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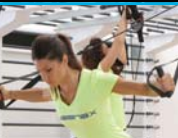
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Prevention in the spotlight

As the population continues to age, it's vitally important that the fitness and medical sectors engage people in preventative healthcare. And now Public Health England has gifted us an opportunity to do exactly this.

These are the facts: around 40 per cent of all deaths in England are linked to bad lifestyle choices, and NHS England spends more than £11bn a year treating illnesses caused by the effects of bad diet, inactivity, smoking and alcohol consumption. This is the stark reality of the health crisis in the UK – one that's mirrored in many other countries around the world.

It's never been more critical to engage the public in a preventative healthcare message; the impact of doing so would have a dramatic impact both on the nation's medical bill and an ageing population's quality of life. It could also bring a whole new *raison d'être* – not to mention new members with a long-term outlook on wellness – to the health and fitness industry.

The problem is, preventative healthcare is never an easy topic to tackle, and that's primarily because people don't generally want to listen. They already know the health risks of an unhealthy lifestyle – but they enjoy that lifestyle, and the lack of immediate (or even 100 per cent guaranteed) ceaseance means they're willing to risk the odds. They'll point to their neighbour – who's never exercised, who's smoked all their life and who's still going strong aged 94 – and use that sample of one as the rationale for not changing their own behaviour.

So bravo to Public Health England for its latest campaign, *One You*, which dives headfirst into this challenging topic, targeting adults – and particularly 40- to 60-year-olds – with a preventative healthcare message. The campaign focuses on small lifestyle changes across seven key areas to improve health and wellbeing: eating well, sleeping well, being smoke-free, only drinking in moderation, getting health checks, reducing stress and exercising.

At the heart of the campaign is an online health quiz, and it's well put together: it's thorough but not tedious, informative but not dry, cajoling but not nagging. It balances praise and encouragement with gentle nudges towards better behaviour, including recommending apps such as 'Couch to 5k' to support people in developing new habits. It reinforces much of what we already know, but does so in a way that's likely to make people think: "I should, and could, do that."



On its first day, PHE's *One You* health quiz received 364,000 hits.

There's clearly an appetite for prevention if it's skillfully communicated

It's still early days, but public uptake has been remarkable: on its first day, the quiz received 364,000 hits. There's clearly an appetite for prevention if it's skillfully communicated, and this campaign ticks two important boxes: it gets people to listen, and then it builds on the message in a way that ensures they don't immediately switch off again.

This is an absolute gift for our sector – but true gains will only be made if both medical and activity sectors use the momentum to fast-track progress in this vital area, turning interest into action.

It's a shame there wasn't more notice on the timing of the campaign, so our sector could prepare a strategy to maximise its impact, but there's still plenty we can do. First and foremost, we must mobilise all staff with behaviour change expertise, briefing them on the campaign and preparing them to support consumers in taking the next step. The *One You* 'conversation starter' leaflet, designed to help health professionals discuss the seven areas of lifestyle change with patients, will be equally valuable to fitness professionals in this regard.

There must then be a concerted effort to engage all those who've done the *One You* quiz, taking advantage of this critical moment when they're open to discussion. Whether it's local press, radio or simply signs outside the club, gyms must ask: "Have you taken the *One You* test?" and invite people in for a chat. This is a huge opportunity with the prospect of a comparatively easy win; let's seize it.

Kate Cracknell

Editor

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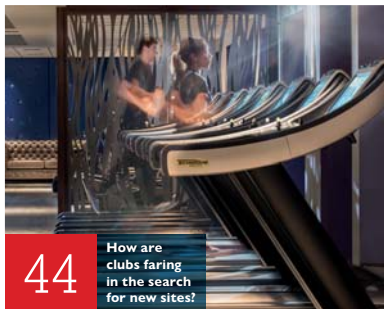
CONTENTS

health club management

APRIL 2016



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44

How are clubs faring in the search for new sites?

05

Editor's letter

It's vital that we engage the public in preventative healthcare, and PHE's new *One You* campaign gives us a chance to do just that, says Kate Cracknell

17

Letters

Joining the dots between fitness and rehab, and creating a community through apps

22

News round-up

Spanish operator Metropolitan unveils expansion plans, the UK has a 'sugar tax' Cybex partners Williams F1, and will boutique studios venture outside London?

37

Events calendar

A look at the key upcoming events in the international health and fitness calendar

38

Interview

Valerie Bönström

The joint CEO of Mrs.Sporty's talks to Kate Cracknell about a new functional training model and international expansion

38

Mrs.Sporty's Valerie Bönström on US expansion

44

Talking point Site insight

How is the fitness sector faring when it comes to securing good locations for clubs?

50

Walking alongside a community

As part of our Gympopia series, we look at how one Canadian club is making a long-term difference with its charitable work

56

Under the influence

Social media is everywhere – but are you harnessing the powers of the 'influencers'?

60

Move with the times

Open platforms, personalised plans and boutiques within clubs are just some of the trends industry experts are predicting for 2016. Kath Hudson reports

68

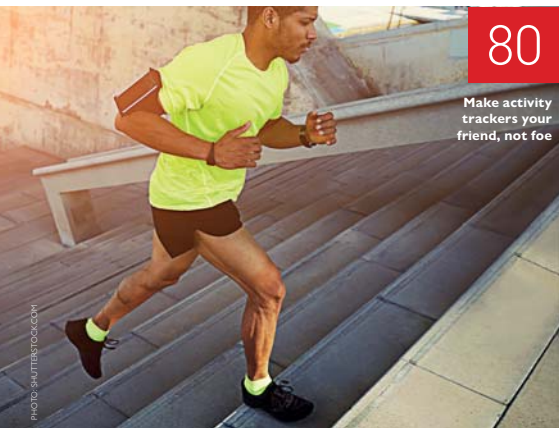
European leaders

Niels Gronau and Gregor Titz take a look at the key findings from the latest edition of *Leading Operators – Fitness in Europe*

72

What makes members unhappy, and what will turn them into fans?





80
Make activity trackers your friend, not foe



50
Clubs' charitable efforts must take a long-term approach

72

What makes a loyal customer?

Jon Nasta offers retention insight from the latest Listen360 analysis



60
We review the latest health and fitness trends

88

Activity = reward

Are tangible rewards the best way to get members to stick to their exercise regimes? We report on the growing category of exercise reward schemes

96

Inactive update Killing the cliché

A number of fitness brands changed the conversation in their New Year ad campaigns. Mark Hutcheon takes a closer look

100

IHRSA update Q&A – Molly Kemmer

The outgoing IHRSA chair reflects on the learnings from her 12-month tenure, and challenges the fitness sector to think bigger and think differently

105

Supplier showcase

We highlight recent projects from leading fitness equipment suppliers Cybex International UK, Life Fitness and Technogym

111

Fitness-kit.net Taking strongholds

A look at some of the latest innovations in strength equipment around the world

116

Judgement call

Obese people tend to see distances as being further than they really are, and hills steeper, according to research from the US

80

Right on track

It's time for health clubs to embrace activity tracking and not see it as a threat – but how many operators are achieving this?

85

Fitness-kit.net Smart bras

We take a look at some of the new smart bras combining proper support with the latest wearable technology

56

Why health clubs need the new social media superstars



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Valerie Bönström & Steffi Graf: The Mrs.Sporty franchise is eyeing up expansion to the US. How is the fitness sector faring in the European property market? We ask the experts. Where should you focus your efforts to maximise your impact on member retention?



Francine Houben, founder and creative director at Mecanoo, on inspiration as she gets older. It's fast-growing, environmentally sustainable and strong. Is bamboo the perfect building material? No more boring gyms – the designers and architects creating inspiring workout spaces



Ivanka Trump to launch her spa concept with a 10,000sq ft flagship site in Washington DC. Kenneth Ryan, Marriott's global head of spa, on the 'game-changing' new Ritz-Carlton Spa brand and market domination. Workplace wellness: We offer a sneak preview of a new study



Merlin collaborates with Derren Brown on new mind-bending, multi-sensory attraction for Thorpe Park in the UK. Future technology and design in Attractions Foresight™ 2016. Is your science centre built to last? Six design tips to make sure your attraction stays cutting-edge

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You don't need to be an elite sports star to train like one – sports performance is now hitting high street gyms. Former world mountain bike champ Martyn Ashton on a new bike for disabled people. The founder of FourSquare is creating a pro football team



Government announces plans to introduce a surprise £520m levy on sugary drinks. New Derren Brown ride sees Thorpe Park rolling back entry prices to a shilling. ukactive urges senior Conservatives to make active workplaces the norm



Aman's first Japanese hot springs resort, Amanemu, opens in Ise Shima National Park. Starwood: Continued expansion in Europe with more than 30 hotels over next five years. LA-based Soothe gains US\$35m in financial investment from The Riverside Company



SeaWorld announces plans to end its orca breeding programme across all parks. Rising 2022 World Cup costs and declining oil value see Qatar cut back on culture spending. IAAPA expands European regional office to incorporate both the Middle East and Africa



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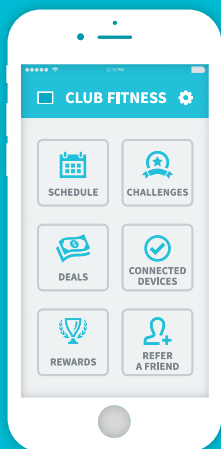
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Write to reply

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

Joining the dots of activity provision

I read your editor's letter entitled 'When sport meets fitness' (*HCM* Feb 16, p3) and agree with everything you said. It's so important that we work to dismantle artificial distinctions between different areas of activity, and I believe health clubs have the opportunity to take this on board.

I badly broke my leg and ankle last year, and it's been very interesting to see how the various phases of injury, operation, recuperation and rehab pan out. Generally I've found a lack of information on, and tie-up between, the operation and immediate after-care (hospital), outreach services once home (mainly physios), GP services, and local health and fitness deliverers (sports centres, gyms etc).

There must be hundreds of thousands of people in the UK undergoing surgery for injuries, but I can't see where these people are catered for. It's something that health and sports centres (and even GP surgeries) could be leading on.

GP referral systems may not reach this group, and while physio in a hospital setting is greatly welcome, for someone like me who's been very active physically, it may not be enough. However, going to a regular gym would be very difficult unless special sessions were arranged. Sports injury clinics don't seem to address this need either.

Perhaps we tend to think of people as being either active or inactive, fit or unfit, healthy or unhealthy, disabled or able-bodied. But it's a much more fluid picture. For at least five months, I was effectively disabled, and it gave me a great insight into how dealing with decreased mobility affects keeping fit generally. The design and accessibility of our fitness centres, services and resources must be able to deal with people dipping in and out of these situations.

Jacqueline Bennett
Co-founder, *belap*



We must do more to bridge the gap between rehab and fitness



The Millennial generation craves 'shareable' experiences; fitness clubs must find ways to meet this growing demand

Creating experiences is key to engaging Millennials

I read your 2016 Fitness Foresight trends report (*HCM* Feb 16, p38) and thought it was fantastic to see 'The Sharing Economy' included – the art of creating experiences for Millennials to make them engage, feel a part of something and want to spread the word. Ken Hughes hit the nail on the head when he said: "Shareable experiences are the new social currency."


Social media is now woven into our industry, with 'sharing' playing a huge part in this; when writing this letter, the #fitspo hashtag had 27,000,000 posts on Instagram alone. Companies like Color Run and

Tough Mudder are capitalising on this, offering a shareable experience – but why is the rest of the fitness industry still playing catch-up?

It's about making fitness fun again – something you want to talk about with your friends, family or all your social media followers.

After all, there's nothing more powerful than word of mouth recommendations. If we get this right, we won't need to rely on traditional advertising methods to drive footfall through our doors.

Lee Myall
Co-founder, *Jumptastic*

A man with short dark hair and a goatee, wearing a green t-shirt and black shorts, is suspended in the air by a suspension training system. He is smiling broadly, looking towards the right. The system consists of several bright green ropes that cross over each other, with black straps attached to his hands and feet. He is wearing black and yellow sneakers. The background is a plain, light-colored wall, and the floor is dark.

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► Avoiding disability discrimination

A recent legal decision has provided clarification for UK employers on how to deal with long-term absence among disabled employees, reducing the risk of disability discrimination. Here is a summary of the key points.

Employers are already required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees where such employees face a substantial disadvantage. For example, a diabetic employee may require flexible working hours to eat regularly and test blood sugar levels.

But when a disabled employee is absent on long-term sick leave, is an employer required to make adjustments to any sickness absence policy? For example, a standard absence policy might include trigger points whereby an employee is automatically disciplined after a certain number of absences – but a disabled employee may have more sickness absence. Should adjustments be made accordingly?

The recent decision confirms that the duty to consider adjustments

does apply where a disabled employee's absences trigger the application of an absence policy. However, employers can determine whether it's reasonable to adjust the rules of the policy in the particular circumstances of the case.

If the disabled employee has been absent for a lengthy period and/or further absences are likely, it might be reasonable to take into account any disability-related absences for the purposes of trigger points. But where there's an initial/one-off absence that's disability-related, it may still be reasonable to discount it for the purposes of a trigger.

Professional advice should be taken before dismissing any adjustments as unreasonable, or if you're considering dismissing a disabled employee for disability-related absences. In the latter situation, this would amount to disability discrimination that would require justification.

Jessica Higgins
Employment law specialist,
Ibex Gale



Trampolining needs to develop best practice guidelines in health and safety

Understanding health & safety

Rather than posing a threat, the UK's new sentencing guidelines for safety offences – which came into effect on 1 February 2016 – should provide an easy reference for operators, who until now may not have fully understood the implications of a lack of, or disregard for, health and safety. No operation can be perfect all the time, and knowing where culpability, accountability and responsibility lie will afford a greater level of protection.

Instead of worrying about the fines – which could be up to 24 times higher than before – operators should use this change in law as a timely reminder to look at their company procedures, check they're following current legislation and best practice, and get up to date with staff training. A health and safety compliance audit could highlight any issues and provide guidance on solutions, particularly in areas that aren't yet regulated.

A prime example is the rise in popularity of trampoline parks. Although there's currently no formal regulated guidance, it's important all hazards and risks have been considered in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act, and we're now working with three trampoline park operators to help with health and safety best practice.

For more information on the new sentencing guidance, visit www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk

Gill Twell

Head of group operations, Right Directions



If you have disabled employees, be aware of recent changes in the law

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► Online enquiries: Speed is of the essence

Your recent feature entitled 'Can your staff sell?' (HCM Feb 16, p64) offers great food for thought and complements research we carried out with Leisure-net Solutions into online enquiries.

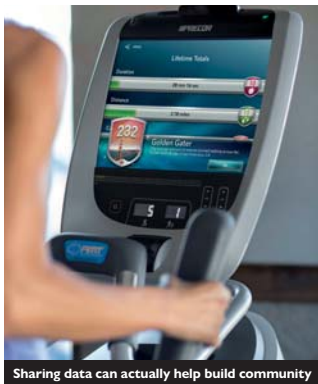
A staggering 50 per cent of all membership enquiries are now made this way, yet we found it took an average of 30 hours for operators to respond. Only 20 per cent of enquirers then received a phone call from the membership sales team; 60 per cent received an email; and a shameful 20 per cent received no contact at all.

