimalist, remember: posture, rhythm, relax."

But few are sufficiently confident to give barefoot a resounding endorsement. Nicholletos and Potter both treat running injuries and are cautious advocates: "I'm somewhere between a fanatic and a sceptic," says Nicholletos. "For technique coaching purposes, barefoot can be a useful tool, but I coach a lot of runners in traditional footwear too. Technique and good training habits are the most important thing for me, not what people do or don't wear on their feet."

Potter believes barefoot has an important influence on how we should run, but concedes converting is a challenge and adequate data isn't currently available. "My advice is choose a mid-range, minimally corrective shoe with some shock attenuation. If you want to take it seriously, get a running coach." ●

GOING BAREFOOT – FIRST PERSON REPORT

Kath Hudson reports on her experience of barefoot running:

"You have a pronounced heel strike, which creates a lot of movement for the body to control. Your foot has a long roll on the ground, which wastes energy. And it lands way in front of your centre of mass, which means there are lots of braking forces going on. You don't extend from the hip but only use your quads, and none of the big muscles at the back. You don't use the trail leg to get any speed and have no forward momentum. You have a slow, heavy cadence."

This was how Louise Nicholletos summed up my running. In short, I'm slow and heavy-footed. But at least I had no comfort zone to retreat to!

First, Louise got me to take off my clumpy trainers. Immediately I felt

lighter and strangely liberated. This shortened my stride, which helped address a lot of my faults. She made me jump up and down on the spot in rhythm with the ideal cadence – roughly twice as fast as I was previously "running". Back on the treadmill, I had to focus on staying relaxed, running in time with the beat, staying vertical and letting my heels "kiss the ground" to give my calves a momentary break, and rise them higher with a slight kick action.

Before we started, she told me that barefoot running feels fun and euphoric. I didn't believe her, but my experience did in fact give me a glimpse of this. After half an hour, she said I picked up the techniques quickly and she could make a runner out of me. This is very heartening: running is a skill that can be learned.

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

Ignore absent members at your peril, and use your ex-member database as a prospect list and a resource for feedback, says Guy Griffiths, in the third and final part of his series on retention and the member journey

Absent and ex-members are two under-used segments in many clubs' databases. Not only can they provide critical business information on how you could adapt or improve retention, but these member groups can also be a great source of sales.

Fear is the main reason why these members are not contacted: club operators worry about awakening dormant members, and are concerned that they will receive negative feedback from people who have left. But sticking your head in the sand is a much riskier strategy; if all your dormant members cancelled tomorrow, your business would be in serious trouble, and if you don't know why members are leaving, how can you expect to make people stick around?

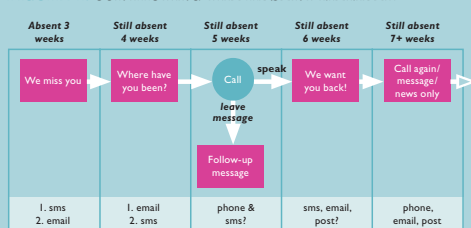
In the same way that the member journey should not end after the first few weeks, you need to plan what happens when a member stops visiting, and after they leave.

Pay versus stay

Let's start with measurement. Knowing your average membership length is a good place to start, but 'length of pay' is different from 'length of stay'. Consider a member who stops paying in month 12; it's no good contacting them in month 11 if they last visited in month seven. At GGFit, we often work with length of stay – ie first to last visit – as it's a truer identifier of member engagement and allows you to affect retention more directly.

Another useful metric to understand is the average time from the last visit

FIGURE 1: CONTACTING THE ABSENT MEMBER



date to cancellation date – this gives you an idea of how long you have to try to re-engage a dormant member.

Who's going to call?

When deciding how to contact absent members, you need to know what's most effective, but also take into account what's practical or possible with the resources you have at your club.

Phone conversations are most effective at getting members back, but you will often have to make a lot of phone calls to have a few conversations, and timing is key to success. Some clubs use customer service staff or even a call centre to make these calls, but



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Phone conversations are the most effective way to get members to return

“IF SOME OF YOUR INSTRUCTORS WOULD PREFER TO DO THE CLEANING THAN CALL ABSENT MEMBERS, PERHAPS IT’S TIME TO ADJUST THEIR FOCUS”

Instructors are best placed, since they have already had face-to-face member contact in the gym. Whether or not they are motivated to call absent members can depend on their own goals, rewards – or, to put it bluntly, job spec. If some of your instructors would prefer to do the cleaning than call absent members, perhaps it’s time to adjust their focus or change their job spec. Properly motivated instructors should be keen to get their members back into the club.

However, if you know that other staff will get the job done, they may prove to be the best route.

Send a message first

A great way to reduce the number of calls required is to text or email members before you call them. This will bring a few members back already, as well as making the calls easier – you can ask them if they received the message as an ice-breaker (see Figure 1 for an

example of an absent member communication process).

Some clubs use text/email only for their absent member communication. This is better than nothing, but you can get a much better return rate if you check the reports from your retention communications to determine which members should be prioritised for follow-up calls.

Mixing up your communication channels also keeps the message fresh ▶

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HOW TO GENERATE £3,000 BY SENDING AN EMAIL

A budget gym chain sent an email survey newsletter to 6,000 ex-members who had left in the previous 12 months. Each person who completed the survey received a special offer to re-join (six months for the price of three).

The survey included four simple questions, with the results analysed – the survey showed, for example, that 63 per cent of ex-members were not currently a member of another club. However, polling ex-members for their views was not the main reason: the main purpose was to simply stay in touch or get them to re-join.

There were around 100 negative replies, which were put to one side and then followed up (or unsubscribed) later.

Around 200 members completed the survey, and 32 went on to use the offer code generated. This created at least £1,440 in revenue. However, returning members at this chain typically stay for around 10 months; with three months free, the projected revenue from this initiative is in fact calculated at £3,360.

Other ex-members may also have joined as a result of the survey, but this was not tracked.

► and means you can reach out to more of your members: you may not have all details for all members, and some may have opted out of certain forms of communication, so a postcard or letter can also be a good option to get in touch with absent members.

Meanwhile guest passes (with a value printed on them) can bring members back with their friends in tow, increasing your prospect list; friends who work out together are also more likely to stay.

If you must offer a PT session as an incentive, don't say it's free (anything that is free has little value). Instead, tell the member that the club will pay for a £50 PT session for them if they return.

Just by showing that you care about a member's visits and fitness, you can extend their membership by another month. For the price of an email, text or postage stamp, it's a no-brainer.

To get started today, take the 100 or so members who have recently become dormant, say from the last month or two. Don't begin by contacting members who haven't visited the club for over a year, as they truly are sleeping dogs. Build a list of members who visited four to eight weeks ago, but who have not visited in the last four weeks. Put a stake in the ground, resolve to get newly absent members back into the club, then repeat weekly.

Ex-members

It's notoriously difficult to leave many clubs, but making it hard to cancel a membership does nothing to improve member retention. You might get another month's membership from people, but they leave feeling totally

disillusioned. Finding out the reason a member wants to leave and offering an alternative or a membership freeze can help, but by the time they want to stop paying, it's usually too late. This is why you must contact them earlier, when you notice their visit rate dwindling.

If you want to report on reasons for leaving, it's a good idea to give members a choice of options to explain why they leave – for example, health/ service/ money/ location/ results. You don't need to make it easy to leave, but the process should be simple and straightforward, just like your joining process.

Leaver's survey

Once they've gone, ex-members are largely overlooked. However, if you have good ex-member data, it's worth regularly contacting them for research and re-sale. Even if you recorded why they left when they cancelled, consider sending a leaver's survey a month later. This can tell you the real reason they left (rather than the excuse they gave), as well as giving you a chance to see what they're up to now, or where they've gone. All this information can be used to trigger future contacts, as well as collecting feedback to improve the club.

Continue to contact ex-members regularly: a quarterly newsletter and/ or survey to ex-members should be a regular communication from your database. The prime focus here is to stay in touch; if an ex-member completes the survey, they should get a voucher to re-visit or re-join. The actual answers to the survey are less important. That said, it's good to use positive questions rather



Staying in regular contact with ex-members could see them return in future

than reminding them why they left. Ask about current exercise goals and habits, perhaps use the Net Promoter question (how likely they are to recommend your club), and include an open question for comments and feedback.

You will get some interesting comments, possibly even some spiteful ones (these are ex-members after all), and occasionally some 'unsubscribe' requests. Focus on the positives: if there's anything you can change, then do so; respond to positive comments; and track the vouchers or offers redeemed.

Face your fears

The complete member journey should run from beginning to end, and if possible beyond. To run a successful club, you need to face your fears and contact absent and ex-members.

When members stop attending your club, do something about it; some may go on to actually leave because of your actions, but you'll get many more re-engaged and coming back.

And when some of your members do leave, don't ignore them: learn from them, turn them back into prospects if you can, and try to get them back when the time is right. ●

Guy Griffiths works for GG Fit, an independent consultancy that helps clubs improve member retention by working with staff, systems and processes. His new book, *Stick Around*, is available from all good bookshops and online retailers.
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ENTERING THE TELO-AGE

Studies into telomeres – DNA structures linked to the ageing of cells – date back eight decades. But since telomeres were the focus of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, they've become the centre of attention in scientific communities and are already being used as health biomarkers in spa lifestyle programmes.

Telomeres are caps at the ends of our chromosomes which prevent them from fraying as our cells replicate. As a cell ages, its telomeres become shorter; when they fall below a certain length, the cell can no longer divide and it dies. This cell loss causes ageing in the body.

However, the ageing of our cells doesn't always match our chronological ageing because, in addition to normal ageing, telomeres can be worn down through an unhealthy and stressful lifestyle. Conversely, it's also been found that telomerase – an enzyme stimulated by healthy lifestyle changes including enhancing wellbeing – can protect telomeres from shortening and

In the last three years, telomeres – an indication of cellular ageing – have galvanised medical interest. Jay Williams explains the science behind telomere health and how it can be used in spas and health clubs

may even lengthen them, effectively reversing the ageing process.

A telomere test can analyse the length of your telomeres to accurately measure your biological age and provide an evaluation of health – ie the longer your telomeres are, the healthier both you and your cells are. It can even show disease risk: cells with shortened telomeres may function poorly and have been linked to age-associated diseases such as osteoporosis and dementia.