Speed of response to an online enquiry is key. Our quick tips are:

- Make sure your website is up to the job and that your online enquiry form captures as much information as possible
- Quickly respond with a personalised acknowledgement, inviting the prospect to take a tour
- Pick up the phone within 15 minutes of the enquiry

As your feature points out, the quality of response is key too. Every enquirer is driven by a personal and emotional response, and joining your facility involves a sensitive decision-making process. So when the sales team calls, it's important they have the skills, training and confidence to build rapport and demonstrate how your club will provide the ideal solution.

Lesley Aitken
Founder, Nurturing Skills



Harness apps to build a community

Without doubt, apps can encourage people to set goals and be more active, so I was heartened to read that the UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has referenced technology and apps in its new sports strategy, *Sporting Future*. However, I believe it's the sense of community that apps can foster that's key – whether that's within a gym or an online community.

For example, I've linked my Preva (Precor's networked fitness solution) and Movescount accounts, meaning my Preva workout data automatically syncs with Movescount. Here there are a number of different community groups – friends, as well as groups set up for specific events. This not only encourages me to log workouts, but also to have a purpose for that data: I can track how I'm doing compared to others, comment on their activity and get involved in group discussions about training methods.

It's essential that non-active people have human interaction too, but apps can also play a part in this. For example, a personal trainer can use apps to keep an eye on clients' goals, workouts and achievements, allowing them to encourage and praise the member and help them become part of a community within the gym.

Ultimately it's the people we share our data with – and with it our experiences – that will make a gym membership sustainable. By creating a community, whether it's led by a PT or through a group where people share their workouts, you can keep people engaged and coming back for more.

Jonathan Griffiths
Business development manager, Precor EMEA Partners



International news

US gym market hits record levels

A record 64 million consumers made use of America's gyms in 2015, as revenues jumped 6 per cent to reach US\$25.8bn (£23.5bn, £18.2bn).

According to figures from IHRSA, the total number of gym members in 2015 stood at 55.3 million – up 2.2 per cent on 2014 – with a further 8.7 million consumers using facilities on a non-contract basis.

Members also spent more time in the gym than ever before, racking up an average of 10.4 visits each in 2015 as fitness remained the nation's most popular sport.

"In 2015, all key consumer indicators posted improvements, including number of health club members, consumers, and visits," says Joe Moore, IHRSA's president and CEO.

Details: http://lei.sr?o=D6v4j_H

Altafit continues affordable club rollout

Spanish franchise operator Altafit launched its 40th fitness site last month – the first to have a dedicated functional training and boxing zone, dubbed The Garage.

This is Altafit's 19th club in Madrid. The 2,000sq m site has more than 200 stations, as well as toning and free weights areas, indoor cycling and a group exercise studio.

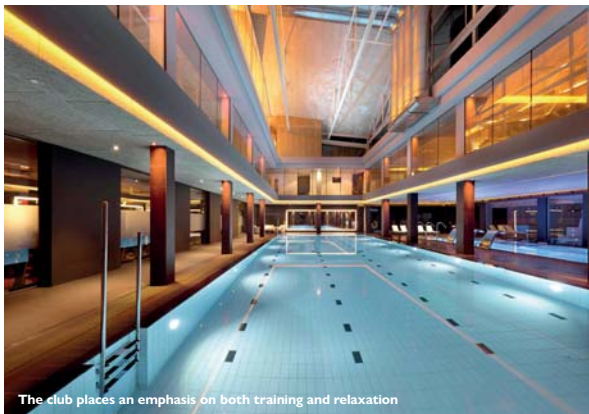
Membership costs €19.90 a month, but in spite of this low cost, Altafit says it's investing in staff training to ensure its employees can advise and motivate members to meet their goals.

The chain is already gearing up to open its next club in Pamplona. In addition to its affordable clubs, Altafit launched a premium concept in December, the Myst Gym Club, also in Madrid.

Details: http://lei.sr?o=UgH5q_H



The new club has 200 stations



The club places an emphasis on both training and relaxation

Badalona site for Metropolitan

Metropolitan launched a 6,000sq m club in Badalona, Spain, last month – its first in the city.

A €5m development, the club follows the Metropolitan brand values of marrying good design and high quality, with an emphasis on both relaxation and training.

Facilities include three indoor studios – one for cycling and two for group exercise, offering 900 classes a month – and a functional training zone. The Technogym-equipped gym has more than 100 machines, including Technogym's Artis line; the MyWellness cloud-based activity tracking system is also on offer.

Other facilities include a large wet area, the focus of which is the 23m indoor pool, which is visible throughout the club. There's also a solarium, Turkish bath, sauna, spa pool, ice fountain and cold showers.

A relaxation area comprises six treatment rooms with a range of beauty treatments on offer, as well as physiotherapy and nutritional

services. Members also have access to a cafeteria, sun terrace and a crèche.

Located in the city centre, the club has been converted from an old multiplex cinema, which started life as a theatre in 1911. The structure of the building has been kept intact, but the inside has been totally renovated in an 18-month project. The club's architect, Joan Carles Navarro of Aia Estudio, was mindful of the high standard of design of Metropolitan clubs: previous sites have been designed by prestigious architects including Richard Rogers.

With 23 clubs in major Spanish cities, the Metropolitan chain currently has 70,000 members. It now plans to open two to three more clubs each year, with a target of 35 clubs operational by 2020.

Headed up by Javier Pellón, Metropolitan was launched in 1989. Turnover in 2015 was €60m and the target for 2016 is €67m.

Details: http://lei.sr?o=K6K9N_H

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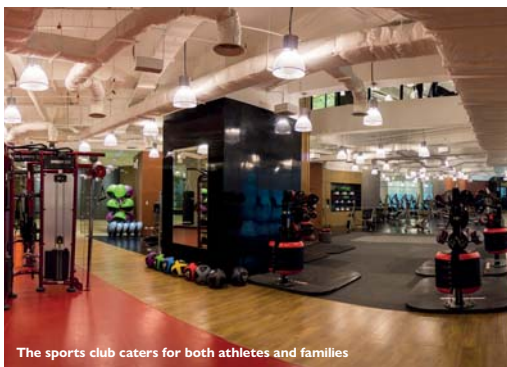
The finishing touches have been put on Seilsprung, a new independent club in Weilerswist, near Cologne in Germany.

Run by brother and sister team Markus and Karoline Schulte, the overall philosophy of the club is to offer high quality member support with frequently updated, individual workout plans and nutritional advice. Some of the latest technology is on offer, such as Star Trac's HumanSport functional training circuit and

Dr Wolf's Back Check. Facilities include strength and cardio areas, a functional training zone, two group fitness studios, a crèche, healthy café and outdoor activity area with beach volleyball.

Aimed at people who want to invest in their health, memberships costs €18.95 a week for a flexible membership; €16.50 a month on a 12-month contract; or €13.95 a month for a 24-month membership.

Details: http://lei.sr?o=S4B8q_H



The sports club caters for both athletes and families

Kerry Sports heads to Shangri-La

March saw the launch of what's claimed to be the most extensive wellness and fitness facility in the Philippines – at the Shangri-La Hotel in Fort Bonifacio, just outside Manila.

The 8,000sq m Kerry Sports club has a 25m lap pool, two tennis courts, two squash courts, an NBA-grade indoor basketball court, four group exercise studios, a free weights area, two functional training zones, and a boxing/MMA zone with five Boxmasters. There's also an Adventure Racing Zone aimed at people wanting to train seriously.

Director Michael Montes previously ran one of Madonna's Hard Candy Fitness clubs.

He says: "What really separates us from the competition is what we can provide to the extreme athletes, but also to families who want to be able to spend more time together. We provide everything that most people would be looking for when it comes to fitness and sports."

There are also eight treatment rooms, two restaurants and extensive children's facilities.

This is the first Kerry Sports to be built inside a Shangri-La Hotel; the other two existing sites are located in Kerry Hotels in Beijing and Shanghai, China.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=X3ag3_H

GWJ reports gives insights into wellness

Whether employees consider their companies to be genuinely caring about their wellness is key to boosting worker health and productivity, according to new research from the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), which has released two new pieces of research on the global wellness industry.

The first, *The Future of Wellness at Work*, looks at unwellness in the global workforce and forecasts how work and workplace wellness concepts will change dramatically in the future.

The second paper, *Unlocking the Power of Company Caring*, gauges how employees feel about their work culture and wellness programmes.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=k4p8K_H

Indoor cycling makes its debut in Paris

Paris now has its first boutique indoor cycling studio, Let's Ride, thanks to entrepreneurial duo Nicolas Chabrier and Jonathan Garret, who discovered the model while working in investment banking in NYC and London.

Architect firm DAS Studio were responsible for converting a former printing factory into an uber-cool club with whitewashed walls, and exposed concrete and ventilation ducts.

The main studio is completely black and lit by neon lights to create a dark and intimate space. Lighting is synchronised with the soundtrack to create a more immersive experience. Schwinn supplied the 42 bikes.

"More sites are on the cards in France and abroad," says Garret.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=Z6y9g_H

Russian dolls prove a hit for Brick

US gym chain Brick has teamed up with advertising giant BBDO New York to create an innovative campaign designed to stop members quitting.

Citing statistics that nearly 80 per cent of New Year gym starters give up within five months, Brick has 3D-printed a range of Russian dolls to demonstrate the progress members can expect to make by following its workout plans.

Inside each doll is a USB stick containing a customised five-month plan for the new member based on their workout goals. New members receive the dolls as an incentive to keep going and to serve as



The dolls show what results members can expect

a reminder of the end result. As well as hooking members, the catchy concept has gained media traction and has helped to boost the gym chain's profile globally.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=M3x9A_H



Schwinn has supplied the 42 bikes

Childhood obesity strategy further delayed

The government's long overdue childhood obesity strategy is facing further delays, with the document now not expected until after the EU referendum.

Although originally due in December 2015, the Department of Health (DoH) has confirmed that the strategy will not be published until the summer.

HCM understands that physical activity will not play a prominent role in the strategy. It is thought that the government considers provisions for tackling physical inactivity to have been covered by the recently published sports strategy – *Sporting Future* – which saw Sport England's remit broadened to increasing participation among those aged five and over.

Tam Fry, from the National Obesity Forum, said: "This constant delay in publishing the childhood obesity strategy is unforgivable and the Department of Health's statement that they 'want to get it right' is the most ridiculous and lame excuse."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=K5W8h_H

PHE targets mid-life inactivity with One You



One You is aimed at 40 to 60-year-olds

Public Health England (PHE) has launched a major new campaign which aims to get middle-aged people more active and on course to spend their retirement in good health.

Aimed primarily at 40- to 60-year-olds, the new One You initiative is intended to help adults ensure that they move more, eat well, drink less and be smoke free. One You will also provide information on how people can take steps to reduce their stress levels and sleep better.

"Although it has been customary to blame people for their 'lifestyle', we now appreciate that we need to take into account the environmental pressures that make it difficult to make healthy choices – having to sit eight hours a day at work, for example, and then drive an hour home," commented Professor Sir Muir Gray, clinical adviser for the One You campaign. Details: http://lei.sr?a=2y4g_H

Xercise4Less gets kids moving

Xercise4Less has kicked off an innovative new programme offering free exercise classes to children in a bid to tackle the growing epidemic of youth inactivity.

Eager to get children on their feet and away from computer screens, Xercise4Less will put on free classes for parents and their children aged between three and five across its 35 UK health clubs. Each site will stage four Xercise4Kids sessions per week as part of a £1m investment from the budget operator into the scheme.

The new exercise model was developed by Xercise4Kids co-ordinator Sarah Philp,

who wanted to provide parents and children with the opportunity to enjoy exercise together and learn new and exciting ways of being physically active.

The 45-minute classes take both the children and parents on a "storytelling journey" through four different themes: The Underwater Kingdom, Deserted Lands, Jump Around Jungle and The Exceptional Circus. Each class incorporates four or five different activities that keep the heart rate high and challenge the major muscle groups, with an emphasis on fun.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=v7j7f_H



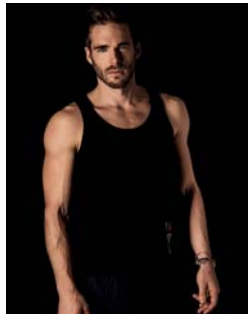
Xercise4Less will put on free classes for parents and their kids aged three to five

Planning laws 'blocking fitness'

The UK's outdated town planning laws are blocking fitness studios from boosting physical activity on the country's high streets, according to the UK boss of Barry's Bootcamp.

Sandy Macaskill, co-owner of the two London Barry's Bootcamps, is calling for an overhaul of planning regulations to reflect how fitness businesses have evolved towards a retail model. He says his efforts to acquire a new site for Barry's Bootcamp have been thwarted by council planners who would rather have a "furniture shop" appear on the high street than a business that encourages the population to get active (see also p44).

He said: "It's as if the 2012 Olympic legacy didn't even happen – councils are telling everyone to be more active but then they don't want to see fitness studios on the high street." Details: http://lei.sr?a=2y4g_H



Sandy Macaskill is co-owner of Barry's Bootcamp London

The UK's £520m 'sugar tax'



Chancellor George Osborne said action must be taken to curb sugar intake

The UK government has announced plans to introduce a surprise £520m levy on sugary drinks to tackle the country's burgeoning obesity problem.

Delivering his spring budget on 16 March, chancellor George Osborne said the average UK five-year-old consumes their own body weight in sugar every year and measures must be taken to prevent this.

"Doing the right thing for the next generation is what this government and this Budget is about," Osborne told MPs. "No matter how controversial it is. You cannot have a long-term plan for the country unless you have a long-term plan for our children's healthcare."

A sugar levy will be introduced on soft drinks from 2018, giving drinks companies – whose shares were sent tumbling by the news – time to adjust. The chancellor said there will be two bands for the levy – which drinks companies can choose whether to pass on to consumers – and added that pure fruit juices will be excluded.

Expected to raise a total of £520m, the money generated by the sugar tax will be used to double the amount spent on school sports. In addition, schools will be able to apply for money to extend the school day with more sports activities.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m4Q9N_H

Sean Fitzpatrick to headline Flame 2016



Fitzpatrick will speak at Flame in June

New Zealand rugby star and motivational leadership expert Sean Fitzpatrick will be the keynote speaker for ukactive's 2016 Flame Conference.

The former All Blacks captain will speak about his ongoing work around the science of a winning culture and the secrets of leadership.

"The TEAM ethos is essential in business, and I'm looking forward to talking about my work at this year's Flame Conference," said Fitzpatrick.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m4Q9N_H

Fitness First puts twins to the test with BioScore



BioScore covers a range of metrics

Fitness First has made waves across the internet with a new campaign promoting its BioScore health and fitness assessment.

The video, which has racked up more than a million views online, invites five pairs of identical twins to determine if their biological age matches their actual age.

BioScore – which comprises health, fitness and lifestyle assessments – is now included within Fitness First's BodyFirst and BodyFirst+ induction packages and forms part of the chain's ongoing investment in unlocking the secrets to motivation.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=S4V6s_H

Sector needs an 'image change'

Efforts to professionalise the physical activity sector workforce have suffered a setback, with statistics suggesting nearly 11 per cent of personal trainers have been intimate with their clients.

The survey of 1,000 regular gym users – carried out, bizarrely, by training provider Be a Better You – found that one in three find their personal trainer attractive. Of these, a quarter confessed to having shared a kiss with their PT and seven per cent said they had slept with them.

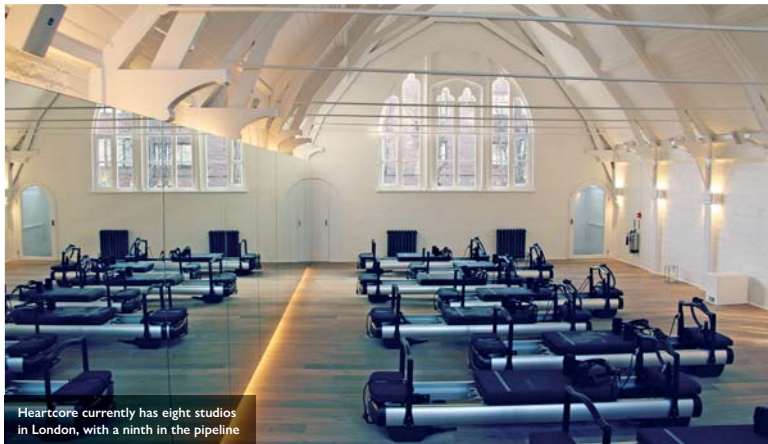
The findings were criticised by ukactive executive director Steven Ward, who said the survey showed a 'lack of respect' for the job roles in the sector at a time when serious initiatives are being implemented by the likes of CIMSPA to professionalise the



Inappropriate client/PT relations are rarely discussed

workforce. However, Ward added that the sector's frontline staff need an 'image change' to alter public perceptions if they are to be considered 'part of a trusted group' of expert professionals in society.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=f7Z7Z_H



Heartcore currently has eight studios in London, with a ninth in the pipeline

Boutique boom to spread beyond London?

Having conquered the country's capital, Britain's booming boutique fitness sector looks set to spread its wings beyond London.

Inspired by boutique pioneers in New York and Los Angeles, boutique fitness studios have taken London by storm in recent years and – together with the budget sector – have been the health club industry's biggest areas of growth since the recession.

But with competition for affluent consumers – boutique fitness classes typically cost £14-

sure everyone in the London boutique space will do sooner or later. We'll all get sick of bashing each other over price eventually."

Property challenges

For Schuring, who has quietly amassed an empire (by boutique standards) of eight sites across the capital with his partner Jess Schuring, the issue isn't so much the number of potential customers, but more the lack of viable spaces in London that represent value for money.

Site acquisition has been a perennial barrier to growth in London. Aside from exorbitant property prices, planning laws can also be cumbersome. "We've still got the major hurdle of planning committees frequently blocking applications to convert A1 spaces into fitness studios," said Barry's Bootcamp UK co-owner Sandy Macaskill, whose efforts to find a third London location for his boutique chain have been frustrated by council planning committees.

Aside from Heartcore, it seems that other boutique businesses are also looking to avoid such property problems and snap up sites in different parts of the country.

Pip Black, co-founder of Frame Fitness – which is about to launch its fourth London location – announced recently that the female-focused boutique chain is branching out beyond London. Having received funding in December from angel investors, Black reiterated the company's plans to launch two new sites each year; Brighton, Bristol and Manchester are all possible locations.

Colin Waggett, CEO of Third Space, told *HCM* last month that his chain's forthcoming boutique concept Another Space could also include locations outside the capital if the site was right.

Meanwhile, online gym pass provider PayasUgym is planning to take its new fitness festival Urban Movement on the road to showcase the best 'boutique-style' fitness classes across the UK.

Meanwhile, boutique fitness is also making its mark in the north-east. Joanne McCue Bannatyne, the former wife of Duncan Bannatyne, recently introduced a range of boutique fitness concepts at her WattFitness studio on Teesside Industrial Estate. "Small boutique fitness units are the future of the fitness industry," she said. "Teesside is helping lead the way for the future of fitness in the UK."

Details: <http://lei.sr/a=bzZ>



Brian Schuring: Looking beyond London

£25 a time – and prime locations reaching fever pitch in London, 2016 could be the year when boutiques break out of the M25.

"We're looking to expand at the moment and locations outside of London are definitely something we're exploring," Heartcore co-founder Brian Schuring told *Health Club Management (HCM)*. "I'm pretty



Joanne McCue Bannatyne: A new boutique for the north-east

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Independent news

Oxygen Freejumping targets 30 sites by 2018

Oxygen Freejumping has set its sights on reaching 30 locations across the UK by 2018, after securing £10m in funding.

The trampolining business – set up by ex-ukactive CEO David Stalker and LA fitness founder Fred Turok, with backing from leisure veteran Steve Philpott – currently has two locations and recently signed a deal with Lucozade Powerleague to open five more sites this summer.

The Oxygen team says it has two further sites “in the hands of solicitors” and is aiming to reach 30 parks within two years, following the £10m investment from Beechbrook Capital and existing investors.

“There was a number of offers on the table, through our advisors Zeus Capital and we are delighted that Beechbrook is investing £8m in this stage of our development,” said Turok.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=U6tzv_H



The debut Oxygen site in West Acton



Designed with the time-poor in mind, Frame Victoria offers 30-minute lunch classes

Frame plants flag in Victoria

Female-focused fitness chain Frame will unveil its fourth boutique studio this month, just a medicine ball's throw away from south London's Victoria Station.

Designed by architects Matheson Whiteley, with strong input from Frame founders Pip Black and Joan Murphy, the soon-to-be-completed studio features a range of exercise areas, in addition to an on-site café and dedicated retail space.

The site comprises three studios: a reformer pilates studio, a sound-proof fitness and dance studio, and a yoga/barre studio. Designed with the time-poor in mind, Frame Victoria sees the introduction of three new 30-minute lunchtime classes – Gliders, Energy Shot and Mini Barre – in addition to Frame favourites such as its Beyoncé dance workshops.

“Literally 20 steps from the station, Frame Victoria is the first pay-as-you-go, multi-discipline studio in SW1,” commented Frame co-founder Pip Black.

“It really is a one-stop-shop for all things health and fitness, making it a destination for Framers to have fun getting fit, grab lunch from the Fuel café and even pick up a pair of leggings from the Frame Shop and get back to their desk all within the lunch hour.”

Frame, which launched its third site in King's Cross late last year, is also exploring locations in several trendy UK cities in a bid to export boutique fitness beyond the capital. London has been a hotbed of boutique growth in recent years and several of the city's concepts are now looking at expansion further afield.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=u8G7y_H

Perrin starts class-based concept

Former Fitness First high-flyer David Perrin has launched a new class-based gym concept in Stockport which emphasises the importance of educating clients to help them achieve their fitness goals.

Perrin, who was fitness product manager when he left the gym chain after seven years, says quality coaching and instruction is a central tenet of his new Seven Movement studio, which launches this month.

With a philosophy of ‘Train hard, learn change’, Seven Movement's functional-focused classes are designed to push participants to their limit, while the instructors are taught to coach clients on key aspects of exercise, diet and motivation.

Devised by Perrin, the classes – which start at £6 for a single session – include High

Resistance Circuits, Move Pro (flexibility and agility) and Superhero Fit (for six- to 13-year-olds). Perrin is the owner of the club and has received support from Growth Manchester, with plans to open four more studios over the next three years.

“My seven years working at Fitness First in both National and Group roles has given me the experience and confidence to go out and build a company with my own vision and philosophies at the heart,” Perrin told *Health Club Management*. “Working in the industry for 12 years has been a privilege, my goal now is to build a fitness company that our members can connect with, is more personal and truly helps them build long term habits to help them love how they look and feel.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=hqZgM_H



David Perrin is the owner of the club



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Technology news

Irish fitness tech start-up eyes US expansion



Glofox CEO Conor O'Loughlin

Boutique fitness software solutions provider Glofox has secured a major cash injection as the firm revs up for an expansion into the US market.

The Dublin-based firm, which supplies business management software to around 170 boutique fitness studios in Europe, has raised €500,000 in an early stage funding round to support US market entry and further development of its product. The round consisted of €250,000 in funding from Enterprise Ireland's High Potential Startup Unit (HPSU) – co-matched with an additional €250,000 from private investment firm, Growing Capital.

The brainchild of former professional rugby player turned entrepreneur Conor O'Loughlin, Glofox is a booking, payment and membership management platform for gyms and fitness studios.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=bqf8v_H



Fitssi has recently brought on board new CEO Emily Stephens

'Tinder for fitness' aiming high

Social workout app Fitssi is on a mission to connect more like-minded fitness fans and the company has outlined a push into the competitive US market as its latest objective.

The app – which aims to offer added motivation by helping users find nearby workout buddies to spur them on – has been making waves in the UK since launching in April 2015 and now hopes to carry that momentum across the pond.

To that end, the company has brought on board new CEO Emily Stephens; recently exhibited at LA Fit Expo; and is now engaging with a number of US-based operators and social influencers.

Fitssi co-founder Chris Sweeney – a PT for nine years with Fitness First who came up with the app as a way to get his mum

off the sofa – says the sheer size of the US market is a significant draw.

"Expansion to the US was based around our desire to scale quickly and build international validity," Sweeney told *Health Club Management* magazine.

"The US market is much bigger and so are the problems of inactivity and obesity. LA Fit Expo was a great platform to establish initial contacts and seed Fitssi."

Key to growth in the US will be the ability to attract investors. Fitssi is aiming to raise £150,000 in seed funding and Sweeney believes that the impending monetisation of the app – by adding an 'Uber for PTs' type function – will significantly increase chances of attracting capital to support growth.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=T3A7Z_H

PayasUgym: New fitness festival

PayasUgym has launched an exciting new series of fitness festivals designed to showcase the hottest group classes from boutique studios.

The online gym pass provider recently hosted its first Urban Movement event at hip Shoreditch venue Village Underground. The pilot event saw more than 100 participants sweat through a 70-minute workout medley of six different exercise classes available through PayasUgym.

Instructors from Good Vibes Fitness, The Hot Spot Yoga, The Capoeira Academy, FightZone and London Dance Academy, plus celebrity PT Bradley Simmonds, put the fitness enthusiasts through their paces with 10-minute sessions covering yoga, pilates, Capoeira, boxing, twerking and HIIT.

Speaking to *Health Club Management* at the

event, PayasUgym founders Jamie Ward and Neil Harmsworth said they want to create a live festival experience for fans of boutique fitness. They plan to stage an Urban Fitness event every quarter in London or other major UK cities to showcase the latest classes and provide a platform for suppliers to showcase products to a captive audience.

For London Dance Academy studio manager Vanessa Fagan, the event provided an ideal forum to showcase exciting classes to potential new members.

"PayasUgym has a truly innovative and fresh approach to getting people motivated to train and we're delighted to have been involved with them from the start of their expansion in London," said Fagan.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=t4B4C_H



Urban Fitness will be held every quarter



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Supplier & training news

BMF guarantees jobs for ex-forces personnel



BMF's Mark Wood (L) and Andy Kay

British Military Fitness (BMF) has launched a new training academy for fitness instructors and personal trainers, with the offer of "guaranteed employment opportunities to ex and serving military personnel".

The outdoor exercise provider's new academy will teach a variety of Level 2 and Level 3 certificates, as well as a new Level 4 award in strength and conditioning, with all courses recognised by Active IQ and endorsed by REPs.

With 98 per cent of its workforce being ex-armed forces, BMF has a strong affinity for those with a military background. Already an MoD-approved supplier of careers to those leaving the forces, the company's new academy will offer work as instructors at BMF outdoor centre to ex-forces graduates.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=gS4d8_H



Festival-goers get into the swing of things when the concept was piloted last year

Schwinn set to star at Bestival

Fitness supplier Schwinn wants to make sure that the DJ decks won't be the only things spinning at this September's Bestival music festival, with its indoor bikes set to star in a dedicated group cycling area.

Around 40 Schwinn indoor cycles will be installed in Bestival's new Revolution Ride arena as part of a concept created by former Psycle programme director Tim Weeks.

Having been trialled at last year's festival, the project is aiming to build on its initial success and "unite the Bestival community through the power of music and exercise".

As with most of the other stages and tents at the festival – which takes place on the Isle of Wight – the Revolution Rides arena will have a dedicated music line-up of different artists, bands and DJs.

Weeks says that he wants to offer riders a healthier route towards attaining the type of endorphin rush that one might get from going to a party in Ibiza, a gig in London – or a festival on the Isle of Wight.

"This isn't about just taking a fitness class to a festival. This is about integrating a basic concept into the DNA of Bestival and creating something fresh that has never been done before," commented Weeks.

"It isn't about burning calories. It's about making exercise part of modern culture and society, not just something for fitness nuts."

"We want everyone to leave grinning so hard their smile meets their ears – they should feel powerful like they can change the world. This is going to be a little bit special."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=h3W3Y_H

Cybox lands Williams F1 tie-up

Cybox was unveiled as the official fitness supplier to Williams Racing Formula One team at a glitzy launch last month.

The announcement was made at the opening of the new Williams Cybox Gym, a 330sq m (3,552sq ft) training facility on-site at the racing team's headquarters in Grove, Oxfordshire. As part of the exclusive five-year agreement, the Williams Cybox Gym will become a new UK showcase site for the fitness equipment manufacturer.

Williams star drivers Felipe Massa and Valtteri Bottas will be among the 700 staff to use the new gym, which features more than 35 pieces of cardiovascular and strength training equipment from Cybox.

The gym offers equipment from Cybox's 700 cardio series and the new SPARC,

Cybox's self-powered resisted cardio machine. It also includes equipment from the Eagle NX and Prestige VRS selectorised strength lines, Bravo Functional Trainer, Big Iron lifting platform and a range of plate-loaded and free weights equipment. Also installed is a functional training rig, group exercise bikes and a range of functional training equipment.

"In working with the team at Williams we were determined to meet their requirements for the wide range of users in the gym," said Rob Thurston, commercial director at Cybox UK. "The equipment was carefully selected to not only provide a state-of-the-art training facility but to also maximise the portfolio of equipment available to all."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=N8QgX_H



Cybox's new SPARC system features



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People news

New FD unveiled by Places for People Leisure



D'Costa is a chartered accountant

Places for People Leisure has announced that Carolyn D'Costa has been appointed to the company's board as its new finance director.

Having most recently headed up finance at Places for People Leisure in her role as chief financial officer, D'Costa has been promoted to the position vacated by Sandra Dodd when she took over from Steve Philpott as CEO last year.

A chartered accountant, D'Costa has more than 14 years' experience and formally took up her new role last month.