Until now, the ability to measure telomere length has only been available through blood tests, but US company

Telome Health has now developed the saliva-based TeloTest™. Telome Health has been founded by leading telomere experts (more on that shortly) and the test is exciting news for the health, fitness and wellbeing industry because saliva samples can be easily collected in a test tube at the club or at home. This single test might soon become the gold standard for gauging overall wellbeing, and an opportunity for operators to provide a wellness diagnostic tool.

The power of knowing

Sha Wellness Clinic in Spain is one of the most recent examples of a spa taking advantage of advances in the study of telomeres. In January, it launched a seven-day Anti-Ageing Programme – costing €7,000 (US\$9,350, £5,850) – that includes telomere analysis, via blood samples, to diagnose a person's biological age. This information is then used in lifestyle and nutrition consultations specifically designed to improve the guest's state of overall health.



Left page: Spain's Sha Wellness Clinic offers telomere analysis
This page: Reducing stress can slow the ageing process

Indeed, telomere length is one of the best biomarkers of overall health status, indicating the impact of diet, fitness, toxins and chronic stress.

Telome Health, for example, will offer a TeloAge report in which your personal telomere length is presented compared to a healthy control population in your age and gender group, to gauge how you measure up to the healthy average. Repeating the tests over time gives you the best view into how your cells are ageing, and whether your current lifestyle is working for or against you.

At ReNove Med Spa in Delaware, US, Dr Michelle Parsons uses telomere testing to optimise recommendations to clients. She says: "When a test reveals an older physiological age [than their chronological age], clients are relieved to discover there are ways of slowing telomere shortening through lifestyle changes. In this respect it's not merely a static test, but a useful tool to measure positive change in their health."

But how do we know all this? And what lifestyle aspects in particular – bad

or good – have been proven to have an impact on telomeres?

Landmark research

In 1978, Dr Elizabeth Blackburn, an American biological researcher, first described telomeres' molecular DNA structure. Then, in 1985, she discovered the telomerase enzyme. Blackburn and two colleagues received the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for "the discovery of how chromosomes are protected by telomeres and the enzyme telomerase".

In 1990, renowned biochemist Calvin Harley showed that telomeres shorten progressively in human cells. He was instrumental in demonstrating that this is a cause of cellular ageing, and that telomerase can prevent this action.

In 2004, Elissa Epel – a leader in health psychology and behavioural medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, US – pioneered research that linked stress to immune cell ageing. Epel showed that the perception of stress, as well as actual stressful events

or thoughts, is related to telomere shortness and reduced telomerase activity. In plain words, she proved that stress ages you at a cellular level. And in a 2008 study, published in scientific journal *The Lancet Oncology*, Epel, Blackburn and physician Dr Dean Ornish showed that "lifestyle changes can significantly increase telomerase activity", with positive changes taking place in just 90 days.

In November 2010, a group of Harvard University researchers published results from a study in *Nature*. The experiment involved mice that were genetically engineered to lack telomerase, so they aged prematurely and died. In a second group of mice, they turned on the telomerase gene with shocking results. For the first time ever, an aged state of an animal was reversed and the mice effectively became young again.

In the same year, Blackburn, Harley, Epel and molecular biologist Jue Lin co-founded Telome Health in an attempt to widen the reach of telomere testing. ►

"When a test reveals an older physiological age, clients are relieved there are ways of slowing telomere shortening through lifestyle changes"

► Fast-forward to today's breaking news. In a large clinical study, the average telomere length was measured in 100,000 patients from Kaiser Permanente, one of America's biggest care organisations. Using the saliva-based TeloTest, it was found that individuals who had short telomeres had an increased risk of death in a three-year follow-up period. Smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, lower education and poor environment were found to be associated with short telomeres, while moderate exercise was associated with longer telomeres.

The size of the Kaiser study goes a long way towards validating previous findings. There are more than 10,000 peer-reviewed scientific publications already in existence which show that factors such as exercise, more and better sleep, healthy food choices and meditation are linked to preventing telomere shortening. So what does all this mean for the wellness industry?

Turn back the clock?

Scientific research has revealed that stress is high on the list of factors that can prematurely shorten telomere length. The relaxing nature of spas and the stress-busting benefits of a gym workout make these important elements to improve one's ageing status – and even reverse the negative effects of premature ageing. Telomere testing – telomere molecular measurement – could be used by operators to demonstrate the impact of their restorative, stress-reducing offering.

Although there are no large, controlled clinical trials published yet, given the multitude of existing studies, it's possible that the following may be helpful for maintaining or even lengthening telomeres:

- Increasing exercise: Incorporating four to five training sessions each week
- Improving nutrition: Implementing a low-fat diet, with less red and processed meat, and talking to a nutritionist about dietary supplements
- Improving metabolism: Starting a weight-loss programme
- Enhancing wellbeing: Reducing psychological stress and depression and

increasing feelings of personal control and purpose in life

- Decreasing stress: Adding yoga and meditation to lifestyle programmes

Opportunities for operators

In June 2012, Epel outlined the potential of telomere health to a host of spa leaders at the annual Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS). She said that "telomere science is just the tip of the iceberg" and that, as the connection between healthy behaviour and the measurable forestalling of disease and cellular ageing grows stronger, "the implications for the spa and wellness industry is profound".

There are two clear opportunities for health club operators to use telomere diagnostics. Firstly, the technique could be used to help prove the effectiveness of corporate wellness programmes – as well as standard gym memberships in higher-end clubs – as stress-reduction in staff is one of the key goals for corporate employers worldwide. Health clubs and spas have a huge opportunity to tap into the workplace wellness industry which, according to the World Economic Forum, is worth US\$30bn-plus (£22.5bn, £18.9bn). Health club operators could, for example, provide TeloAge diagnostic information about employees' health, with tailored workout, relaxation and nutrition plans for individuals, then repeating the tests to monitor health improvements.

Secondly, operators can latch onto the personalised wellness movement that's gaining momentum. The World's Youngest Populations study by Euromonitor showed that, at the beginning of 2012, half of the world's population was aged over 30 – and a growing number of this demographic have an interest in actively managing their health (see HCM April 13, p39). Knowledge about your health status is empowering, and can lead to a shift towards healthy lifestyle behaviours.

In the Boomers Value Realignment Study, conducted in 2011 by US real estate advisory firm Civano Living, it was reported that 84 per cent of baby boomers in the US are "somewhat to very interested" in health and fitness



Elizabeth Blackburn was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

plans designed for them. Measuring telomere length as an overall health barometer will be a key component in this personalised wellness revolution.

John Kao, chair of the US Institute for Large Scale Innovation, who also spoke at last year's GSWS, highlighted the fitness and wellness industries' need to "move from the event-driven model and create much more sustainable connections and experiences". The ability to benchmark people's health through telomere testing, followed by a personalised programme – both for workouts within the club and lifestyle choices beyond – with a six-month re-test is an opportune way to stay connected to members. With a simple saliva telomere test, tracking the impact of various fitness and wellness therapies on telomere health is a reality.

As the evidence mounts that health clubs' wellness approaches can modify telomeres – one of the few changeable parts of the human genome – a natural, major industry opportunity arises. ●

A version of this feature first appeared in *Spa Business* 1 2013.



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Line Marking	£ 2,500	£ 2,500	£ 2,500
TOTAL	£ 55,270	£ 42,620	£ 32,500

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▲ Michael Bruno says he is 'a product man at heart' and aims to extensively expand the Star Trac range

NEW STAR RISING

In June 2010, with Star Trac actively looking for investment, entrepreneur Michael Bruno came forward and acquired the company outright. Already producing equipment for other companies in an 800,000sq ft manufacturing plant in Xiamen, China, Bruno added Star Trac to the already purchased StairMaster® brand and began to rebuild. Here, he explains the challenges since his purchase, along with his vision for the future

You're approaching the third anniversary since acquiring Star Trac. How has it been?

Star Trac had been hit hard by the economy at a time when its strategy had anticipated growth. The company was at the brink of financial disaster and I knew there was an opportunity to take control and turn it around.

Fate also played a part. I spoke with Jim Doody, Star Trac's former CEO and owner, who agreed to meet me in San Francisco to discuss a potential transaction. The next day I took my family out for dim sum and it was the best dim sum I'd ever eaten – and that's saying something considering I lived in Asia for years. But the funniest thing happened after the meal. They brought out fortune cookies, and mine read: "The next few days are a lucky time for you. You can take a chance." I still keep that fortune laminated to one of my business cards in my wallet. I can't say that I make all my business decisions based on what fortune cookies tell me, but it seemed too much of a coincidence to ignore it.

Looking back I probably didn't realise just how much of an investment it would take to build the company back up, but three years later I'm amazed and excited by how far we've come.

What drew you to Star Trac?

I always knew there was a strong product portfolio that I could improve and add to with my manufacturing capabilities at my

factory in China. There was also a strong loyalty to the Star Trac brand with many international key accounts and facility owners, many of whom I met in the first year. I took time to listen to their frustrations and hear about the challenges they'd faced over the years. I realised that, although they were disappointed, they all wanted to see us succeed. Many of the meetings were intense, but I knew the steps we needed to take operationally to regain their business and their belief in the Star Trac brand – and that's exactly what we did.

The biggest issue with the former Star Trac had become customer service. The need for significant improvement was obvious to me and it was what Star Trac customers missed most of all. Service for me was the number one problem that we had to address, and we will not stop in this area until we are known for being the best in the industry.

What steps did it take to rebuild?

We launched two major initiatives in the first 24 months, as Core Health and Fitness took over Star Trac. Firstly, we needed to create operational efficiency by consolidating the StairMaster® and Star Trac employee resources and bringing the shared services of finance, support, inside sales, engineering and quality under the Core umbrella. With Dustin Grosz as the president of Core Health and Fitness, we knew we could create a parent company that would



drive the growth of both brands – Star Trac and Stairmaster. This was a time of massive organisational transition that impacted the offices in the US, Europe and Asia. However, the restructuring has resulted in a more efficient and powerful corporate support structure for the business, and that means better service to our customers.