She said: "Places for People Leisure has an exciting future and I am delighted to be joining the board at this time where I aim to build on the solid foundations already in place and drive our corporate financial strategy in accordance with our overall objectives to create active places."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=F8U8u_H



(L-R) Ken Campling, Justin Musgrove and Anthony Elliott have all been promoted

Bannatyne top team rewarded

Duncan Bannatyne has rewarded the senior management team which helped his health club chain navigate a tricky 2015 with a series of promotions.

Last year saw the jailing of former finance director Christopher Watson for defrauding The Bannatyne Group out of nearly £8m – an experience that left Bannatyne feeling 'betrayed'. During this time, the revamped top team has worked hard to move the operator forward and redefine its brand as a premium proposition.

Leading this initiative has been Bannatyne Group managing director Justin Musgrove, who has been promoted to the role of chief executive for his efforts.

Meanwhile, finance director Ken Campling has also been commended for his

work balancing the books, being given the new role of chief financial officer and a seat on the company board.

Completing the shake-up, Anthony Elliott has been named director of operations, responsible for day-to-day operations across the company's health club, spa and hotel businesses. Elliott has recently been overseeing the Bannatyne gym refurbishment programme and has also played a significant role in the group's recent acquisitions as it seeks to expand.

In addition to Musgrove, Campling and Elliott, chair Duncan Bannatyne, director of estates & facilities Steve Hancock, plus legal counsel & director Ed James complete the Bannatyne Group senior management team.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=gV8ag_H

Brice named new Sustrans CEO

Sustrans has announced that Transport for London (TfL) high-flyer Xavier Brice will become its new CEO from June 2016.

The sustainable transport charity is "excited" by the appointment of Brice, who has spent the last 10 years working on a number of high-profile cycling projects for TfL. He designed a new cycling strategy for London – which led to the introduction of the Cycle Superhighways and the 'Boris bike' Cycle Hire Scheme – and has also overseen the recent London Underground transformation programme.

"I've been enthusiastic about the benefits of cycling for a long time, both professionally and in my home life – where I'm introducing my young daughters to the joys of getting around by bike," said Brice.

"As a long-term supporter of Sustrans I'm looking forward to leading the organisation and making walking and cycling a more attractive and practical option for communities across the UK."

Brice will be expected to continue the work of Sustrans in championing cycling as a healthy and sustainable form of transport. A recent report from the charity highlighted that three-quarters of the public want the government to invest more cycling, while another found the National Cycle Network has saved the UK economy 'more than £7bn' since it was established 20 years ago.

Brice will replace Sustrans' current chief executive Malcolm Shepherd, who left the charity at the end of March.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=g4n6G_H



Brice is a long-term Sustrans supporter

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EVENTS CALENDAR

APRIL

7-10 | FIBO 2016 Cologne, Germany

The world's leading trade show for health, fitness and wellness, offering an international platform for managers, distributors, suppliers and investors. This year's show will see some brand new halls added, for a hands-on exploration of the future of the sector.

www.fibo.de

8-9 | FitPro LIVE 2016 Novotel London West, London, UK

FitPro LIVE's new format will encompass the FitPro LIVE Workshop Series – a series of interactive single-theme workshops – and FitPro LIVE 2016, two two-day multi-theme events.

www.fitpro.com/live16

13-14 | Millennial 20/20 Victoria House, Bloomsbury, London, UK

Millennial 20/20 will gather more than 2,000 brands, companies, founders and start-ups to examine and understand the Millennial consumer and marketplace.

www.millennial20-20.com

15-18 | ECA World Fitness Conference / OBOW Show New York City, US

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2016, ECA World Fitness' annual shows in New York and Florida highlight new products, ideas and concepts.

www.ecaworldfitness.com

CHARITY EVENT

17 APRIL & 18 SEPTEMBER 10k Stampede at ZSL London Zoo

Streak past the tigers, slither by the snakes and fly by the bats as part of ZSL's London Zoo 10k stampede in April and September. Monies raised will help the zoo care for and conserve some of the world's most endangered animals. Registration includes entry to the zoo after the race.

www.zsl.org/fundraising-for-zsl



CHARITY EVENT

21 MAY La Médocaine

Up to 6,500 bikers take part in France's La Médocaine challenge, which includes fancy dress and wine tasting en route. Set in the Médoc wine region, the routes range from 20km to 80km in distance, with up to 18 wine tasting stations, musical stations and beautiful vistas along the way. Participants are encouraged to dress themselves and their bikes up. It's the sister event to the famous Médoc marathon, which will be held in September 2016.

Details: www.medocaineeytt.com

27-28 | Active-net 2016 Loughborough University, UK

A networking event with a focus on the public leisure sector. Educational seminars take place alongside talks, development seminars and buyer/supplier meetings.

www.active-net.org

29 April-1 May | Fitness & Health Expo Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre, Australia

Three days of all things fitness at the southern hemisphere's largest fitness event.

www.fitnessexpo.com.au/melbourne

MAY

4-5 | Elevate Olympia, London, UK

This cross-sector event brings together academia, healthcare, government, the physical activity sector and performance experts to focus on the complex societal challenge of turning the tide of inactivity.

www.elevatearena.com

13-15 | BodyPower Expo 2016 NEC, Birmingham, UK

With international stars and industry experts, an extensive exhibition, interactive feature areas and competitions.

www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk

19-20 | Retention Convention Austen Court, Birmingham, UK

The event will cover a range of approaches to increase retention, reduce attrition and improve member loyalty in the fitness arena.

www.retentionguru.co.uk

25-26 | SIBEC UK 2016 The Belfry, West Midlands, UK

Brings together UK suppliers and buyers from the local authority, trust and education markets to participate in a series of one-to-one meetings.

www.sibec.co.uk



Valerie Bönström

The joint CEO of Mrs.Sporty talks to **Kate Cracknell** about a new functional training model, and bold plans for international expansion

My background is in computer science, working for the likes of Deutsche Bank and JP Morgan. So when I came to Mrs.Sporty and suddenly had to work with people, my world changed. It was a culture shock, but I loved feeling and seeing the impact you can have when you're working directly with people," says Valerie Bönström, now joint CEO of the women-only health club franchise.

"I was already sporty – I'd played field hockey extensively at university – and it gave me such happiness to see how I could pass that passion on to other people."

She continues: "It was my husband Niclas who came up with the idea for Mrs.Sporty. He'd recognised that in Germany, women – especially those over 30 – weren't being active, and there was nothing out there catering for them."

"So he approached Mark Mastrov [founder of 24 Hour Fitness and NeV in the US] with a view to addressing this, and the two of them scoured the world looking for a good concept. They landed on the model of a small club, 150–200sq m, local and easy to get to, with a friendly atmosphere and high levels of assistance – something that today is being called small group personal training – all built around a circuit training approach."

"At the heart of the Mrs.Sporty concept is a strong focus on setting and reaching goals. It's not necessarily about losing weight – it's about building muscle mass and making your body healthy, and with it your soul too."

"To achieve this, members must be educated, motivated and supported, so although at some times of the day you'll go in and work out on your own, there are also 'assisted times' when an instructor gives hands-on personalised guidance to a maximum of 16 members per session."

A PASSION IS BORN

The first Mrs.Sporty club launched in 2004, with Bönström initially just helping out behind the scenes – a supportive

wife rather than a business partner. So what was it that convinced her to join the company in an official capacity?

"I didn't really want to work for Niclas' business, or even alongside him. It's always difficult when it's someone you're in a relationship with – it can still be difficult today. But a situation arose where he needed my help."

"The first club had opened but the team wasn't quite gelling. Niclas is a real visionary, but at the time he didn't speak great German – he's Swedish and had only recently moved – and while he had a great idea and the backing of Mark, he needed someone to run the club and build the team. I agreed to help out for a couple of weeks."

And that's when she realised how much she loved being able to make a difference to people? "Yes, exactly. And then we started to work with a big sports medicine research company to really explore the best forms of training for our target group. I suddenly felt the passion to develop the best products, the best possible training for the women I was meeting in our club."

"Because it's a wonderful community at Mrs.Sporty. You hear stories, you hear how members' lives are going. Women of all ages come together – members are typically aged 49–55, but we have grandmothers aged 80 too. I'm 36 and I love going, and I take my 12-year-old daughter with me. The members all benefit from each other. It's far more than just a fitness club."

She continues: "Niclas had recognised that he needed help in running the business, so for a while we led it side-by-side. Then, in 2007 – by which time we'd started franchising and opened a couple of hundred clubs – we realised it was confusing for our now large team to work into two leaders, especially as he and I bring to the table very distinct sets of strengths and ways of looking at things."

"I therefore went to do an MBA between 2007 and 2009. I still worked for the business while I was studying, but only looking after international markets – Niclas



Mrs.Sporty's NPS was already 58, but with the introduction of our PIXformance concept it's now 72



looked after Germany. The plan had been that I would then leave the company in 2009.

"However, I came out of my MBA with lots of great ideas I wanted to implement, so the plans totally changed and I assumed full responsibility for the whole operational business of Mrs Sporty International. Niclas stepped into a strategic and financial role, working on investor relations and business development – creating our own membership software, for example, and developing new concepts to pilot.

"It allowed us to play to our respective strengths and follow our different areas of passion: Niclas experimenting with new things; me building teams, helping people develop, continuing to innovate within our product to ensure results for our members."

GOING FUNCTIONAL

The latest product innovation, PIXformance, has been a big one, transforming the Mrs.Sporty offering via the introduction of interactive screens – looking like human-height iPhones – that offer virtually coached functional training.

Bönström explains the rationale for this new development: "When you train with machines, it gets a bit boring for the body and even more importantly for the mind. People lose their motivation after a few years. They want progression and variation, to learn new things.

"We therefore wanted to offer functional training in our clubs, using body weight and small pieces of

Bönström has discovered a great passion for helping her members



Having instructors on-hand to help is key to the Mrs.Sporty philosophy

- equipment like Swiss balls, medicine balls and dumbbells – but that presented a challenge. How to make sure, outside of the assisted times, that members were doing the exercises correctly – especially members like ours who are a bit older and not necessarily very sport-savvy? Even more importantly, how to make sure they were doing the best exercises for them to reach their goals, without them having to find the money for personal training?

"We decided to look for a digital solution that offered feedback and technique correction as well as personalisation and variety. PIXformance is that solution. You input your personal goals, do some tests, and then you stand in front of the screen and do your personalised workout – it recognises you via a QR code, tells you what to do next, corrects you if you're doing something wrong, and tells you how well you're performing.

"This allows for high quality individual training, but we also offer instructor-led PIXformance circuits where, even though you do your own routine moving from station to station, you get the motivation of working in a group.

"We ran some pilots where we introduced PIXformance alongside our traditional hydraulic circuits and the member feedback was fantastic: Mrs.Sporty's Net Promoter Score was already 58, but now with PIXformance it's 72. We're finding our trainers are

happier too, because it frees them up to spend time focusing on just one person if need be, without feeling they've left the other members to their own devices."

She continues: "We're 100 per cent convinced PIXformance is the future, so all new Mrs.Sporty clubs will be PIXformance only – we already have over 30 such clubs in Germany, Italy and Austria. Franchisees at our 550 existing clubs can also switch to PIXformance if they wish, whether now or at the next refurb, although we won't insist on this – that really isn't our culture.

"We'll keep introducing new exercises to the system too, so members never get bored – we're working on a kettlebell programme now, for example.

"We're also able to accurately track results. We regularly measure members' fat and muscle mass on Tanita scales and we log all this data in the PIXformance system. That means we can now centrally track the weight loss progress of hundreds of thousands of women. I think that's significant: I don't want to say anything out of turn, but I think it's fair to say that not many operators have a clue how their members are really doing.

"I suppose this is the computer scientist coming in me, but I find it very strange working in a world where there's so little customer data and insight. PIXformance lets us monitor everything, right down to how well



Not many operators know how their members are really doing. I find it very strange working in a world with so little customer data



members are doing their exercises. We're really just starting out on all this, but for example we'll use the data to identify which exercises are most effective, so we can continually refine and improve our programming.

"We should be able to spot trends across our clubs too, so we can take best practice learnings from franchisees who are doing particularly well."

EMBRACING HEALTHCARE

Such has been the success of PIXformance that Bönström has already begun to reach beyond health clubs and into the complementary field of healthcare.

"I visited four or five hospitals last week which either already had PIXformance installed or who bought it on my visit. We're seeing a lot of demand from physiotherapy clinics too," she says.

"I'm intrigued to see how the relationship between fitness and the medical sector evolves over the coming years, because it's going to be key as the population continues to age and strain is placed on healthcare and pension systems. People are going to have to start taking more responsibility for their own health.

"It's very hard to transfer people out of therapy and into real life though. The therapy phase – whether paid for by government or the individual – tends to be too short, so people come back into mainstream life and they're still not really ready to be active by themselves.

"The nice thing with PIXformance is that physios can use it with their patients, and then those patients can come into the real world and use it at our clubs, still doing the same programme their physio has prescribed and getting guidance from our trainers.

"We can eventually help them progress into new exercises, but they start off by coming out of therapy and straight into doing something familiar. That makes them far less likely to give up than if they were left to exercise on their own at home. They're instantly on a path towards an active and healthy life."

REACHING NEW MARKETS

And it isn't just new sectors Mrs.Sporty is targeting. The operator – which currently has clubs in Germany, Austria, ►



Steffi Graf – brand ambassador

German tennis legend Steffi Graf came onboard with Mrs.Sporty at the outset, acting as a brand ambassador for the business.

"Steffi has been a great partner in our journey," confirms joint CEO Valerie Bönström (above left, with Graf). "She was very active in the early years, because we were looking for franchisees and Steffi is well known and well respected. That certainly helped fuel our growth.

"We never really used her inside the clubs, or to do member-facing marketing, but for the franchise growth her involvement was invaluable.

"She's still connected with the business – she remains a shareholder and a supporter – but to a lesser extent quite simply because we've sold most of the franchises we can in the German-speaking markets: we're at 75 per cent of capacity in Germany and 100 per cent in Austria.

"I think we've reached the point now where we need to grow Mrs.Sporty as its own brand, independent and on its own two feet, but we're very happy to have gone as far as we have with Steffi – I think much further than we could ever have imagined. She's been always a great partner for us."



PIXformance will be the model for all new franchisees



PIXformance enables the clubs to closely measure members' results

Community isn't about chit-chatting. In sport, if you achieve success together, you create trust and community

► Switzerland, Italy and Poland, as well as a small number in Russia and the Czech Republic – also has bold plans in terms of expansion into new international markets.

"We initially grew very fast, especially between 2008 and 2012," says Bönström. "Then we stood back a bit, investing in our product and deciding if we wanted to take on the world – and yes, we do!"

"We want to grow much bigger than we already are today, and I firmly believe that we have an even better concept to roll out now than we had 10 years ago. I'm fully expecting to at least see the same growth again that we had a few years ago."

She continues: "We're looking at rolling out in the United States right now, and the potential in that market is huge. If we reach capacity in Germany, that will mean approximately 600–700 clubs. In the US, we believe we could have 1,000 clubs. We've already piloted PIXformance there and we think the appetite for growth will be even stronger and faster than in other markets."