The second major move was to get out of the numerous other equipment manufacturers and US-based factories that supported Star Trac's product portfolio, and move this manufacturing into my factory in Xiamen, China – Land America. This would ensure more efficiency, higher quality and complete control over the flow of both our products and the service parts needed to support our customers.

This all happened in the first 24 months, in preparation for the real goal of focusing our efforts on our customers. The first two years allowed us to restructure, refocus and bring the manufacturing online, which fundamentally drove Star Trac back to a position of growth.

What have been the biggest challenges since taking over?

Working to build Star Trac back to a powerful brand was a bigger job than



▲ Star Trac equipment installed at Crunch Gym in Lakewood, California
◀ The TreadClimber® by Star Trac

► Bruno with BoxMaster inventor Rai Fazio (left) and Ray 'Boom Boom' Mancini (right) at IHRSA



- I had probably anticipated. There were so many opportunities, but there were hurdles and sometimes brick walls in front of every one of them. Of course, there was the financial challenge of funding the recovery, but that was inevitable. Arguably a major challenge was the transfer and consolidation of over 120 different product models into Land America. This included the complete cardiovascular product line and almost every strength model in the Star Trac portfolio. They all had to be rebuilt from the ground up, redesigned, re-tooled and improved. It wasn't just about transferring the same products to Land America – it was about improving them, enhancing quality and the experience of the end user.

Did you really realise the size of the task?

As any manufacturer will tell you, launching three or four new products a year can be a significant effort. During the two years following the acquisition of Star Trac, Land America was able to cross the entire portfolio over in what, frankly, was the most aggressive manufacturing effort we've seen in the industry. Star Trac, with the power of Land America manufacturing, was not only crossing over the current portfolio but in fact introducing new products simultaneously. The teams were focused and hardworking, and over the course of more than 24 months we introduced a crossover or new design every fortnight.

Now the transition is done, will things slow down?

I'm a product guy at heart. I engage in manufacturing, I talk with sales, engineering and marketing daily. I love new products, and just because we've transferred and introduced new models aggressively in the first few years doesn't mean we plan on stopping anytime soon. We're launching the new Star Trac StairMill, the BoxMaster®, the E-TR Treadmill, the Spinner® Blade ION and soon the TreadClimber® by Star Trac, all of which are new, innovative and will be significant players in the Star Trac product mix. It won't stop there, trust

Now, more than ever, we are committed to a total customer experience which starts the moment we meet them for the first time

me – we have a lot to do and many more ideas for portfolio growth!

You say you've brought John Gamble into the business as managing director for Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA)?

The moment I heard John was interested in joining Star Trac, I wanted to talk to him. He has a fantastic track record in the fitness industry. He came to meet me and I knew he was the right person to drive the EMEA business forward. He shares my passion for quality and service and, once I explained why I'd got into the business and how I saw the future, he was behind it 100 per cent. It was an easy decision for both of us.

How you would like Star Trac to be perceived?

I've built my manufacturing businesses and I've founded my fitness businesses on one simple rule: do what you say you're going to do. With integrity and honesty, make commitments you can work to achieve and then follow through on those commitments. It's a basic rule that has helped drive me for several decades, and it's what I expect in my team. That's what I want us to be known for.

As we enter our third and fourth years, we're on track to turn our efforts towards our customer and truly understand their needs, to deliver solutions and a higher level of service that really matter and that will help them be successful.

We've built a foundation of operational stability and manufacturing efficiency that will keep the company profitable. Now, more than ever, we are committed to a total customer experience which starts the moment we meet them for the first time. If we do our jobs properly, the relationship that transpires through the installation of our products and the ongoing service thereafter will be truly unique. It's our hope that customers see us as simply the easiest fitness company in the industry to do business with.

I believe Star Trac is very much like the wonderful small boutique hotels that Europe is known for, and that I love to be a guest of: a focused business where we have a great product and intimate service relationship with our customers. A business where we're not so large that we've forgotten about the most important aspect of what we do: our customer. I love being out in front in this quest and look forward to the continuation of the Star Trac story. ●

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WELLBEING COACHING

In the second of his two-part series on behaviour change, Dr Tim Anstiss looks at the power of wellbeing coaching

In my previous article, I described the professional practice of health coaching: guiding and empowering people to make one or more changes to their health behaviour, in ways likely to bring about improved health. I emphasised the importance of empathic listening, evoking from the other person rather than telling and instructing, working in partnership and sharing ideas in a respectful, person-centred manner. This article builds on the ideas and concepts shared in the first article.

Instead of health, though, we will be talking about wellbeing: the two are related, but not the same. It's perfectly possible to have good physical health and poor psychological wellbeing, or to have poor physical health but good wellbeing. Some activities will commonly improve both health and wellbeing – becoming more active, for example – but there are some specific activities people can engage in which might be expected to improve their wellbeing over time.

What is wellbeing?

There are several definitions of wellbeing. Some emphasise the 'feeling good/feeling well' aspects of wellbeing, while others emphasise the 'doing good/doing well' aspects. For instance, according to the *Government Foresight Report: Mental Capital and Wellbeing*: "Mental wellbeing is a dynamic state in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute

to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society."

This definition emphasises that wellbeing is related to optimum human functioning, thriving and flourishing. Other definitions of wellbeing are more akin to the idea of happiness – the pleasant inner emotion characterised by positive feelings like contentment, joy, achievement, feeling accepted and loved.

Of course, these different aspects of wellbeing are related. Generally speaking, doing well in life tends to bring with it a flow of positive emotions and experiences, while people who experience more happiness, optimism and wellbeing tend to do better in life. This two-way relationship between doing well and feeling well has led to people talking about an upward spiral of wellbeing, where one good thing leads to another. Improved psychological wellbeing can also result in improved physical health, even for people with long-term health problems.

Origins of wellbeing

Research suggests that a person's level of wellbeing is determined by three main factors: their biology, their circumstances, and their attitudes and behaviours. This last factor – attitudes and behaviours – is thought to account for up to 35-40 per cent of people's happiness. So what does the research suggest a person should do if they want to protect and improve their happiness and wellbeing?

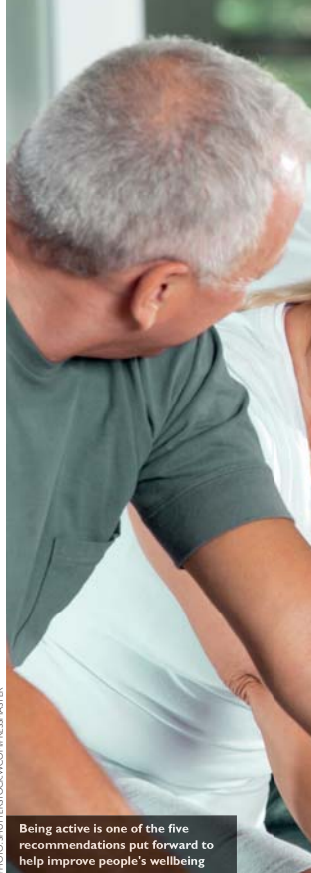


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/WOCHENPRESS/ASTER

Being active is one of the five recommendations put forward to help improve people's wellbeing

When it comes to health promotion, the UK government likes to focus on five: a recommended intake of five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, or taking part in 5 x 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every week. The government therefore asked Nic Marks and his colleagues at the New Economics Foundation to come up with 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', with the following suggestions put forward:

- Connect
- Be active
- Take notice
- Keep learning
- Give

A person's attitudes and behaviours are thought to account for up to 35-40 per cent of their wellbeing and happiness



Meanwhile, over in the US, Martin Seligman – one of the fathers of the positive psychology movement – suggests that there are five ‘pillars’ of wellbeing:

- Positive emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Achievement / accomplishment

What is wellbeing coaching?

To my mind, wellbeing coaching is helping people apply insights from the science of wellbeing (sometimes called positive psychology) to their own lives, but following the principles outlined in

my previous article. For instance, you don’t tell people what to do – you share and explore options with them, their reasons and motivations for change, and help them come up with plans for making changes if that’s what they want to do.

I’ve been teaching people about positive psychology for over 10 years, helping individuals apply it in their own lives and helping organisations apply it with their managers and staff. When I’m undertaking wellbeing coaching with individuals and groups, there are a number of options I explore to help them protect and improve their wellbeing into the future. Here are

13 activities I encourage people to experiment with:

- Clarify values. Learn what’s important to you – the things you consider to be part of the good life. You can do this with a card-sorting exercise, and you can find the cards here: [http://casaa.unm.edu/inst/Personal Values Card Sort.pdf](http://casaa.unm.edu/inst/Personal%20Values%20Card%20Sort.pdf)
- Set goals in line with your values – long-term and short-term, and in more than one area of your life. Powerful goal-setting exercises include watching your own funeral (and writing down what you want people to be thinking and saying about you), writing your own obituary (writing down what you want to be remembered for), and imagining what

Many of us would benefit from evidence-based wellbeing coaching, and this service is best delivered in non-clinical settings such as health clubs and leisure centres



One way to improve your wellbeing is to make more time for friends

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/COMING85984578

- will be happening in your life in around three to five years' time if things were going really well for you.
- Invest in friendship. Make a list of friends with whom you've been out of touch for a while and arrange to meet up. Make more time for friends. Become a better listener.
 - Engage in small and large acts of kindness. Do something nice for someone, or several people.
 - Become more active.
 - Increase your contact with nature. We didn't evolve to live in urban environments, so find ways of spending more time close to animals, fields, hills, lakes and woods.
 - Get into 'flow'. Flow is the positive emotional and performance state identified by the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. When in flow, you lose track of time and become less self-conscious. You become absorbed, immersed and lost in the task or activity. This might be cooking, gardening, writing, painting, playing music – we all get into flow doing different things. Identify when and where you enter this state, and try to spend more time in it.
 - Discover, explore and use your strengths. Strengths are the things that are right about you, that you do well, that others appreciate about you, and that you feel drawn towards doing. Once way of doing this is to take an online survey – for instance, here: <http://www.viamer.org>
 - Become more mindful. Learn to pay attention in a non-judgmental way. Mindfulness is proving itself to be an extremely effective way of helping many people improve their wellbeing, and I commonly recommend people buy and listen to the MP3 files in the book

Mindfulness. A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world (Mark Williams and Danny Penman, 2011): <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Mindfulness-practical-guide-finding-frantic/dp/074995308X>

- Forgive people who've hurt or offended you and let go of grudges. You don't have to tell them you've done this – this is more about you than them. The aim is to reduce your experience of negative emotions such as bitterness, hurt, anger and hatred.
- Cultivate gratitude. Once or twice a week, write down a list of things you're grateful for – things you sometimes take for granted. Reflect on these, and let the feeling of gratefulness arise within you. Also, express gratitude more often to others, whether that's for small things like serving you coffee or for big things. Express gratitude to people to whom you are grateful, but to whom you have never really expressed that gratitude. Tell them why you're grateful, what they did, and why it means or meant so much to you.
- Notice good things. We're wired to notice bad things: threat, danger, potential loss, etc. They grab our attention more easily. Good things happen, but we may have to pay more attention to notice them. In this exercise, sometimes called 'what went well', I encourage individuals to identify and write down four to seven good things that have happened to them in the previous 24 hours. Some people choose to do this at the end of each day for a seven-day period, and see what happens.
- Get help. If your level of wellbeing is really low – if you are very unhappy, anxious, addicted, feeling out of control, etc – then go and see a trained health professional such as your GP, practice

nurse or someone from the local NHS counselling services (sometimes called the IAPT service; increasing access to psychological therapies).

Reflection

Many people lack wellbeing. They experience boredom, feelings of isolation, sadness, lack of meaning, self-doubt, self-criticism, regrets about the past and worries about the future. Sometimes these thoughts and feelings are so strong and long-lasting that modern medicine calls them 'psychological conditions' and recommends treatment for them.

Without wishing to understate the importance of doctors, psychologists and other mental health professionals in helping people with psychological health problems get well, I believe many of us would benefit from evidence-based wellbeing coaching by a professional, and this service is best offered in non-clinical settings such as health clubs and leisure centres. ●

Tim Anstiss is a medical doctor who has been training health professionals in the use of behaviour change techniques for over 20 years. He helped develop the training materials for the Let's Get Moving national programme for physical activity, as well as co-authoring a National Obesity Observatory report on weight loss. He is currently training cancer clinicians in health coaching as part of the National Cancer Survivorship Initiative, and developing a health coaching qualification in conjunction with SkillsActive. He is also a former international polevaulter and Gladiators contender.

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REACHING ❖ OUT

In the last issue of *HCM*, we continued our series reporting on sport's unsung heroes across the UK. This time we head north to Scotland, to show how four of the country's many cultural and leisure trusts are changing lives for the better

DELIVERING SOCIAL ROI

ORGANISATION

Borders Sport and Leisure

PROJECT

**Vibration therapy
for MS sufferers**

Borders Sport and Leisure is working with The MS Society Borders on a three-year programme to provide multiple sclerosis (MS) sufferers with access to vibration technology sessions, run by specially trained instructors.

The programme began in January this year following an initial eight-week pilot

study, which explored the effectiveness of vibration training in improving fitness and wellbeing in those with the disease, which attacks the central nervous system (CNS) and can cause a range of symptoms, from numbness in the limbs through to paralysis or loss of vision.

The initial study found the vibration therapy improved participants' muscle power, strength and co-ordination, mobility and functional mobility and functional reach. Now The MS Society has financed vibration technology kit, and Borders Sport and Leisure is providing staff and unrestricted access to the equipment within its leisure centres.

Sarah Calder, aged 46, who has had MS for more than four years, is one of the local residents to benefit from the programme. She says: "The sessions are an essential part of my life. They provide safe exercising, are energising, relieve stiffness and aid my mobility."

The programme, currently used by around 20 MS sufferers, has been evaluated using sport's Impact & Social Value toolkit to measure social return on investment, which showed that for every £1 invested into vibration technology therapy for MS sufferers, there is a social value return of £4.23. The findings will now be used to demonstrate the true value of the organisation to stakeholder groups, particularly when funding decisions are being made.

"MS is statistically more prevalent in the Scottish Borders than other areas of the UK," says Ewan Jackson, CEO of Borders Sport and Leisure. "Vibration technology is proven to help ease MS symptoms, so we were pleased to be able to offer local residents access to this life-changing programme. We're also very proud to be the first trust in the UK to have carried out the sporta evaluation on our programmes."



Vibration is proven to ease symptoms for MS sufferers

BREAKING BARRIERS

ORGANISATION

Inverness Leisure

PROJECT

Helping children
with autism

Inverness Leisure has launched a free Swim Access Scheme for families affected by autism, thought to be the first of its kind in the UK.

In partnership with the National Autistic Society Scotland, Inverness Leisure developed an illustrated booklet for parents and carers detailing the various experiences and sensations they might come across at a swimming pool.

The scheme was created after CEO James Martin was approached by a customer with an autistic child. "They had experienced difficulty and expense bringing their son to the pool," he says. "They had to leave almost as soon as they got in the water, as the experience was too stressful for their child."

"Our coaching and instruction staff had been trained by the National Autistic Society (NAS), and by Highland Council's outreach team on working with children on the autistic spectrum, so we had a good understanding of the needs of children with autism. We decided to do something about the situation our customer described, creating a scheme that would offer families the chance to prepare themselves to come swimming."

In addition to the booklet, each family is also provided with six free family swim vouchers, allowing them to



Inverness Leisure offers autistic children and their families six free swimming vouchers

@STOCKPHOTO.COM/13

'acclimatise' themselves with swimming at Inverness Leisure pools.

"Swimming is a life-skill, and it's important that everyone has access to water in order to build their understanding and confidence," adds Martin. "The scheme also has the additional benefit of introducing children on the autistic spectrum to a very family-based activity, giving them the

opportunity to improve their social development skills as well."

The project, launched last summer to coincide with the start of the London 2012 Paralympics, was awarded support funding from the Scottish government's new fund to support autism awareness.

Dr Robert Moffat, national director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, says: "An estimated 50,000 people in Scotland have autism, with nearly 1,000 thought to live in Inverness. From the outside, they can appear to be functioning well, while often experiencing severe challenges in communication and social situations. Most people with autism want the same social and leisure opportunities the rest of us take for granted – they just need the right support at the right time to help them do this."

Inverness Leisure is about to embark on a reprint of the booklet, having distributed almost 1,000 so far through partner organisations such as the NAS and NHS Highland, as well as through schools, educational psychologists and directly to families.



Swimming is a fun, family activity that can help autistic children with social skills

YOUTH ACTION

ORGANISATION

Live Active Leisure

PROJECT

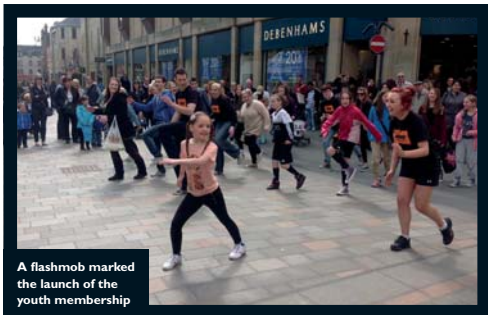
Active Energy scheme

Live Active Leisure (LAL) launched its new Active Energy membership for 12- to 15-year-olds with a flashmob in Perth City Centre in May.

The flashmob, which saw Perth and Kinross Youth Legacy Ambassadors lead an aerobics session, was the culmination of a two-year research project with local youngsters into how LAL should deliver leisure for its young residents.

Perth and Kinross Youth Council approached LAL early in 2011, having identified a number of key areas where they believed they could make a significant impact on young people's lives – one being physical activity.

After attending Youth Council meetings, LAL's marketing team and youth councillors, along with their Youth Council worker, had the idea for a summer of mystery visits around LAL-operated venues to establish young people's thoughts on how accessible the products, services and venues were. They also carried out mystery phone calls and used the LAL website to find out about activities.



A flashmob marked the launch of the youth membership

After a summer of mystery visits, the Youth Council members fed back their findings, making key observations on how the services could be improved, as well as identifying the next stage: using a questionnaire to ask young people how they wanted LAL to deliver their leisure.

Over 250 young people aged 12 to 17 years responded to the questionnaire, with the findings showing that:

- Females are less likely to exercise outside of PE lessons: only 41 per cent of females exercised at least four times a week, compared to 61 per cent of males
- Females are more likely to exercise in a school/campus environment and males slightly more likely to use a sports centre
- The fitness gym was equally popular with males and females, but classes and

swimming proved more popular for females, and team sports for males

- Younger people are likely to want to exercise with their peers, whereas older respondents were less likely to do this

As a result, LAL launched its Active Energy membership for 12- to 15-year-olds – at 30 per cent cheaper than the previous membership – with unlimited swimming, sports hall activity, access to some adult fitness classes, all Active Energy fitness classes, and access to gyms with an adult or to a supervised Active Energy session.

Marketing manager Karen Taylor says: "The ambassadors have given us an insight we would not otherwise have had, and their drive has ensured everything we commit to doing is always achieved."

FOOT ON THE LADDER

Active Stirling and Raploch Community Enterprise have launched a pioneering programme to help the area's unemployed to gain careers in sport and leisure.

Each six-week Health and Wellbeing Employability course – funded by the Department For Work and Pensions Flexible Support Fund – recruited 10 unemployed individuals from the Forth Valley area.

The courses, which were held at The Peak at the Stirling Sports Village, were delivered in partnership with the Raploch Urban Regeneration Company and Job Centre Plus. They aimed to equip students for employment opportunities within the leisure sector across the Stirlingshire area, as well as boosting their physical activity levels and encouraging a better overall lifestyle.

ORGANISATION

Active Stirling

PROJECT

Health and Wellbeing Employability courses

Active Stirling's health and fitness development manager, Matt Bunnell, was encouraged by the reaction to the new programme, which has seen seven people go on to gain employment – two within Active Stirling. "The courses were a superb opportunity for people to kick-start a career in health and fitness," he says. "Our students were provided with top-level training in a range of activities, including exercise to

music, gym instruction and first aid. The programme culminated in an SVQ Level 1 certification, which can propel them into volunteering. We then support them to achieve the SVQ Level 2, which is needed for paid employment.

"We're committed to supporting the graduates as much as we can and the course was hugely successful, with some participants even securing employment part-way through the programme."