"Meanwhile I think we could easily have 300–400 clubs in Italy, and Spain is on the radar too."

"I'd love to go to the UK, but location costs are always so high and that's a barrier for our model. However, with our new price point – PIXformance clubs cost €59 a month, as opposed to the average €45 in non-PIXformance clubs – there's a good chance."

CREATING A COMMUNITY

So what advice would Bönström offer other fitness operators who would like to emulate Mrs.Sporty's sense of in-club community?

"A lot of fitness clubs say that they have a sense of community, and OK, someone says 'hello' when you go in and there's a trainer walking around, maybe having a chat with a few members – but it all depends so much on the individual trainer," she says.

"At Mrs.Sporty, we don't leave interpretation of the role of trainer to the individual – we're very clear what we expect from them. Community isn't about chit-chatting or just saying hello. We believe that, in the world of sport, if you're successful as a team – if your success comes from working together – then you create trust and community."

"Our trainers really get to know our members. They motivate them and coach them on their food and diet, they do check-up sessions every four to six weeks to see how they're progressing. And when members trust their trainer and get results with them, they bring their friends – and a whole community is built."

Bönström concludes: "In our clubs we offer teaching, assistance, community – it's a whole experience, a place you can go to feel good. That's something you can't get working out at home and you can't get with an app. It's a different need we're meeting." ●



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Site Insight

How is the fitness sector is faring when it comes to securing good locations for gyms and health clubs? **Niamh Madigan** finds out

There's good news for fitness operators looking to grow: the property market for gyms is expanding, with landlords and developers seeing fitness as a relatively safe bet. New developments and the re-emergence of the high street are also offering more opportunities to gym groups searching for sites.

But in the UK at least, a major challenge remains: Under England's planning use classes framework – which hasn't been updated since 1987 – gyms and leisure centres can only occupy buildings designated under the Class D2 category, whereas shops and retail outlets sit in the far more abundant

Class A1 category of building. Many big name operators have told *Health Club Management* in recent months that obtaining suitable properties is one of the biggest barriers to expansion.

Nevertheless, with landlords coming on-side, there are now more locations to choose from than previously. So how do operators pick the right one?

On the one hand, people's habits are becoming more local; big supermarkets have already recognised this in their shift towards smaller, local sites. Tim Baker, chair of Touchstone Partners, says: "The places where people are going – and where they're therefore wanting to use health clubs – are becoming more local. Operators need to acknowledge this."

But on the other hand, increasing competition for prime floor space is beginning to push some health club operations into thinking outside the box. Retailers with a large footprint have been looking to downsize or share space, thus creating new opportunities for some gym groups to launch in-store health clubs – in the UK, for example, Xercise4Less has partnered with Tesco to do exactly this. "A clever operator should be talking to developers about ways it can complement other businesses in retail parks," Baker adds.

So what are the changes, challenges and opportunities in the fitness property market? We ask our panel of operators for their thoughts.

Sandy Macaskill

Co-owner,
Barry's Bootcamp London

Fitness studios used to be a hard sell to landlords, as they viewed us more like leisure centres than vibrant retail hubs that drive footfall and add value to buildings. The success of our business and others like it has helped change this.

Boutique studios – with their retail offering, juice bars and the fact they sell spaces in classes rather than relying on a membership model – have more in common with hairdressers and other A1-classified businesses than they do with the leisure centres the Class D2 category was originally created for.

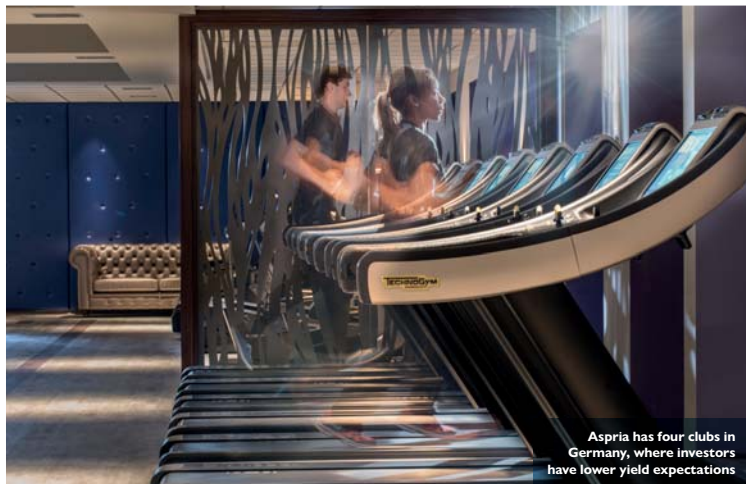
However, we still face the major hurdle of planning committees frequently blocking applications to convert A1 spaces into fitness studios. It's as if the 2012 Olympic legacy didn't happen – councils are telling everyone to be more active, but then they don't want to see fitness studios on the high street. They'd rather see a furniture shop or mobile phone shop.

I've asked ukactive to raise the planning issue on behalf of the industry. We've won the landlords over in terms of the benefits that fitness businesses can offer. Now it's time for the government to make good on its calls for us all to do more exercise, by supporting the businesses that are trying to make this happen.



Councils are telling everyone to be more active, but they don't want to see fitness studios on the high street – they'd rather see a mobile phone shop

Sandy Macaskill



Aspria has four clubs in Germany, where investors have lower yield expectations

Brian Morris
Co-founder & CEO,
Aspria

There have been a number of changes in the fitness sector property market over recent years.

One trend has been towards sale and leaseback deals: we've seen it happen in hotels and it's now hit the leisure sector. It tends to occur in operators with larger format or standalone facilities – David Lloyd Leisure is one example. Either you're an operator or you're a property owner/investor, but you aren't both – real estate ownership has become separated from the business operation itself. This OpCo/PropCo split frees up capital and allows the operating company to be much more nimble.

We're also seeing a lot of consolidation in the market. That's key, because the more clubs you have in one group, the stronger the covenant – and that not only makes you a more interesting prospect for landlords, but also for investors. In turn, that begins to put leisure on the same footing as retail, offices and so on – the asset class of leisure

becomes more recognised, which boosts property opportunities.

Meanwhile, with a growth in the number of operators and facilities, the size of properties has changed. There's been a resurgence of the smaller operating format across Europe: 10,000–25,000sq ft boxes with an almost retail-style model. Urban centres are currently readjusting rental prices accordingly. However, retail hasn't had that much of a resurgence in Europe, so isn't a major threat in terms of securing new sites in the markets where we operate. People like spending in the UK, but less so on the continent.

Real estate is an expensive component of any operation, so it can make sense to share the footfall with a compatible partner. The idea of putting retail and leisure in one location may work, for example. However, I would still assert that out-of-town superstores aren't sufficiently accessible locations for members wanting to visit their club several times a week.

In terms of our own expansion, we're looking at other countries in Europe to broaden our network. The difficulties are around planning departments, plus

an ownership structure that has yet to recognise leisure as a bona fide sector in itself. The size of property we require is also difficult to find: our clubs range from 100,000sq ft to 187,000sq ft.

On a more positive note, in Germany – where we have four clubs – investors have a more conservative, long-term perspective when it comes to real estate. They have lower yield expectations, which plays out in our favour in terms of securing good sites.



Real estate ownership has become separated from the operation itself, allowing the operating company to be much more nimble

Brian Morris



Jonathan Spaven
Property director,
The Gym Group

The property market fluctuates, with supply and demand vying to outdo each other. The glut of low-hanging fruit post-Lehman and the subprime mortgage crisis has been snapped up over the last three years – yet different opportunities now come forward.

Development is back, particularly in London. Large residential and mixed-use schemes are coming through the planning stage and are starting to get off the ground. These will provide opportunity for a wide variety of leisure occupiers.

The re-consolidation of large space users in the supermarket and DIY sectors has also brought new vacant space to the market. This will continue through 2016 and particularly suits the larger space leisure operators; the new trend of trampoline parks will benefit and proliferate, with a peak still to come.

Yet prime space will remain highly sought after. As some landlords begin to seek primary prices for tertiary space, there will be those who pay the price now and run the risk of literally paying the price later. It will be difficult for smaller chains and new entrants, who will find that the best sites will go to the best covenants.

Development is back, particularly in London. Large residential and mixed-use schemes will provide opportunity for a variety of leisure occupiers

Jonathan Spaven

Stephen Rought-Whitta
Head of property,
Anytime Fitness

Anytime Fitness has 73 clubs in the UK, while locations in Europe include Spain, the Netherlands and Belgium. Looking back to the bad days of the recession, it was the mid-market that really suffered in fitness. The top end was unaffected and dozens of discount gyms emerged. That said, there's still buoyancy in the mid-market and we see ourselves as the only serious player in it.

We face two big challenges when it comes to finding property. One is competition for sites from other fitness groups. The other is our own self-imposed restrictions in terms of finding sites that offer convenience to gym-goers – our model is all about convenience, both in terms of location and 24/7 access. This narrows down the places we can go.

The re-emergence of the residential and office market is causing us a lot of

problems. In the past, we were able to take first floor space over shops, but this space is now more valuable to landlords and developers as residential or office space. So we now need to look for different types of floor space.

We would marry up with supermarkets. We keep our eyes open for businesses that have too much floor space and who may be looking to downsize. But beyond that, there are no quick wins.

The number of gyms opening in Europe has increased dramatically, but overall revenue figures have only risen moderately. This suggests it's the discounters that are doing all the new club openings. That's who we're competing against in Europe, but there's room for a lot of growth too – particularly Eastern Europe has big potential.

Our ultimate target is to have 700 franchises in the UK by 2025. I anticipate that the country will be getting close to saturation point in terms of the number of gym groups operating in that market by then.



In the past, we were able to take first floor space over shops, but this space is now more valuable to landlords and developers as residential or office space

Stephen Rought-Whitta

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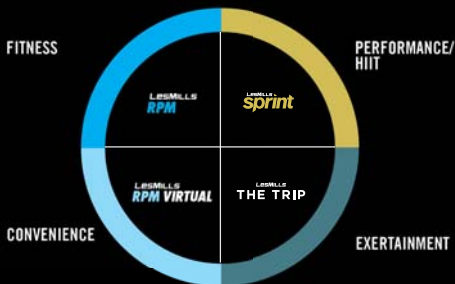
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► Paul Lorimer-Wing

Co-founder & CEO,
easyGym

We see ourselves as a convenience model: we're located in highly pedestrianised footfall areas close to people's homes or work. So there are lots of opportunities for low-cost operators when it comes to finding properties in the UK and Europe.

Historically, fitness hasn't been the most attractive in terms of property investment, because operators don't pay high levels of rent. However, it fills big spaces that are sometimes difficult to lease. I think

it's currently a good market for fitness operators to pick up properties – but things can change. There will always be competition, whether within low-cost or against occupiers from other industries.

In terms of our own expansion, easyGym would consider a partnership with a retailer to launch an in-store gym, but it would come down to convenience, prominence and if the store were well attended by the local community.

We're also looking to expand into Europe. Following a period of over-development, it's possible to obtain property in Spain at good terms. This has



Fitness clubs can fill big spaces that landlords find hard to lease



been on our radar for a while and will be our first step into Europe. I appreciate that rents can be expensive in other markets, but I still believe there are opportunities, certainly in Western Europe.

For smaller low-cost operators, as well as new start-ups such as the niche/boutique operators, it's tough going up against the bigger brands that are able to command much cheaper property deals. Looking specifically at the low-cost sector, I believe there will eventually be four or five players as consolidation is inevitable, but the market is a little way off saturation.

Simon Tutt

CCO,
Xercise4Less

We believe location isn't actually as important as the overall quality of a product offered to the member. Health club operators who offer what customers want – whether that's the best value, a niche product, a good environment and equipment – are typically performing well.

Retail rents are probably increasing, but are a long way behind what they were at the peak of 2006/07. The rents are symptoms of supply and demand and risk management. With growth in consumer spending, the risks associated with most tenants have fallen, and this is offsetting the yield required by landlords.

I think smaller property developments are always likely to favour retail. That said, budget health club operators are now driving higher footfall levels and are more able to compete for space.

Our biggest challenge is undoubtedly managing change-of-use planning

applications, which affect approximately half of the sites we review.

Meanwhile, most retailers operating on very large footprints of 80,000sq ft have been looking at options to downsize over the last 24 months. They want to do this in a way that will drive rental income and additional footfall. We formed a partnership with Tesco to launch our first in-store gym in 2013 and we will open similar sites in the near future.

Finally, I would say the market is a long way off saturation: Mintel data suggests that up to 80 per cent of adults would consider using a health club, but only 14 per cent are currently members. There's still plenty of room for expansion.

However, the management teams of fitness clubs will know the impact that expanding too quickly can have on a business. This is particularly relevant to rent levels and the level of acceptable operational gearing. Nevertheless, a good business with a strong model and supportive stakeholders can still roll out quickly and profitably. ●



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Walking alongside a community

Are the charitable efforts of your club one-off events, or are they part of a long-term commitment to make a difference?

Ray Algar reports on a remarkable club in Canada

This month I want to share the remarkable story of how the independent Fifth Avenue Club in Calgary, Canada, is making a nine-year commitment to support the growth of communities in the Belo region of western Ethiopia.

WHY FEATURE THIS CLUB?

What appealed to me about this project was the long-term nature of the club's support for Food for the Hungry, its chosen Canadian charity partner.

Darren Kanwischer, owner of the Fifth Avenue Club, had noticed the tendency for some gyms to approach charity as a one-time short-term event, whereas he wanted to forge a long-term partnership that could make a meaningful and enduring impact, touching thousands of lives.

IT STARTED OVER A COFFEE

Kanwischer became aware of Food for the Hungry and its work across Africa through the club's coffee supplier, and was drawn to the idea of 'adopting' the Belo community as part of a sustainable development project.

The purpose of Food for the Hungry is to end poverty one community at a time, and the charity achieves this by 'walking alongside' a community. 'Walking alongside' means the charity doesn't believe in short-term handouts, but instead works to understand the root causes of poverty

and commits to support a community for about 10 years, after which it should be self-sustaining. It therefore seeks donor partners who believe in this long-term approach and who are able to support the funding of health, sanitation, food security, education and local leadership.

FRIENDLIEST CLUB IN TOWN

Since the 1,440sq m (15,500sq ft) Fifth Avenue Club opened in 2006, it has focused on becoming the friendliest fitness venue in the city. Calgary itself is the largest city in the province of Alberta, with a population of 1.1 million at the 2011 census. It's a prospering city that has attracted many of Canada's largest companies, so residents can choose from many different club brands: GoodLife Fitness operates nearby, as do Anytime Fitness, a number of specialist studios, CrossFit and many other fitness providers.

'Friendly' and 'supportive' are therefore two important attributes for this 700-member club as competition intensifies and people make their club choice.

EVERY MEMBER COUNTS

Since 2007, three dollars of every member's monthly membership subscription is donated to Food for the Hungry. These compound over the years, which means this one club has so far donated more than C\$250,000.