Funding is now being sought to expand the programmes to include work placement training and an SVQ Level 2 qualification, which will allow candidates to move directly into paid employment in one of the UK's fastest growing industries.

Raploch community enterprise manager Nicole DeBrincat says: "Working in partnership to deliver this programme has clearly shown what can be achieved." ●



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RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Harder work

Women with diabetes have to work out harder than men to get the same benefits in certain exercises, shows a small US study

Exercise is one of the key interventions suggested to help people with Type 2 diabetes – a disease that's often linked with the escalating numbers of obese people. However, a new study – which shows that women suffering from Type 2 diabetes need to work out harder than men to reap the same benefits – suggests that simply prescribing exercise isn't enough. Programmes should be targeted to suit individuals to make a real difference.

Exercise test

The study*, conducted by researchers at the University of Missouri in the US, was based on 22 obese men and women diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. They were aged between 40 and 60 years and were previously physically inactive.

All of the participants were put on a 16-week exercise training programme where they walked, either on a treadmill or outside, for 30 minutes four days a week at 65 per cent capacity.

At the start and end of the training programme, many measurements were taken including weight, BMI and glucose and insulin levels. The impact of the training on cardiovascular fitness was also recorded, by running a three-minute isometric handgrip test before and after the training programme. The handgrip test involves continually and forcefully squeezing an object, and is considered a clinically useful, static exercise tool for measuring heart rate and blood pressure.

Male benefits

Results from the study showed no significant increase or decrease in weight, BMI, glucose or insulin levels in response to the training programme in



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ROBERT INESCHKE

The benefits attributed to exercise may not be the same across genders

either men or women. Likewise, resting blood pressure and heart rates showed no notable differences.

Where marked changes did occur, however, was in the results of the handgrip test. In the test that took place after training, men had a greater reduction in diastolic blood pressure and dilation of the blood vessels – but there was no improvement in women. This indicates that, cardiovascularly, the women did not recover as quickly as the men, suggesting that their fitness levels had not increased.

Lead researcher Jill Kanaley says: "This research highlights that the advantages we think exercise is going to give individuals may not be the same across genders, particularly for those who have Type 2 diabetes. This is a concern, because there are high mortality rates with Type 2 diabetes, especially for women.

"We keep assuming that exercise will do the trick – we think, when we tell

people to 'go train' regardless of gender, that everyone will get the same results. Our research indicates certain exercises may not be enough for women."

Kanaley goes on to suggest that obese women with Type 2 diabetes may benefit from longer durations of exercise, or physical activity that is of a higher intensity than 65 per cent, if they want to see benefits.

She also says that, based on the significant variances in cardiovascular recovery rates between men and women, more focus should be placed on measuring this in future studies. "A lot of people focus on how high individuals' heart rates get during exercise, but their recovery rates should also be monitored. When you exercise, you want your blood pressure to rise, but you don't want it to get too high. Your blood pressure should also return to normal relatively quickly after you stop exercise. In our study, the recovery rate for women was not as rapid as for men."

*Kanaley, JA et al. Exercise training improves hemodynamic recovery to isometric exercise in obese men with type 2 diabetes but not women. *Metabolism*. Sept 2012



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MONEY MATTERS

What's the future of member payments? Technology is moving fast, but is it helping operators to make more money? Kath Hudson asks the experts

According to research from payment service Judo, one in five consumers failed to make a purchase in a shop in the last six months because the retailer didn't take cards. Some 70 per cent of consumers prefer to pay by card, while 60 per cent say they would spend more with a business that takes cards than one that doesn't.

There's a perception among small businesses in particular that card transactions are too expensive to process, or simply not as convenient as cash. However, that need no longer be an issue thanks to innovative products from companies such as Swedish firm iZettle, whose new service allows anyone to carry out a card transaction on their smartphone or tablet. Two devices are offered which can plug into, or wirelessly connect to, the smartphone. One accepts a PIN (and costs £99), while the other takes signatures (£20). Both come with an app installed onto the phone or tablet. iZettle takes 2.75 per cent commission on each transaction. Analytics are available to keep track of payments, revenue and returning customers, which will show if the system is wasting its face.

Or is cashless and cardless the way to go – if members could pay via their phone, for example, would this make them more inclined to have an impulsive coffee, or buy a new swimsuit while the endorphins are flowing?

In general, are clubs keeping up with consumer trends? What new technology is coming on-stream that could help operators offer a more convenient service, removing barriers to customers spending money and thereby boosting secondary revenue? We ask the experts.

TOM WITHERS

**GLADSTONE:
HEAD OF SALES**

Removing the barriers that prevent customers from spending money, including the need for cash or card, is essential to increase secondary spend in clubs.

Cashless systems have been around for over 20 years and are a tried and tested method in adjacent industries such as golf. Paying onto an account is the simplest way to offer this. However, the fitness industry uptake of this technology has, so far, remained in high-end, private sector clubs.

The way we're heading is towards continuous authority payments, similar to how Amazon and iTunes work. The member sets up an account linked to a payment card and can spend by entering a password. It's easy for the consumer and secure for operators, as card details are held off-site by secure bureau services, avoiding PCI complications.

Payment service providers like PayPal are launching new technology this year that will allow people to pay by swiping their phones, using this continuous authority service. Barclaycard already issues "Wave and Pay" stickers for phones, which allow them to be swiped for low-level transactions. It's an acknowledgement by card companies that, while people might not always have their wallets, they invariably carry their phone with them.

Continuous authority will supersede the other cashless models, as it breaks down all the barriers for purchasing and increases spend. How often do you put a few more items than you intended in your basket when shopping on Amazon?



ANDRES MORAN

**MINDBODY:
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT**

MINDBODY introduced the Express app in May this year, which takes all the daily tasks needed to run a health club and makes them mobile, including adding new clients, getting them to sign waiver forms and checking them into classes.

The most popular function of our new app is the ability to swipe a credit card straight from your mobile device to take a payment. It makes the customer experience more about the interaction and less about the front desk. Imagine not having a front desk at all – that's now becoming a possibility.

Empowering clients to manage their own experience by giving them access to their account, class schedules, bookings





▲ **Above:** Technology allows members to take control of their class schedules

▼ **Below:** Offering a cashless payment system could increase impulse purchases

and registrations satisfies their need to get things done on their own schedule, while simultaneously reducing the front desk overhead.

From a convenience standpoint, cashless clubs are a good idea: nobody likes lugging their wallets around if they don't have to. It also provides a layer of physical security to your business: no wallet, no possibility of theft.

Technology does help clubs make more money if it supports client retention and acquisition and can cut down overheads. It also provides businesses with competitive intelligence: customer behaviour is always changing, but it's changing even faster with the speed of technological disruption happening around us on a daily basis.

Mobile technology gives the business the feeling of being innovative, which engages and retains consumers: who doesn't love going to the Apple Store? ▶



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MEMBER PAYMENTS



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / MICHAEL JUNG

Members will increasingly use their phones to make purchases in the club

▶ SEAN MAGUIRE

**LEGEND:
FOUNDER AND MD**

The fitness industry is traditionally slow to adapt to new technologies as consumers habits change. Going forward, we can expect to see more use of smartphones and faster credit/debit card transactions, such as near field.

Self-service is also a growing trend, with people taking care of their own membership, bookings and purchases online from a PC, kiosk, smartphone or tablet. Going forward there is likely to be more flexibility, allowing members to flit from method to method.

As new technologies enter the mainstream, self-service will become even more prevalent, making it easier for people to pay how they want, when they want, and to make use of multiple channels – such as direct debit and credit card – simultaneously.

Cashless clubs are a good idea, but if it's the only way to pay it's bound to have a negative impact on sales potential, as not everyone would be prepared to pay money to the club before making a purchase. Cashless as an additional offering boosts sales by making it easier to pay. However, if you offer credit, expect problems collecting money.



IVAN STEVENSON

**DEBIT FINANCE
COLLECTIONS:
DIRECTOR**

Clubs are missing out on sales by not offering a cashless option, especially as the technology is now available to make this much easier. One report found that cashless systems can boost member spend by 25 per cent.

The further rollout of the Single European Payment Authority (SEPA – see HCM July 12, p59) will help chains which are expanding overseas, as it will offer one solution for direct debits across borders: operators will be able to collect memberships for a club in Spain, for example, at the same time as their UK operations.

Giving customers the chance to join online is showing great results in club profitability. It takes the admin burden away from clubs, and puts the consumer in charge. The clubs we work with can see an increase in year-on-year sales of between eight and 10 per cent, but one high-end club achieved a 23 per cent rise.

One of the main influences in the near future will be further leveraging of mobile phone technology, allowing people to join online, as well as paying in clubs using their phones. ●



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BILT TO REVOLUTIONISE FITNESS



Tennis star Andre Agassi
used the prototype range



The BILT range has a
futuristic look, with many
innovative new features

It started out life as a highly personalised set of workout machines created in a garage by fitness guru Gil Reyes for tennis player Andre Agassi. Now it's been turned into a revolutionary series of gym equipment – BILT by Agassi & Reyes – that's about to hit clubs globally and change the way members work out. Miro Gladovic details his personal encounter with the BILT system

For all of us who've sat on a lat pulldown machine, laid back on a bench press, nestled into a leg extension machine, or used a leg curl apparatus, I bet not many of us have ever wondered: "Now who was the person who invented this machine?" I also doubt many of us have ever pondered the scientific, evolutionary design process of the machines we trust and engage to transform our own physical being.

As a lifelong gym junkie, I've worked out in all sorts of gyms around the world, from the plush former LA Sports Club in Beverly Hills, US, to the back-to-basics Doherty's Gym in Melbourne,

Australia, where you'll see spray painted warnings on the wall cautioning you to "put your weights away" and a sign above the water fountain asking patrons to "refrain from spitting in the sink".

So the reason for this entire preamble, before I talk about the new BILT by Agassi & Reyes gym equipment, is to establish the fact that I've been around the block a few times, and know more than the average weights warrior. I also want to convey that I've rarely thought about which engineer, weights guru or gym development trainer actually developed and invented these machines.