The club and other donors are transforming the lives of 40,000 people across nine different villages



I love that Fifth Avenue Club is not only making a difference in Calgary, but also changing lives on the other side of the globe — *Darren Kanwischer*



Members and staff fundraise on top of this via sponsored runs, and the club also donates proceeds when replacing gym equipment. This partnership has become a part of the club's story and features prominently on its website.

"I love that Fifth Avenue Club is not only making a difference here in Calgary, but also changing lives on the other side of the globe in Belo," says Kanwischer.

A PERSONAL INVESTMENT

Long-term partnerships like this only work when owners, staff and members feel a genuine connection with the project, which in this case is separated by more than 8,000 miles. Kanwischer has personally visited the region four times and so is able to report back first-hand on the difference the club is making, along with mid- and full-year updates from the charity. Kanwischer's family has also been personally sponsoring a child from the area for many years.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The club will continue its support of the Belo community through to its 'graduation' in December 2016 – the point at which the community is untethered from 'charity' and deemed to be self-sufficient. Food for the Hungry characterises this as being this point at which the charity is able to transition from being the 'coach' to watching from the sidelines.



Kanwischer wanted to make a long-term commitment to Belo

IN A NUTSHELL

Project by: Fifth Avenue Club, Canada

Web: www.fifthavenueclub.ca

Charity supported: Food for the Hungry, Canada

Project status: Ongoing and long-term

Impact: Belo region, Ethiopia

Gymtopia keywords: Clothing and Shelter, Education, Food & Nutrition, Health & Wellbeing



The project in Ethiopia is providing fresh, and readily accessible, drinking water for the villagers

- When this stage is reached, more children will be flourishing in school, proudly wearing their new school uniforms and possessing all the materials necessary for learning. New water points will not only be providing fresh drinking water, but their close proximity will also mean time previously spent walking for water can now be reclaimed and better invested in activities such as farming, education and also just joyful play. Counselling will at this point be available on HIV/AIDS awareness, food nutrition, women's rights, child marriages and much more, creating a virtuous spiral.



And all this will have been achieved because a health club bothered to care some 8,000 miles away. In all, Fifth Avenue Club and other donors are helping transform the lives of more than 40,000 people across nine villages.

WOULD THIS CLUB BE MISSED?

The test of a remarkable club is knowing members, staff and the wider community would genuinely miss it if it were to permanently close – not simply a temporary sense of frustration as an alternative is sourced, but profound disappointment. So let me ask you: 'Do you believe members, staff and the wider community of Calgary would miss this club if I waved a wand and made it disappear?'

WHAT'S YOUR CLUB'S STORY?

Among the ocean of clubs and fitness alternatives, what is your business doing in standing for something and using its influence to create some meaningful change?

Once you've created a significant difference, remember to share your story on Gymtopia and see how remarkable things can really spread. ●

GYMTOPIA – A PLACE WHERE CLUBS DO SOCIAL GOOD



Gymtopia was conceived by founder and chief engagement officer Ray Algar, who believes the global health and fitness industry has enormous influence and potential to do good in the world, beyond its immediate customers.

The idea of Gymtopia is simple: to curate and spread remarkable stories in which the fitness industry uses its influence to reach out and support an external community in need.

It was created with the generous support of five organisations: Companhia Athletica, Gantner Technologies, Les Mills, Retention Management and The Gym Group. Gymtopia received an Outstanding

gymtopia

Achievement Award in the ukactive Matrix Flame Awards 2014. Read more stories and submit your own: www.Gymtopia.org



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ELEVATE: THE ARENA OF HEALTH, EXERCISE & PERFORMANCE

London's Olympia in May will be the venue for Elevate 2016, the UK's largest trade event dedicated to physical activity, bringing together a range of leaders and specialists from all disciplines

Physical inactivity is moving higher and higher up the public agenda, presenting the physical activity sector with significant opportunity. An opportunity to further raise industry standards, collaborate with healthcare and connect with those responsible for the highest levels of human performance.

Taking place at Olympia, London, on 4–5 May 2016, Elevate will bring together professionals from these different sectors to learn more about how exercise, health and performance connect.

Elevate is a trade event designed to bring together industry leaders, academics, practitioners, policy makers and sport scientists to focus on tackling physical inactivity.

Max Quittenton, director of Elevate, comments: "Tackling physical inactivity is widely recognised as politically, economically and socially more important than ever. An independently researched, balanced, free-to-attend event of scale, in London, will help accelerate progress first regionally, then nationally – and in the near future, internationally."

OVERVIEW

Over the two-day event, thousands of attendees will be welcomed, all benefiting from a free exhibition and seminar programme boasting hundreds of speakers and exhibitors.

Prof Fares Haddad, ISEH clinical director, says: "The ISEH – which aims to translate between elite sport, amateur sports and exercise prescription, with the ultimate aim of both health and performance gains – is pleased to support Elevate. We believe London is the best place for the major stakeholders to learn more about the ways in which exercise, health and performance connect."

SEMINARS

Elevate will run three seminars covering Future Performance, Physical Activity for Health and Wellbeing, and Inclusivity Strategies to Increase Participation. Speakers represent a range of organisations including EIS, UK Sport, Intelligent Health, Public Health England, Juniper Research and TTL.



Professor Charlie Foster from the University of Oxford is a leader of physical activity and public health in the UK, and will be chairing a talk on physical activity as preventative care. Foster comments: "The UK Chief Medical Officers have prioritised physical activity and the new infographics for adults, children and young people will be essential tools for all health and fitness professionals to use to promote physical activity. Elevate brings together different sectors which, working together, have a much better chance of achieving success than working in silos."

EXHIBITION

With seven feature areas, two attractions and 150 exhibitors and sponsors – including Matrix Fitness, Technogym, Precor, Pulse Fitness, Origin Fitness, Les Mills, Wattbike, TRX, Octane and Power Plate – attendees will learn more about how the connections between exercise, health and performance are developing. With inspiring attractions, demonstrations and innovative solutions feature areas,

Technology will be a key theme at Elevate in May





The connections between exercise, health and performance are strengthening

including a skills pavilion and technology walk, attendees can immerse themselves in the latest products and research designed to facilitate future cross-sector collaborations.

Zak Pitt, MD of Jordan Fitness, which will be exhibiting at the show, comments: "As Europe's leading functional fitness equipment and education specialist, we're committed to working closely with organisations such as Elevate to provide a platform where experts from the leisure sector, academia and healthcare can come together to help tackle the enormous challenge that is physical inactivity within the UK."

EXHIBITION FEATURES

- Performance Laboratory
- Evidence base
- Start-ups
- Research Uncovered
- Active Aquatic
- Skills Pavilion
- Technology Walk
- Performance Path
- VIP Lounge

FIVE SEMINARS NOT TO MISS

- Digital and wearable technology and behaviour change
- Understanding inactivity and how to increase participation
- How can advances in elite performance inform and support public health?
- Active ageing – using physical activity to optimise health and wellbeing in older adults
- Understanding the role of physical activity for health and wellbeing of children

"Everything we do reflects our passion for fitness and education, while encouraging continuous improvement, which is why we feel an event such as Elevate is the perfect opportunity to encourage future health innovation."

SUPPORTERS

Supporters of the event include Public Health England (PHE), London Sport, the Institute of Sport, Exercise & Health (ISEH), the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA), SIBEC, Parkour UK, and the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine (NCSEM) among others.

Barry Kelly, strategic lead for Physical Activity and Health at London Sport, comments: "Elevate provides a chance for all stakeholders to contribute and learn more about how the connections between exercise, health and performance are strengthening. I look forward to discussing these topics and addressing the importance of collaborative approaches at the conference in May."

For more information, visit www.elevatearena.com

NAME OF EVENT: Elevate

DATES: 4–5 May 2016

VENUE: Olympia, London, UK

WEBSITE: www.elevatearena.com

REGISTRATION: This event is free to attend

TWITTER: @elevatearena

FACEBOOK: Elevate

PRESS ENQUIRIES: Promote PR

Amelia Millan

amelia.millan@promotepr.com

Catherine Russ

catherine.russ@promotepr.com

+44 (0)1628 630363

ELEVATE
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Social media 'influencers' can have hundreds of thousands of followers



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Under the INFLUENCE

Social media is everywhere – but are you harnessing the potential of those who wield power within it?

Louise Rumball introduces the 'influencers'

Communications are constantly evolving, but one thing is clear: advances in digital and social media demonstrate that we've entered a new era of marketing.

The Millennials – or Generation Y as they're often called – are tech-savvy, globally minded and, putting it simply, are constantly using social media.

This is a generation that isn't joining, buying, networking, learning or engaging like before. They hate to be sold anything, they trust their peers before standard marketing messages, and actively research products, prices and reviews before purchasing. Generation Y is a visual generation. They're online all the time and react to photos and videos, not words.

INTRODUCING THE 'INFLUENCERS'

As the world has shifted to social media, consumers now look to each other and to their favourite online personalities for guidance and information. These individuals are not necessarily those you would see or hear if you turned on the television or the radio, but they have a

social media following that can easily range into the hundreds of thousands.

When these people talk, their followers listen, whether it's discussing where they train, what they eat or what they wear. These individuals operate on a variety of different online platforms: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, Tumblr, Pinterest. Today, each post and caption has the opportunity to add value to a company – and, equally, put any brand that's not providing the service it promised in the hotseat. The more famous vloggers (video bloggers) like Zoella can make or break a brand – sales can soar or plummet literally overnight.

Increasingly, then, it's these social media influencers who hold the power – and as they do the talking, brands don't have to go it alone. Simply put, brands are really missing a trick if they're not engaging with these influencers.

WHERE TO START?

However, many companies don't know where to start. Brands often experience difficulties in determining who's actually classified as an influencer, how to contact

them, how much to pay them, or how to create engaging content that will be well-received, liked and shared by the ever-judging Generation Y.

Certainly in the health club sector, influencer marketing has thus far been given little attention, although this emerging form of marketing is something the boutique operators are picking up on.

Tally Rye – a personal trainer at Fitness First, and a significant online fitness influencer with over 38,000 followers on Instagram – explains: "The newer boutique gyms have done a fantastic job of recognising how to be relevant and how to reach their target audience via links with bloggers and influencers. However, the larger corporate-style gym chains are only just cottoning on to the emerging role of influencers as a key marketing tool."

London-based boutique fitness studio 1Rebel is one operator that has understood the power of the influencers – to such an extent that its founders have now launched IMPACT, a content creation and influencer network agency.

Co-founder Giles Dean explains: "The rise of the social media influencer creates



Girl power: Zanna Van Dijk is one of the leading influencers in London fitness circles

a world of possibilities for businesses, and this was one of the key reasons behind us starting 1MPACT. Content is king, but it's creating the right content – using the right people – that will determine your success in terms of how many people you can reach and how effectively."

He continues: "At the heart of 1Rebel is a focus on brand and lifestyle, and social media has been key in bringing this to life."

"The development of an online presence, supported by those with influence, brings a more holistic and integrated approach where customers continually communicate with each other on social media, both inside and outside of the club."

"Their favourite workout, their favourite fitness instructor, how many classes they've done that week... When the class

stops, the community element doesn't. All of our campaigns, competitions, deals and brand messages are conveyed through the creation of engaging graphics, photos and videos that we create. We talk to our customers through social media and the use of influencers extends our reach dramatically." (For more information, see 'Creating an 1MPACT', p58).

A RISING POWER

Zanna Van Dijk, a personal trainer and arguably one of the most significant influencers in the London fitness circle at the moment, agrees: "The power of influencers is getting bigger and bigger. Within the last few years, there has been a huge shift from celebrity endorsement to influencer endorsement."

"I've found the most engaging content tends to be information that my followers can use – workouts, healthy meal and snack ideas and so on. My message is positive and I try my best to be open, honest and helpful in every post."

For Van Dijk, Instagram holds her largest following, with 83,000 people following her every move – a figure that's rising every day. And when she aligns herself with a brand, her social media followers sit up and take note.

So too do forward-thinking businesses. The development of a large social media following has allowed Van Dijk not only to set up a successful blog and YouTube channel, but also to become a signed fitness model fronting campaigns for Tommy Hilfiger and Adidas, to develop her own activewear collection, and to write for numerous magazines and host a series of influencer and fitness events.

"Some brands are now catching on to how powerful influencers are, and they value them accordingly," she says. "It's these companies that seem to be successfully building their brands and infiltrating the market."

WHEN INFLUENCERS TALK, THEIR FOLLOWERS LISTEN – WHETHER IT'S WHERE THEY TRAIN, WHAT THEY EAT OR WHAT THEY WEAR

ALIGNING OURSELVES WITH AUTHENTIC, ON-BRAND INFLUENCERS WAS KEY TO SPREADING OUR BRAND MESSAGE

- Giles Dean

- However, influencer marketing is still a new concept and not necessarily an easy task, as Van Dijk explains: "There are many brands that still assume influencers will do everything for free or in exchange for product. In reality, time is money and influencers need to be paid in exchange for their skills, time sacrifices and audience."

Dean agrees: "Influencer marketing is no doubt a very effective strategy, but brands need to have an understanding of the influencer market, which individuals are associated with which brands already, and which are best aligned to support their specific brand message. That is where 1MPACT comes in – we tell you who you should be using and we do the outreach for you while creating the content."

The message here is clear: embrace new forms of marketing. Content creation, social media and influencer marketing are no longer the future. They are the now, and the opportunities are endless. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Louise Rumball is co-founder of 1MPACT, a health and fitness-focused content creation, social media management and influencer outreach agency. 1MPACT focuses on creating content for brands featuring those with influence within the market, managing all social media channels and reporting on the reach of each campaign. www.1mpact.co.uk

Creating an IMPACT

Over the past four months, 1MPACT has orchestrated four online social media and content campaigns for London-based boutique operator 1Rebel. With campaigns ranging from one-week stints to three-month promotions, bespoke video and photo content was created for each campaign to run across the Facebook, Instagram and Twitter platforms.

For example, the #REBELSLEEPPREPEAT campaign – which was fronted by some of London's largest fitness influencers, each with social media followings of 20,000–100,000 people – encouraged customers to complete four sessions a week for four weeks. People like Jessica Ball, a London-based nutritionist, posted about the challenge four times a week for four weeks to an audience of over 19,000 Londoners.

The campaign reached over a million people, and although increased sales and attendance cannot be directly correlated to the social media influencers – attendees weren't specifically asked

what made them decide to visit the club – the 1Rebel founders have no doubt of the power of the influencers in driving interest in the campaign.

1Rebel co-founder Giles Dean comments: "Aligning ourselves with authentic, on-brand influencers with thousands of followers was key to spreading our brand message. Before we knew it, we had a whole community of Londoners involved in the #REBELSLEEPPREPEAT challenge."

"On an hourly basis, photos and videos were being created by customers buying into the #REBELSLEEPPREPEAT community. Had we done this without influencers, I have no doubt that our reach would have been significantly smaller."

Additionally, when 1MPACT launched, 1Rebel hosted a party for 100 of London's biggest fitness influencers at its club in Broadgate Circle. As a result of these influencers posting on Instagram before, during and after the event, the 1Rebel and 1MPACT brand names reached over 849,000 Londoners in 24 hours.