Now that I've established my credentials, I can enthusiastically



talk about one of the most exciting workout days I've ever had in my life. I was fortunate enough to be invited by Agassi Graf CEO Steve Miller to have a personal workout session with Gil Reyes and road test his new line of BILT by Agassi & Reyes workout machines.

Gil Reyes is a fitness guru and has been Agassi's strength and conditioning coach since 1989. Agassi credits Reyes for sustaining his physical conditioning during his amazing career that allowed him to win more tennis Grand Slams later in his career than in his earlier years. There are many inspirational examples that testify to the amazing results and effectiveness of Reyes' work,

such as taking Agassi's bench press maximum weight from 135 pounds in 1989 to 350 pounds in 2003. Being in Reyes' presence, around his inspiring energy, engaging him in conversation and being instructed by him, is truly moving.

Futuristic machines

Reyes lives and breathes fitness and health and if ever a piece of fitness equipment could capture the essence of its inventor, then BILT truly has. Entering the BILT showroom gym in Las Vegas was pure inspiration and exhilaration. The gym and equipment looks like something out of a futuristic movie, reminiscent of today's gym

machines, but with a twist. Also striking is the obvious advancements, evolution and additions to even the most recognisable of machines, such as the bench press.

That is where my workout started. Not a bench press any more, but a Flat Bench. The Flat Bench comes with retractable arms that holds your barbell and safely lowers it into your "sweet spot" over your chest, avoiding the awkward and potentially risky process of lifting the barbell over your head and then having to manoeuvre it into position. Once you have the barbell in your hands, the arms retract back away and you can start your presses. ▶



The full BILT range will be seen for the first time in the UK at LIW 2013

► Next up was a piece of equipment I couldn't wait to try: the COD. Resembling a traditional squat machine, the COD looked much more elaborate and somewhat robotic. Rather than just nestling your shoulders under the holds and performing a simple standing fixed squat, this machine allows you to shuffle and move laterally, whether you want to step, jump or shuffle, while still having the weighted holds over your shoulder. This will revolutionise the way athletes train – especially ball players, whether it be a footballer, rugby player or a basketball forward looking to greatly sharpen their lateral movements.

As the workout continues, you're struck by the intelligent advancements that the BILT range has brought to fitness equipment. I'd liken it to the jump that old cell phones made when they became smartphones. The equipment is more interactive and user-friendly, and you find yourself aching to engage in exercises like bench presses that you once found laborious or mundane.

A brand is born

How the equipment came to be is equally inspiring. Essentially, they were born out of necessity to help Agassi in his strength and conditioning training. Reyes would think up a piece of equipment and go out and build it

himself with rudimentary pieces of steel and pulleys and whatever else he needed. Reyes even taught himself how to weld, so he could manufacture the equipment himself.

The process continued for many years, and it got to the point where Reyes and Agassi had a secret gym full of quirky and unique handmade equipment. A conversation one day between Reyes, Agassi and his CEO Miller (a former founding board member of Nike) about potentially taking this equipment and properly engineering and manufacturing it for mass consumption was the catalyst for the BILT brand and range to be born.

The BILT range has just hit the market, but I suspect it will not be long until it's a common fixture in gyms across the US and globally. Highlighting just a couple of the pieces of the BILT range does not do it justice, nor could writing about all of the range of equipment. You simply have to experience it for yourself.

BILT recently won the FIBO Innovation Award for the C.O.D. Having heard that orders and sales of the BILT equipment have already greatly surpassed everyone's expectations at the company, I've no doubt that it won't be long before you're nestled into one of these great pieces of workout

BILT is exclusively distributed in the UK and Ireland by Concept Fitness (International) Ltd (CFI), which also distributes TKO – a US range of functional training equipment, combat equipment, free weights, studio and fitness accessories.

www.biltbyagassiandreyes.com

To contact CFI: David Reid - sales and operations director

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equipment at your gym – be it in Beverly Hills, US, or Melbourne, Australia – and having a little daydream of being the latest of Reyes' superstar clients. ●

BILT will be launched at this year's LIW (Stand H575), on 24–26 September

Miro Gladovic

Gladovic has a diverse and accomplished background in the entertainment arena, encompassing both the film industry, as well as professional sports. After finishing his professional soccer career as a goalkeeper prematurely, Gladovic stayed immersed in the game as an agent/manager. In 1997, he became the youngest players' agent in the world to be accredited by FIFA, and went on to represent some of the biggest names in international soccer.





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FUTURE-PROOFED FUNDING

Neena Dhillon takes a look at three new leisure sites in the UK that demonstrate how creative thinking can help deliver value in times of reduced government spending

Affordable spas are increasingly being included in local authority leisure sites

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/HOLBOX

The sheer scale of the challenge facing local authorities in the UK has been the subject of much national debate. Despite unprecedented pressure from central government to slash budgets, local authorities began 2013 with a new responsibility for public health – a remit that includes promoting healthier lifestyles and encouraging people to be physically active. Within this landscape, local authorities are turning to partner

organisations that can secure funding for major leisure facilities without the requirement for significant capital expenditure or ongoing subsidised support.

Developers of leisure services are responding with solutions that both unlock financing and deliver leisure centres with the capability of standing on their own two feet – as the three ambitious projects showcased in this feature demonstrate. ►



The centre's new look will help attract a different demographic

INNOVATIVE THINKING

Client: **Ramsgate Leisure Centre, UK**
Supplier: **Alliance Leisure**

"With the current financial pressures on leisure provision, local authorities need to overcome two major challenges," explains Sarah Watts, MD of Alliance Leisure, which has partnered with more than 30 local authorities and leisure trusts over the past 12 years. "First, the lack of direct access to sufficient capital investment. Second, many existing leisure sites are housed in old building stock, in urgent need of redevelopment."

This month sees completion of one of the company's latest redevelopment projects: a £4m extension and refurb of Ramsgate Leisure Centre in partnership with Your Leisure, Thanet District Council and lead contractor ISG.

Representing an enhanced replacement of Ramsgate's ageing, standalone pool, construction has focused on the addition of a new-build to the council's dry sports centre – now home to a 25-metre swimming pool, learner pool, day spa, group cycling studio and a toning suite –

as well as the upgrade of CV equipment in the onsite gym.

The business case for this million-pound build has been based on savings of around £100,000 being achieved through the consolidation of two operations into a single site, as well as enhanced revenue streams being realised with the inclusion of commercial facilities that go beyond usual local authority leisure provision – namely, an affordable spa and suite of toning machines, called Your Feelgood Factory, for a maturing population.

Alliance Leisure raised the required funding from the city against Your Leisure's commitment to pay back the investment over 20 years, using surplus revenues generated by the new facilities. Breaking down the figures, Alliance Leisure's commercial director Paul Cluett explains: "The net revenue improvement of the development (at membership maturity) is forecast at £462,000 per annum. Through careful construction, the cost of building is £4.08m. Utilising our access to fixed-price capital over a set period, this results in an annual repayment of significantly less than the revenue opportunity, which will reduce the need for subsidy by the council."

Although existing memberships to the leisure centre remain unchanged, a

new level of membership – costing £55 a month – will cover gym, swim and classes, as well as use of the thermal spa facilities. It will also provide a 20 per cent discount on therapies given in one of the four spa treatment rooms. Spa-only membership (£30 a month) is also being introduced, as is a membership for the toning suite (£25 a month).

Alliance Leisure charges a fee for delivery as well as arranging funding. In some projects, as is the case here with Your Leisure, the company also partners with the operator to assist with ongoing sales and marketing.

"What's innovative about this robust business model is the facility mix that we've been able to drive into old stock, at no extra cost to the council," observes Watts. "We're not building the same old thing – we're thinking about the users of the future. Commercially-orientated additions such as a day spa in the public sector can create revenues, introduce new demographic groups and help with retention."

Steve Davis, MD of Your Leisure, adds: "Increased participation in physical activity and the improved wellbeing of our communities will only be achieved if we offer modern, family-friendly services. This requires significant investment at a time when local councils are struggling with reduced finances.

"The Alliance Leisure model offers cost-effective project management and access to funding to enable facilities to be both upgraded and made more commercial, with improved revenues being used to finance investment."

"Commercially-orientated additions such as public sector day spas can bring in new users"



The £8m project was designed to drive local participation

UPFRONT PLANNING

Client: **Waverley Leisure Centre, UK**
Supplier: **Pulse**

Pulse, which has provided leisure solutions to the local authority sector for 25 years, recently completed the transformation of Waverley Leisure Centre in Lowestoft, UK.

In the role of strategic leisure development partner to Waverley District Council and Sentinel Leisure Trust, Pulse delivered the £8m redevelopment project in 2012, having fully refurbished and expanded the partly dilapidated site. The leisure centre's swimming pool, as well as a sports hall, squash courts and gym all dating from the 1980s, have been completely upgraded or replaced.

Designed with the key objective of improving health and fitness participation in Lowestoft and beyond, the modern leisure centre now comprises a hotel-style reception, café, restaurant, two swimming pools, generous changing facilities, two-floor fitness suite, dance studio, cycling studio, children's play area and a spa featuring a thermal experience and six treatment rooms. Membership – including gym, swim, classes and spa – costs £32.95; all other activities incur an additional fee.

Waverley represents the largest single site project undertaken by Pulse, underlining that sizeable leisure developments conceived around sustainable and self-financing models are still attracting funding, in spite of the difficulties experienced by the

banking sector. Of the £8m raised, Pulse provided £6m from its consortium of corporate banking partners; Waverley District Council contributed £250,000; £1.12m came from a Sport England grant; and a smaller amount was invested by Lowestoft Sixth Form College – one of the community neighbours to use the centre on a weekly basis.

But Pulse's commitment to Waverley goes beyond design, build and delivery. "We developed a proposal that allows for a total investment in works, equipment and services worth almost £12m over the next 20 years, while simultaneously enabling the council to reduce its financial support for the site," says Chris Johnson, Pulse MD. "In addition to providing initial capital investment, we've incorporated a planned equipment replacement and facility refresh programme. This has ensured future funding requirements are assessed and dealt with from the outset, which aids business planning, budget forecasts and affordability."

And it's this future-proofing aspect that underpins the viability of this particular funding model: not only will the projected income from increased membership and revenue opportunities service the investment, but it's also forecast to reduce Waverley District Council's subsidy by 62.5 per cent.

Pulse will continue to work with the council over the next 20 years, supporting sales and marketing efforts to ensure that financial and operational targets are met. "We're usually dependent on the commercial income generated by the facility to recover some or all of our investment in works, equipment and services," adds Johnson. "This risk transfer keeps all parties focused on the long-term objectives."

"The projected income is forecast to reduce the district council subsidy by 62.5 per cent"

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION

Client: Moberly Leisure Centre, UK

Supplier: Willmott Dixon

A groundbreaking scheme that demonstrates how the private sector can collaborate with the public sector to design and fund community facilities, Moberly Leisure Centre in London's Queen's Park is currently awaiting full planning approval, with completion expected in spring 2016.

This new £17m, multi-use leisure facility is being made possible thanks to an innovative land deal between Westminster City Council and Willmott Dixon's development division, Regen. Given a gross development value of £60m, the deal will see sales receipts from 120 new homes – built by Regen on Kilburn Lane and Caird Street – being allocated towards the funding of a new leisure centre.

Brian Brady, managing director for residential at Willmott Dixon Regen, explains more: "Local authorities are increasingly looking at ways of using their assets to facilitate new public amenities,

such as leisure centres, in joint ventures with private sector companies that have an interest in the residential redevelopment of that land. As public funds diminish, these partnerships help deliver high quality public facilities – directly benefiting local communities and representing good value for taxpayers – through the sale of new homes."

Under the current planning proposal, the ageing Jubilee (Caird Street) and Moberly (Kilburn Lane) Sports Centres, which are less than a mile apart, will be demolished and replaced with a new, consolidated leisure centre at the Moberly site, measuring more than the two existing facilities combined. The £17m project will accommodate a 25-metre swimming pool, teaching pool, sports hall, health and fitness suite, exercise studios, health spa, boxing hall and a gym. Moberly will be the location of 80 of the new homes developed by Regen, with the remaining 40 positioned on the Jubilee site on Caird Street.

In response to public consultation, however, a smaller facility at Jubilee will be introduced as a replacement to the existing sports centre. "While the two locations are within easy walking distance, feedback from local people indicated that the existing Jubilee Sports Centre is an important hub

for the community," says Brady. "The new, smaller facility aims to retain this community aspect, providing flexible space. The proposed three-court hall will be able to accommodate different sports and exercises classes, and we've planned for changing facilities and a meeting area too."

Regen, which believes elements of its funding model are unique, will work both as a developer and contractor on this project. Westminster City Council will benefit from the sales value generated when the housing is sold, land receipts, and two new leisure sites.

"Few councils are in the position of being able to build multi-million pound sports facilities in the current climate," observes Westminster councillor Steve Summers. "But together with Willmott Dixon, the creation of a £17m centre for residents of Queen's Park will be done at no cost to the taxpayer, representing incredible value for money."

And for Regen, this type of land arrangement between the private and public sectors has the capability of being applied to a range of similar schemes, in which ageing community assets undergo much-needed modernisation or replacement thanks to a creative solution that unlocks value and generates funds. ●

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www.healthclubawards.co.uk

SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

WE TAKE A LOOK AT RECENT PROJECTS FROM PRECOR, XN LEISURE AND TECHNOGYM



The new club in Edgbaston was converted from a former office building

MOTIVATING MEMBERS

CLIENT: ANYTIME FITNESS, EDGBASTON, UK

SUPPLIER: PRECOR

Anytime Fitness is the world's largest and fastest growing fitness club chain and prides itself on providing members with convenient, affordable fitness featuring top-quality equipment.

Having worked in the fitness industry for over 20 years, and as director of European operations for Anytime Fitness for the last two years, Diane Vesey decided that she wanted to be more immersed in the brand. In February 2013, she opened her first Anytime Fitness club in Edgbaston. She says: "The existing Anytime Fitness clubs in the UK are doing extremely well, and opening my own club while continuing in my current role was a way to further support our master franchisors in Europe."

Working with leading fitness equipment manufacturer and supplier Precor, Vesey transformed what was originally an

office building into a 510sq m (5,500sq ft) gym. Featuring Precor equipment and showcasing the brand's latest innovation – the AMT with Open Stride – the gym provides state-of-the-art exercise facilities. The AMT with Open Stride provides the ability to change a workout in mid-stride, offering exercisers even more freedom of motion by allowing them to dynamically change their stride both horizontally and vertically.

All cardiovascular equipment also features Precor's latest technological solution, Preva® networked fitness software, which is compatible with P80 touchscreen consoles. The cloud-based system offers a suite of tools designed to banish dull workouts and help attract, engage, motivate and support members. "It's ideal for the Anytime Fitness 24/7 brand, as the sites are not always staffed," says Vesey.

Preva Net offers access to a wide variety of internet content, while Preva Personal Accounts enables users to set personal weekly workout goals, choose targets – distance, calories or duration – and select an individual long-term focus, like losing weight or toning up.

"As everyone lives on the web nowadays, Preva plays well to that strength, offering support to our members whether or not the club is staffed. They can set weekly targets, track their progress, and if they miss a session it automatically recalculates remaining workouts so members can still reach their goal.

"I really like the new Preva mobile app too, as members can upload activities outside of the gym, all of which counts towards their weekly goal," adds Vesey, who is also a fan of the recognition rewards that pop up to celebrate user milestones.

Users can save workouts so their 'favourite' last session is waiting next time they log in, from anywhere in the world – something Vesey says the Anytime Fitness personal trainers love, as they can create targeted workouts with members without the need for programme cards or print-outs.



Members benefit from Precor's networked fitness software

For more information: www.precor.com



A SPORTING DECISION
 CLIENT: THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK, UK
 SUPPLIER: XN LEISURE

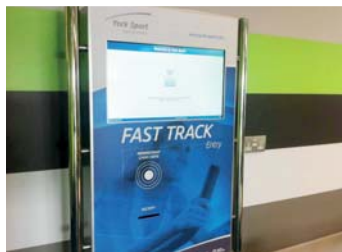
When the University of York was planning the York Sport Village, the decision was made to procure a new leisure management solution. Three companies responded and Xn Leisure – based in Abingdon, Oxfordshire – submitted the winning bid.

Paul Baker, Xn Leisure business development manager, explains: "The brief was to install a membership management system in time for the opening of the new sports facility, in both the new build and the existing site, without impacting on the original software system. The two systems were operated in tandem until Xn Leisure and the University of York had prepared for the switchover."

The Xn Leisure solution offered its Dimension system, access control, online bookings and Fast Track Kiosk – all modules that the University of York needed to successfully manage its facilities and expand its membership. "We knew our new facility would be driven by memberships, which would generate new income streams, so we were pleased to partner with a provider whose system allowed for easy communication with existing and prospective members," comments Ashley Smith, York Sport operations manager.

York Sport previously offered two sports halls, an 80-station fitness suite, four squash courts, three indoor five-a-side pitches, six outdoor tennis courts, an outdoor pitch and 47 acres of grass fields. The new facilities include a 25-metre swimming pool, a 16-metre training pool, a 120-station fitness suite, three studios, a health suite and two outdoor 3G football pitches. The £9m funding for this ambitious expansion came from three sources: the university, the City of York Council and Sport England.

Xn Leisure and the University of York formed a close-knit team to plan the installation and commissioning of the system, which would enable the two sites – almost two miles apart



Fast Track kiosks went live in March, freeing up front-of-house staff and enabling better customer service

– to effectively communicate management and membership information and allow members to book courts, pitches, sessions and courses.

Smith continues: "Our working in partnership was crucial to the success of the project. Xn Leisure's training programme was outstanding and we were confident, when the system went live in July 2012, that our staff would be proficient with the system by the time we opened on 31 August."

There are 7,500 members across both sites, which are well used and enjoy excellent retention. In May 2013 alone, 300 new members registered and there were high levels of pay and play, with over 2,000 visits a week to the swimming pool.

Membership can be purchased online. Meanwhile Fast Track Kiosks went live in March 2013, freeing up front-of-house staff and making way for improved customer service. Xn Leisure's On Course module is scheduled to go live this summer, empowering parents to book sessions online for their children and monitor their progress.

Smith concludes: "The features and functionality of the Xn Leisure solution allow us to generate quality reports with information that enables us to increase efficiency and offer enhanced services to our members and our neighbours."

For more information: www.xnleisure.com



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BOOSTING MEMBER ENGAGEMENT CLIENT: FITNESS UNLIMITED

SUPPLIER: TECHNOGYM

Hillsborough Leisure Centre is a Fitness Unlimited venue operated by Sheffield International Venues, and is a thriving facility with 20,000 visits to the gym every month. As part of its refurbishment in early 2013, the centre installed internet-enabled Technogym VISIONWEB cardio machines to provide a truly integrated, interactive, personalised training experience for members.

To support this, the site chose Challenge and Communicator, two ready-made solutions that form part of the mywellness cloud, a set of business applications that provide operators with the tools to attract, motivate, inspire and retain members.

The Challenge application allows operators to create, manage and measure effective, interactive challenges for all members, while the Communicator application allows facility managers to communicate with members directly through the consoles on cardio machines. Used together, they provide facilities with an ideal combination of enhanced customer engagement and increased secondary revenue generation.

Peter Clark, corporate health and fitness manager at Sheffield International Venues, says: "We wanted to create a real end-user community at Hillsborough Leisure Centre by adding value to the customer experience. We decided to use Challenge strategically to engage members and grow participation, loyalty and gym usage."

The centre's first challenge involved six trainer-led teams burning as many calories as possible within a month. Trainers recruited members into teams, with the challenge publicised through messages and bulletins sent to the cardio machines via the Communicator application and viewed by members on the VISIONWEB screens.

Participants tracked their progress by logging into their personal mywellness cloud accounts on VISIONWEB, at home via www.mywellness.com, and 'on the go' through the mywellness iPhone app. All data was automatically collected



The gym ran a challenge involving six trainer-led teams; more than 200 members signed up in the first week



and synchronised on the mywellness cloud portal by the cardio machines, allowing users and trainers to view their data and their position on the Challenge leader board whenever they liked, through any device with an internet connection.