#REBELSLEEPPREPEAT
– 1Rebel's campaign
reached 849,000
people in 24 hours



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with the times

Open platforms, personalised programmes and boutiques within clubs are just some of the trends the experts are identifying for 2016. **Kath Hudson** reports

PHILIPP ROESCH-SCHLANDERER

EGYM: CEO



Gyms need to meet the consumer demand for personalisation and connected fitness. The irony of the present bricks and mortar health club business is that

the cost of fitness is decreasing, while the value of fitness and health to the consumer is increasing.

In the short term, I think commoditisation and differentiation will continue to play out, but in the medium term, digital products will transform all of the fitness market, both in and out of the club. This is why it's so important for suppliers to connect to all parts of the ecosystem. Unconnected and closed systems will wither away.

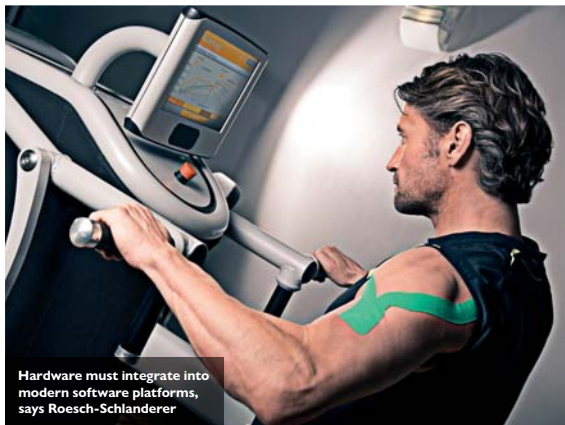
Going forward, we will move from just having data, to having data and using it. Gyms will be fully digitised and coaches (or automated knowledge workers, as McKinsey calls them) will know everything about their members and be able to optimise their training and diet, using a holistic approach that adopts the latest electronic, software-guided fitness equipment.

Sophisticated CRM software will know about members' habits both inside and outside of the club, and even how hard they should be training.

The true driving force that will change the shape of the fitness industry will be

It's important for suppliers to connect to all parts of the ecosystem. Unconnected and closed systems will wither away

Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer



Hardware must integrate into modern software platforms, says Roesch-Schlenderer

software – as it is in most industries. Software will play an increasingly big role, and hardware that can't be integrated into modern software platforms will disappear from the gym altogether.

I certainly have no doubt that software developments in the fitness sector will enable entirely new business models, which is a solution on which eGym is currently working.



Les Mills' in-club boutique cycle studio, Chain, targets Millennials with cool imagery

PHILLIP MILLS LES MILLS: CEO



Now is the time for the industry to innovate and better cater for the Millennial market. If health and fitness facilities don't take action, as our 2008

Future of Fitness white paper suggests, then they risk a steady demise.

The dominance of the Millennial market is growing – they already make up half of regular exercisers doing gym-type activities – and these savvy exercisers are no longer the compliant consumers we once catered for. Millennials know what they want and they'll make sure they get it.

With this in mind, it's highly likely that in the foreseeable future, the popular modes of achieving fitness may become almost unrecognisable.

The market for boutique facilities is significant and growing: last year nearly twice as many exercisers opted for a boutique gym experience than in 2014. More than 40 per cent of the 54 million members of health and fitness facilities in the US now use fitness boutiques.

The addition of boutique solutions within traditional multi-purpose facilities could be the key to long-term success

Phillip Mills

And boutique offerings aren't limited to standalone studios. In fact, the addition of boutique solutions within traditional multi-purpose facilities could be the key to long-term success.

This is something the retail industry has done well: during the 1980s, boutique fashion stores began to pop up and the popularity of department stores began to plummet. In recent years, many department stores have driven a renaissance by integrating in-store boutique offerings.

A number of forward-thinking multi-purpose fitness facilities are now taking this same approach. Whether it's creating high-end, technology-driven cycle studios or blurring the lines between exercise and entertainment, they are re-engineering their overall value proposition, turning up the technology and disrupting the status quo. In doing so, they are better satisfying the demands of Millennials.





The High Octane Ride takes nine minutes – no need to even get changed

► **JON JOHNSTON**
MATRIX FITNESS UK: MD



Digitisation is a key theme. It probably won't and ideally shouldn't be used as a substitute for the human touch, but where there's a simple, repeatable

task that doesn't require much thought or creativity, digitisation should be employed to support individuals and help them achieve their goals.

Matrix is currently trialling the High Octane Ride, which combines digitisation, cycling and HIIT into one package. When you log on it gives instructions, and it helps you to visualise an immersive scenario – for example, Neanderthal man sauntering across a plain, then facing a threat and sprinting like crazy. It tells you when to breathe, your power output and

The way pro-athletes train is starting to filter into the rest of the industry, which if done well will be a good thing

Jon Johnston

draws the power curve of your sprint. It also provides a very connected digital experience: you get an email afterwards and it really makes you feel part of a connected training system.

This is a clever use of technology and sports science to deliver a short, intense workout. Blue chip corporates like Barclays and PwC are trialling this technology in pods in their offices and getting a really good uptake, especially from employees who wouldn't normally exercise. It's appealing because you don't need to get changed, and the experience takes just nine minutes.

This is part of a wider trend towards our industry re-packaging athletic performance training techniques: Matrix is launching the S-Drive performance treadmill, Technogym has launched the SkillMill, and operators are installing athletic performance training zones. Much of the industry's current strength techniques emerged in the 1970s from adapting body-building ideas, but now athletic performance and sports science is proving to be the way forward: the way pro-athletes train is starting to filter into the rest of the industry, which if done well will be a good thing.

ROB BARKER
PRECOR: PRESIDENT



2016 looks set to be another exciting year for the fitness industry. Clubs of all price points are becoming more innovative with programme offerings

in order to differentiate themselves.

Ray Algar's *Health Club Industry Mid-Market Report* shows the growing prominence of the mid-market club. These clubs are investing in small group training and highly branded concepts to differentiate themselves from both the low-cost and boutique clubs, and this trend is fuelling growth in group functional training, group cycling, hybrid

studios (combined cardio and functional classes) and networked fitness.

Functional training gives members the ability to vary their training modalities and enables clubs to add more value through their staff, while also increasing personal training revenue. Small group training is also coming to cardio areas on gym floors, with classes on elliptical, treadmills and cross-trainers like Precor's AMT.

Members are increasingly asking for a more personalised experience, and in 2016 I expect more clubs to invest in networked fitness solutions, which work on cardio equipment and smartphones via an app. The in-club experience will also feature more personalised media to help entertain members, and programming to help them achieve their goals.



Small group training is now coming to the cardio floor



Obstacle racing is a fast-growing trend that clubs should tap into

► **MERRILL RICHMOND**
CORE HEALTH & FITNESS:
VP OF MARKETING



Technology and community are two exciting trends. The health and fitness space is no longer limited to just one area: there's now an overlap

between the home, leisure time and the health and fitness club.

After listening to feedback from operators, Core Health & Fitness is introducing new cardio equipment that incorporates a console with a flexible, open platform. This allows consumers to aggregate all their data, both in and out of the club, from our equipment as well as from apps like Strava and MapMyRun.

Obstacle racing – 5k and 10k races with added elements such as climbing ropes and jumping fires – is another fast-growing trend around the world

and we're very excited to tap into this through our partnership with obstacle race organiser Spartan Race, which is running events in the UK this year.

In collaboration with Spartan Race, and using its branding, we've created workouts on our Stepmill. If members don't complete an obstacle in the allocated time, they have to do burpees, as they would in a real competition. This is a very vocal community on social media and we think it will create a buzz.

DAVE WRIGHT
MYZONE: CEO



As a wearable technology company built entirely for the health and fitness sector, it's fantastic that the number one trend for 2016 is reported

as being wearable technology. It has moved beyond the innovators and early adopters to the vast majority of both operators and consumers seeking a digital health solution.

One issue with wearable technology, however, is that 99 per cent of it isn't fit for purpose. Wrist-based trackers and accelerometers serve no purpose

In the past, the feeders to our industry have been the likes of WeightWatchers. Now activity trackers will be the first step towards becoming more active

Dave Wright

in the fitness industry due to inaccurate readings, potentially providing unsafe training advice for customers.

Going forward, the main threat to the sector is from consumer brands trying to encroach into the fitness industry space, providing coaching that will take customers away from clubs and make the operator redundant. In response,

the industry needs to embrace members' data within its own ecosystem.

Despite this, the future looks exciting and technology can bring new audiences into our clubs. In the past, the feeders to our industry have been the likes of WeightWatchers and Slimming World – now it will be those who have an activity tracker as a first step to being active. ●

SEARCH FOR THE HERO INSIDE YOURSELF...

With the Rio Olympic Games only months away, it's inevitable that thoughts turn to success stories of previous Games and, most notably, the people who made it to the podium. But will the real winners in 2016 be those who see through the media hype and draw from the journeys to the Olympic stage, and the experiences of the 'also-rans'?

HERO:

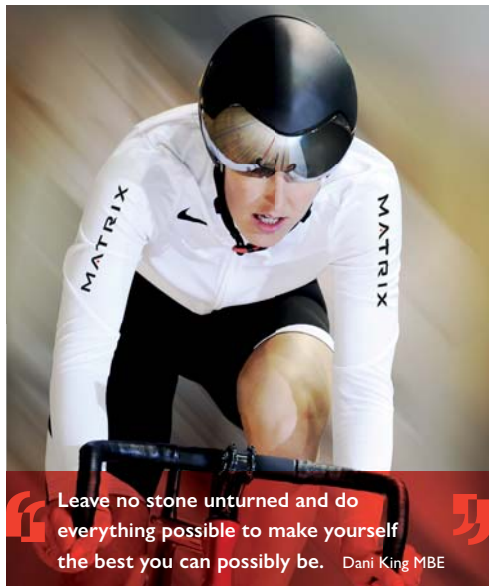
A person who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.

Traditionally, the term 'hero' has been reserved for those who demonstrate heroic feats during times of war. While not on a par with those in the trenches, athletes do have a need for physical and emotional courage. Sadly, their route to success is often edited, resulting in sporting stars like Usain Bolt seemingly appearing from nowhere to take Olympic glory overnight.

In reality, such talent is the result of years of hard work and dedication to a chosen discipline. Indeed, Bolt's success in the 2012 Olympics was a journey that started many years before - his first medal being a slightly less newsworthy bronze at a high school athletics meet - but he isn't the only example of legendary talent taking its time to manifest.

As a sophomore, Michael Jordan was rejected from his high school's varsity basketball team, apparently lacking the necessary skills. He turned it to his advantage though, stating:

"I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."



Leave no stone unturned and do everything possible to make yourself the best you can possibly be. Dani King MBE

MATRIX

WHO DO YOU ASPIRE TO?

"No one – I think it's important to be the very best that you can be and not try and be as good as someone else."



Colin Jackson CBE

Former 110m Hurdles World Champion,
Olympic Silver Medallist,
Team Matrix Ambassador

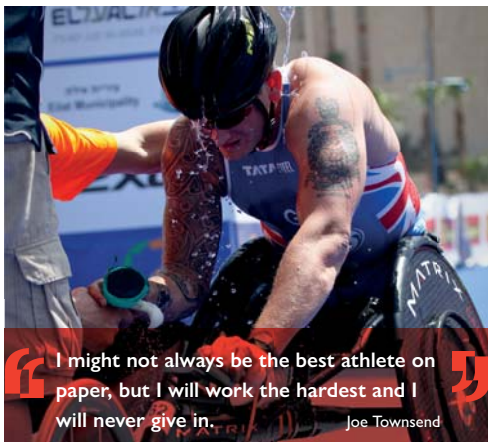
CLOSER TO HOME

Team Matrix ambassador and Olympic Champion, Dani King MBE - having missed out on selection for the British Cycling U23 Academy - left the British Cycling system in 2009, before being invited back in 2010 when her work ethic, coupled with the 'no stone left unturned' mentality to training, resulted in her improving in leaps and bounds. The rest, as they say, is history, with Dani going on to win Olympic gold and three World Championship golds, along with a handful of European and British Championship medals and titles.

Q. WHO WON THE MEN'S INDIVIDUAL SKI JUMP AT THE 1988 WINTER OLYMPICS?

CLUE: It wasn't Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, but who could forget the first competitor to represent Great Britain in Olympic Ski Jumping? There were no ski jumps in Britain for him to practice on, he had to wear glasses while jumping due to far-sightedness, he had no funding and wore second-hand boots, but against all the odds he was determined to compete!

Answer on page 70.



I might not always be the best athlete on paper, but I will work the hardest and I will never give in.

Joe Townsend

Joe Townsend, another Matrix Ambassador and Rio hopeful is just as committed, commenting:

"I might not always be the best athlete on paper, but I will work the hardest and I will never give in."



WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD AND GREAT?

“A good race is one where I’ve finished in the group relatively high up, and I enjoyed myself... A great race is one that I’ve worked really hard in, and it’s paid off. It’s not always about winning, but about meeting your aims. If I’ve achieved my targets, it’s been a great race.”

TEAM MATRIX

Isla Rush
Matrix Fitness Racing Team cyclist
& Team Matrix Ambassador

- Sport does have a competitive edge, and, ultimately contenders train hard with the belief that it’s getting them closer to a win; a faster time, a higher jump, but, as stakeholders in the fitness industry, perhaps our focus should be on what it takes to get them there; the dedication and drive - ingredients for success that make an athlete inspirational and, at the same time, their achievements realistic?

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Conscious of the public platform that sport offers, Matrix works closely with 'Team Matrix' ambassadors, offering direct access to athletes at all levels and providing unedited insights into their journeys;

inspiring the next generation and challenging them to be the best that they can be.

One example of this was the brand's support for 'Fan-Backed Women's Racing' – a network of cycling professionals, riders, and fans dedicated to furthering opportunities for women's cycle racing – run in conjunction with British Cycling coach, Huw Williams. The sessions inspired young rider, Isla Rush, to race, and earlier this year she was signed by the Matrix Fitness Racing Team as they sidestep from traditional cycling team environments to focus on developing riders and supporting them to realise their potential.

Matrix' work with the cycling team has led to a nomination for 'Sponsor

Partnership of the Year' in the Women's Sport Trust #BeAGameChanger awards. The awards recognise those individuals and organisations doing the most to progress women's sport and inspire others to take action. With obesity and physical inactivity an ever-present challenge for today's society, clearly something needs to change, and with the Olympics just around the corner, there is no better time to convince the next generation to search for the hero inside themselves.

Matrix Fitness:

It's all about you!



Answer: Matti Nykanen

TEAM MATRIX ROLL CALL

Colin Jackson CBE, Jonathan Edwards CBE, Sally Gunnell OBE, Laura Trott OBE, Dani King MBE, Elinor Barker, Lucy Martin, Matrix Fitness Cycling Team, Renault Sport Formula 1 Racing Team, Redbull Racing, Wigan Warriors, Derby County FC, Northamptonshire County Cricket Club, Ben Morgan, Joe Townsend, Bernie Shrobsbree

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EUROPEAN LEADERS

The latest edition of *Leading Operators - Fitness in Europe* analyses the largest health and fitness club operators in Europe. Authors **Niels Gronau** and **Gregor Titze** report on the key findings

By the end of 2015, there were a total of 9.3 million people exercising at the leading 20 providers across Europe – an increase of 1.1 million customers (13.3 per cent) compared to the previous year. British and German budget operators show the strongest growth.