Within one week, the centre saw more than 200 members signing up to the very first online challenge hosted on the mywellness cloud. At the end of the month, over 129,000 calories had been burnt in total across all groups, and to date more than 400 members have created mywellness cloud accounts to track their personal exercise data.

Sue Emsell, a member of Fitness Unlimited at Hillsborough Leisure Centre, says: "I've enjoyed the new spirit of friendly competition that the challenges have brought to the gym. It motivates me to work out more regularly and push myself more every time. I visit the gym more often now."

Fitness manager Laura Jeffery says: "Feedback has been very positive on mywellness cloud. Not only has it helped to grow emotional engagement, but our users are also embracing the fact that intelligent technology can help them measure results and stay motivated. We're looking forward to maintaining the momentum by holding new challenges every month to keep our user community engaged and interested."

For more information: www.technogym.com/mywellnesscloud



Members can access their personal data via VISIONWEB



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Talking points

SIBEC UK took place in May, attracting more than 150 operators and suppliers from the leisure and education sectors. Katie Lewis summarises the key points raised in the Question Time-style debate, hosted by Mike Hill of Leisure-net Solutions

PANEL MEMBERS



David Stalker,
CEO,
ukactive



Neil Mosley,
head of sport,
Imperial College
London



Martin Kay, general
manager, Rossendale
Leisure Trust, & member
of the national sports
executive committee



Lee Mason,
CEO,
County Sports
Partnership Network



John Wileman,
head of sport & leisure,
Nottingham
City Council

Question 1

Wesley Hutchins, assistant
director, community services,
Borough of Broxbourne

The leisure and education sectors are under huge pressure to address obesity. What initiatives and actions are going to make the biggest impact?

John Wileman

Making local leisure provision more accessible to a wider demographic. Not everybody feels comfortable walking into a leisure centre. In Nottingham, we're working with other community providers, such as resident and tenant associations, to deliver a wider leisure service in village halls and community centres. If we train residents to run activities such as walking or jogging sessions, we will hopefully break down some barriers. Once people feel comfortable exercising in familiar environments, we can signpost them into our leisure centres.

David Stalker

Better community engagement is the answer. The leisure sector will not make a significant impact on the obesity issue working in silos. Instead, we need to concentrate efforts on building partnerships with other community organisations to deliver activities. Initiatives such as The Responsibility Deal may also make it possible to attract private sector investment.

Neil Mosley

Many students are inactive during their time at university, with cost cited as a main reason for this. Higher Education organisations are now recognising this issue. In some cases, more effort is being made to provide smaller leisure facilities on residential campuses, negating travel fees and increasing ease of access. Many universities are also subsidising leisure provision, offering free use to students at scheduled times.

Lee Mason

Providing more choice of physical activity is what's needed. A community

has many different leisure needs and a 'one size fits all' approach does not work.

Many NGBs are having significant success in attracting new participants by remodelling their traditional game format to meet the needs of specific groups within the community. Perhaps the fitness sector needs to do the same.

Question 2

Rory McGown, MD, GYMetric

Do you think that the thousands of pounds spent on gym equipment every year, without data to support this investment, is money well spent?

David Stalker

There is little doubt that leisure operators need to become better at data collection and analysis. Without solid evidence to support the purchases we make and the actions we take, we're going to struggle to stake our case for investment from either government or the private sector. Making better use of the technology available to measure, track and analyse is the key to the growth of the sector.

John Wileman

There's little doubt that the purchase of gym equipment has had a huge impact on community leisure provision. Let's not forget, it was the arrival of the gym into leisure centres that drove the direct debit model and enabled the sector to enjoy huge revenues, subsidising other physical activity services and provisions.

So yes, it has been money well spent. Moving forward we need to direct more resources to staff training. This will help ensure users receive the education necessary for them to make the right exercise choices.

Question 3

Christian Harris, director,
Bonasystems

What are the key areas of focus moving forward, and what will success look like?



Barriers could be broken down if community members were trained to run jogging or walking sessions, says John Wileman

Martin Kay

Leisure provision used to be focused on community needs, but increasingly it's becoming focused on reducing the subsidy and generating more revenue. Unfortunately, the balance sheet is now a Key Performance Indicator when it comes to leisure, which is a very short-sighted approach.

Neil Mosley

Our aim is to deliver a valuable experience to students while preparing them for the workforce. Success is a highly skilled, healthy labour pool.

Question 4

Phil Steele, director of sport,
UEA Sports Park

What role can Higher Education play in driving participation?

Lee Mason

Universities play a key role in driving participation. The CSP Network does not own any assets and is totally reliant on partners to deliver physical activity to the local community. Some of the Network's activity centres are encouraging universities to open facilities to the community during evenings and weekends. This is a win-win scenario: it provides the local

population with a wider choice of affordable facilities while generating extra income for the hosting site.

Question 5

Stuart Lockwood, CEO, Oldham
Community Leisure

If you were given £500,000, how would you spend it?

Martin Kay

Investment in leisure assets and the development of partnerships that deliver a wider choice of leisure activities to the local community.

Lee Mason

I'd use it to leverage matched funding from government and employers. Funds could be used to train physical activity activators, thereby creating training and employment opportunities. The role of the activators would be to drive participation, resulting in a healthier, more active population.

John Wileman

I'd invest it in the development of a multi-functional sports band. Worn on the wrist, the sports band would log and track physical activity. It would also be used to collect reward points, for example in partnership with a large

supermarket chain, which could be redeemed against activity sessions at the local leisure centre.

David Stalker

Gain matched funding from the commercial sector to grow the investment. Capital would then be used to fund peer-based research, to provide better evidence of the positive impact our leisure services are having on the local population. Strong evidence of success will, moving forward, enable the sector to stake a strong case for funding via bodies such as Public Health England.

Neil Mosley

I'd introduce a health, fitness and wellbeing qualification that carries as much weight as core GCSEs such as English and maths. Individuals would be assessed according to their health, and would achieve a grade depending on the state of their health and their efforts to improve it. This would give less academic youngsters a chance to excel, while giving employers a good indication of the health of potential new recruits. ●

For more information about SIBEC UK or other similar events, please visit www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

Resistance equipment



Life Fitness launches small SYNRGY360 range

Life Fitness has added three new customisable, modular configurations to its SYNRGY360 resistance and multi-purpose training system. The SYNRGY360XM provides six training spaces; SYNRGY360XS features four. The smallest, SYNRGY360T, can be placed against a wall. The new configurations offer integrated storage for accessories and training variety.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

Life Fitness



Air-based resistance by Keiser for young and old

The new Xpress suite at GL1 leisure centre in Gloucester, UK, has installed Keiser Air resistance and CV equipment as part of a suite for children's PE lessons, older club members and women, with a timed circuit of the Keiser equipment. Business development director Jacquie Douglas says: "The second gym offers progression for women and older clients, from toning tables to air-based resistance work."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Keiser

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Concept to distribute Agassi's BILT line

Eight-time Grand Slam tennis champion Andre Agassi has teamed up with his fitness trainer Gil Reyes to launch a new 12-piece resistance training line. The BILT equipment by Agassi & Reyes will be available in the UK and Ireland through Concept Fitness International (CFI), which has secured an exclusive distribution deal for the kit in those markets. The centrepiece of the new range, the Change of Direction (COD) Machine received the 2013 FIBO Innovation Award for its design and safety.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

Concept Fitness

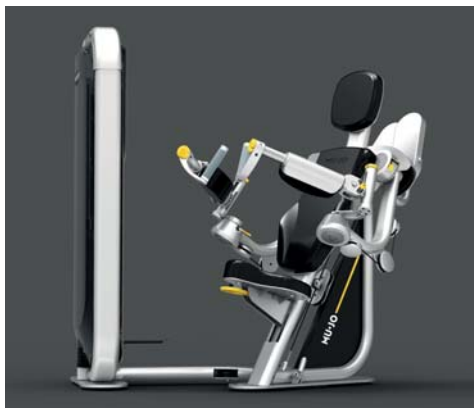


fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

HUR

HUR's air-resistance is an active ageing winner

HUR's Smart Card System, which integrates with HUR strength machines and iBalance Testing Systems, won the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) Innovative Solutions Award last year. The computerised Smart Card exercise machines and software set up machines automatically, enabling users to be more independent. The exercise machines feature age-friendly features, such as easy on and off buttons, low-impact air-resistance technology and close-to-zero starting resistance. In addition, all activity carried out is recorded for reporting, to give user feedback, and for measuring outcomes.



MuJo's multi-axis resistance sports rehab machine

MuJo (Multiple Joint Fitness Systems) has created the new External Shoulder Machine for sport performance and rehabilitation. It is designed to use resistance to train the multi-axial shoulder joint external rotator cuff muscles over a full range of motion with just one machine. It loads the shoulder joint independently in two directions to combine the benefits of four traditional shoulder exercises into one smooth, evenly loaded and efficient multi-axis exercise. The machine uses moving axis cam technology to replicate natural movements.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD MuJo

Precor has launched five new additions to its Discovery Series Plate Loaded range. The resistance line is designed to be more inviting and user-friendly, targeting first-time users and seasoned athletes alike. The new pieces are a Bicep Curl, Seated Dip with two positions for traditional dip or tricep extension, Leg Extension, Shoulder Press with counterbalance to reduce the starting weight to 4kg, and Weight Plate Tree for additional storage. The full range incorporates large, text-free illustrations demonstrating correct form and muscle usage. QR codes also allow smartphone users to view 30-second instruction videos.

Discovery Series Plate Loaded range additions



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Precor



User-friendly Shock fitness from Telju

Telju UK's new Shock fitness range, featuring resistance kit, is now on show at Vibro Suite, Birmingham, UK. The brand provides plate-loaded resistance, pulley towers, Olympic free weights, benches, squat racks and power cage kit. Its focus is on providing machines for all user levels, and machines have a user-friendly design.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Telju



Matrix Fitness UK reveals Magnum range

Matrix Fitness UK will be introducing its Magnum series resistance range for professional strength and conditioning in autumn 2013. The new products include Breaker Benches, Mega Racks and customisable multi-gyms. The products are designed to provide variety with a natural, mechanically correct motion and to be durable. They are constructed with heavy-gauge steel tubing with colour-coded adjustments.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Matrix

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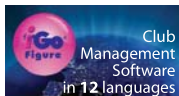
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