To be listed in the top 20 operators by members, operators needed at least 210,000 members at the end of 2015; to be ranked in the top 10, that figure rose to 430,000 customers (see Figure 1).

The approximately 3,300 clubs belonging to the top 20 operators hosted on average around 2,800 members each.

TOP PLAYERS BY MEMBERS

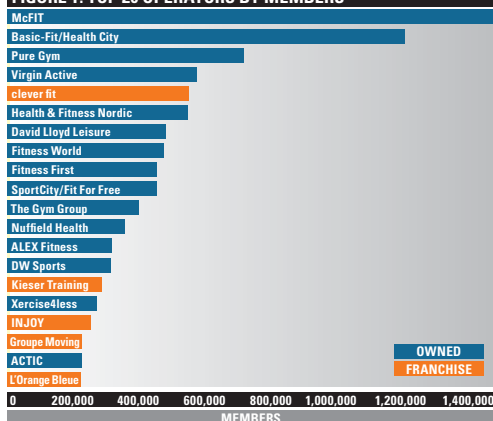
The leading fitness company by member numbers remains German budget provider McFIT. Over 1.4 million people currently exercise in the operator's clubs in Germany, Austria, Poland, Spain and Italy. Germany remains the company's largest market with 169 clubs. In 2015, McFIT also launched its new concept, High5 – facilities of smaller size and with a price starting at €990 – in Germany and Austria.

Second-ranked Basic-Fit/HealthCity group realised a growth of almost 50 clubs over the year and now has more than 1.1 million members. According to media reports, the company – partially owned by

private equity firm 3i since 2013 – plans to conduct an IPO later this year. Should this go ahead, it will represent the second big fitness operator IPO in Europe after an absence from European stock exchanges for more than a decade – the first being the successful IPO by British budget operator The Gym Group (11th in the current ranking) at the end of 2015.

The realised valuation of The Gym Group – and the IPO efforts of other providers like Basic-Fit, and SoulCycle in the United States – show that fitness companies seem not only to be of interest to institutional investment companies, but also to investors among the general public.

FIGURE 1: TOP 20 OPERATORS BY MEMBERS



9.3 million
people exercise
at the leading
20 providers
in Europe – an
increase of
1.1 million
customers

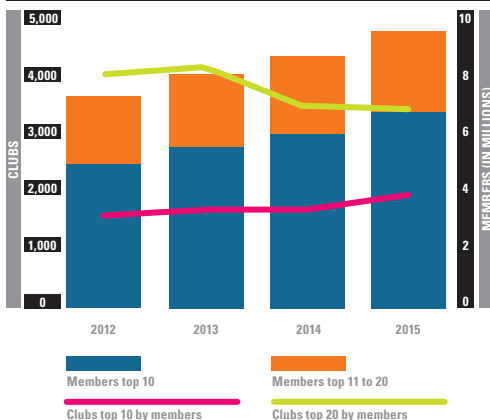
Meanwhile British operator Pure Gym – which is also rumoured to be considering an IPO – now ranks third with its approximately 700,000 members.

In comparison to last year, the company was able to move up three positions, outstripping established players such as Virgin Active and David Lloyd Leisure.



Xercise4Less entered the member numbers ranking at 16th place

FIGURE 2: CLUBS & MEMBERS OF THE LEADING OPERATORS



However, the biggest jump of all came from German franchise provider clever fit: with more than 500,000 members at the end of 2015, it leapt up five places from 10th to fifth in the list.

There are two new providers in the top 20. Xercise4Less, another British budget provider, entered the ranking in 16th place, while franchise offering L'Orange Bleue – which has about 300 clubs, primarily in France – comes in at number 20.

Not included in the top 20 is CrossFit. Although 2,500 CrossFit boxes exist in Europe, they don't meet the criteria for a fitness club chain due to the pure license payment to CrossFit Inc. Were it included, CrossFit would be ranked in the middle of the top 20, with an estimated total of more than 300,000 members – a significant presence.

MEMBERS UP, LOCATIONS DOWN

Each year, the number of members joining the leading European operators grows. In 2012, the top 10 operators had about seven million members between them; in 2015, that number had surpassed nine million customers (see Figure 2).



- The drop in the total number of clubs owned by the top 20 chains was caused by the fact that two small footprint franchise operators left the member-based ranking: Curves (in 2014) and Mrs.Sporty (in 2015) had contributed a relatively high number of clubs compared to traditional providers.

A certain dominance of British operators becomes clear while looking at the geographical origin of the largest chains. Eight of the 20 providers originate from the United Kingdom. In contrast, only three companies are based in Germany. Other countries that are home to the headquarters of more than one top 20 operator are the Netherlands and France, with two companies each.

GROWTH & REVENUE

Finally, Figure 3 shows the average annual club growth of the leading providers in relation to the revenue per member; the bubble size corresponds to the number of members at the provider as at 31 December 2015.

When considering this illustration, it becomes clear that especially the British-based budget operators – namely Xercise4Less, Pure Gym and The Gym Group – have been able to increase their number of clubs, with average growth rates of at least 30 per cent per year witnessed among these operators.

They are closely followed by the German budget operator clever fit.

Given the inflow of funds through the aforementioned IPO of The Gym Group, but also the support of financial investors at the remaining British providers, it may be only a matter of time before they dare to make the jump to continental Europe.

Moreover, the 11 fastest growing companies are at least partially active in the budget segment. The significantly higher revenue per member of Health & Fitness Nordic is caused by its higher-priced brand SATS ELIXIA, but its growth was achieved in the Nordic region thanks in part to its budget brand Fresh Fitness.

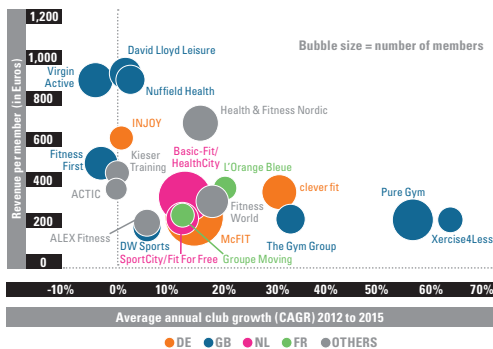
However, while the top 20 is led by British companies with regard to growth, two other British operators come in at the bottom with the weakest club development performance: both Virgin Active and Fitness First have adjusted their portfolios in recent years and sold individual clubs. Virgin Active found a new investor last year, and media reports suggest that Fitness First could also face a change of ownership.

SHAPE OF THE FUTURE?

It will be exciting to see what 2016 brings, and not only for the leading market players. Will the growth of budget operators continue? How can other operating concepts position themselves in the market? How will small, modern, niche concepts develop further? And what role will investors play in the industry this year?

We will certainly be watching with interest as the story unfolds. ●

FIGURE 3: SALES GROWTH OF THE TOP 20 PROVIDERS



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Niels Gronau and Gregor Titze are respectively MD and head of market research for edelhelfer GmbH – an advisory boutique set up to partner its clients at all stages of their corporate development.

The new report – *Leading Operators - Fitness in Europe* (31 December 2015) – is available on request at www.edelhelfer.eu

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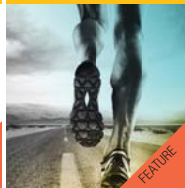
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What makes a loyal customer

What's making health club customers unhappy, what will grow their loyalty, and how do we join the dots to make more customers loyal to our clubs?

Jon Nasta offers insight from the latest Listen360 analysis

Walt Disney once said: "Do what you do so well that they'll want to see it again – and bring their friends." In any industry – and the competitive health club industry is no exception – knowing how to get your customers returning and bringing along their friends is vital.

But how do you build this type of loyalty? Research has found that, while having satisfied customers is a necessary element of this process, it isn't on its own sufficient to build customer loyalty. Customer loyalty goes one step further, involving a commitment from the customer to make a sustained investment in an ongoing relationship with a brand.

Customer loyalty is reflected in a combination of behaviours and positive attitudes about a brand. One such behaviour is providing a recommendation to other potential customers, resulting in additional business for the brand. Indeed, research has consistently shown that customer loyalty is a primary driver of business growth; this is the insight on which NPS (Net Promoter Score) is based.

Meanwhile, dissatisfied customers will walk away from the brand – unless they're trapped by a lack of alternatives or high barriers to leaving – and if they're extremely dissatisfied, they will also give

negative feedback or reviews to others, damaging the brand's reputation.

With this in mind, we sought to find answers to two essential questions. Firstly, what is it that's currently dissatisfying customers? And secondly, what will help to grow customer loyalty?

TOWARDS BRAND LOYALTY

In 2015, we analysed over one million Listen360 member surveys (see 'Listen up'

briefing, below) to identify positive and negative mentions of touchpoints (places or processes where customers interact with the brand, such as 'the facility') and attributes (qualities or characteristics such as 'cleanliness', for instance).

Touchpoints and attributes work to create an attitude or emotion about the brand, which in turn drives consumer behaviour in the form of loyalty. Our analysis therefore categorised touchpoints

LISTEN UP!

On behalf of its clients, Listen360 conducts ongoing online Net Promoter Score (NPS) surveys of customers, allowing companies to hear the voices of their customers in real-time. The surveys ask customers: 'How likely are you to recommend [brand X] to your friends and family?' followed by a question asking them to explain the reason for their 1–10 rating.

In 2015, Listen360 conducted an analysis of over one million customer surveys to learn what aspects of the customer experience had the biggest impact on customer loyalty in various segments of the health club industry. The analysis randomly selected fitness and health brands around the world, encompassing yoga, boutiques, classes, children's classes, small to medium-sized fitness (clubs under 15,000sq ft), and large fitness (sites over 15,000sq ft).

Semi-automated text analysis and advanced statistical analysis then ranked customer comments and related them to their loyalty. The text comments were analysed for positive and negative mentions of touchpoints (places or processes where customers interact with the brand, such as 'the facility') and attributes (qualities or characteristics such as 'cleanliness').



Friendliness of club staff was a commonly mentioned 'delighter'

FIGURE 1: TOP BARRIERS BY SEGMENT

YOGA	BOUTIQUE	CLASSES	CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES	HEALTH CLUB (SMALL-MIDSIZE)	HEALTH CLUB (LARGE)
Too Expensive/Not Good Value	Too Expensive/Not Good Value	Too Small, Cramped/Crowded	Poor Communication	Too Small, Cramped/Crowded	Changing Rooms
No or Limited Availability	Too Small, Cramped/Crowded	Too Expensive/Not Good Value	Too Expensive/Not Good Value	Equipment	Do Not Resolve Issues Quickly/At all
Too Small, Cramped/Crowded	Inflexible/Restrictive	Poorly Organised/Managed	Late to Start/Poor Use of Time	No or Limited Availability	Temperature Air Flow Issues
Temperature Air Flow Issues	Late to Start/Poor Use of Time	Inflexible/Restrictive	Changing Rooms	Inconvenient Hours/Scheduling	Poor Communication
Not Challenging Enough	Lacking Consistency/Continuity	Front Desk Staff/Receptionist	Too Small, Cramped/Crowded	Changing Rooms	Payment/Billing Process
			Pool		Showers

and attributes into one of three types: barriers, delighters or key drivers.

Barriers are minimal expectations that dissatisfy customers if performed poorly, but don't have any positive effect on customer loyalty if performed well. One example would be clean bathrooms: this is a minimal expectation which if not met causes customer dissatisfaction. However, clean bathrooms won't be the reason your customers recommend you.

Delighters are the wow factors that aren't expected by customers. They improve customer loyalty when performed well, but if absent or not performed well, there's no damage done. An example might be an unexpected giveaway, such as a free class or a flower on Valentine's Day. The delighters are your brand's differentiators that will make you stand out above the competition.

Key drivers work both ways: when not performed well, customers will be dissatisfied; when performed well, customer loyalty will increase.

As an example, consider the quality of an exercise class. If the instruction is poor and the class is boring, your customers will be disappointed and probably won't return. However, if the instruction is excellent and the class enjoyable, customers will want to return and share the experience with their friends. ▶

FIGURE 2: TOP DELIGHTERS BY SEGMENT

YOGA	BOUTIQUE	CLASSES	CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES	FITNESS (SMALL-MIDSIZE)	FITNESS (LARGE)
The Lesson/Class/Workout	Friendliness	The Employees/Staff	Friendliness	Friendliness	The Facility/Space
The Facility/Space	The Employees/Staff	The Atmosphere/Environment	Fun	Fun	Helpful
Friendliness	Experienced/Knowledgeable	Fun	Encouraging/Supportive/Motivating	Personalised Service	Convenient Location
The Employees/Staff	The Atmosphere/Environment	Plenty of Variety/Options	Plenty of Variety/Options	Encouraging/Supportive/Motivating	Warm/Welcoming/Inviting
The Atmosphere/Environment	Helpful	High Energy/Positive	Personalised Service	Plenty of Variety/Options	Easy to Use

FIGURE 3: TOP KEY DRIVERS BY SEGMENT

YOGA	BOUTIQUE	CLASSES	CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES	HEALTH CLUB (SMALL-MIDSIZE)	HEALTH CLUB (LARGE)
The Teachers/Instructors/Coaches	The Teachers/Instructors/Coaches	The Lesson/Class/Workout	The Teachers/Instructors/Coaches	The Teachers/Instructors/Coaches	Cleanliness
Convenience of Hours/Scheduling	The Lesson/Class/Workout	The Teachers/Instructors/Coaches	The Lesson/Class/Workout	The Lesson/Class/Workout	The Employees/Staff
Peacefulness	The Facility/Space	Friendliness	The Employees/Staff	The Employees/Staff	Equipment
	Cleanliness	The Facility/Space	Organisation/Management	Cleanliness	Friendliness
	Convenience of Hours/Scheduling	Cleanliness	The Facility/Space	The Facility/Space	Spaciousness

Again, large health and fitness clubs differ from the other six segments. For this segment, customers are delighted by the facility/space, helpfulness, convenience, warm/welcoming/inviting feeling, and the club being easy to use.

These are the areas in which you can focus your efforts to really make your club or studio stand out from the crowd.

IN THE BALANCE: PRIORITISING THE KEY DRIVERS

In our analysis, two crucial touchpoints emerge as the most common key drivers across the segments, and these really are the *raison d'être* of the health and fitness industry: the personal trainers/instructors/coaches and the lesson/class/workout (see details in Figure 3).

For the large health clubs, which are less class-based and more self-designed, the top key drivers are cleanliness, the employees/staff, equipment, staff friendliness and spaciousness.

Consistently good performance on these key drivers is necessary – and ultimately rewarding. Get it wrong and face the consequences.

- So why categorise the touchpoints and attributes of the experience? Because knowing which elements of the experience fall into each category is helpful for prioritising your club's operational decisions, as well as effectively managing your resources.

With barriers, only a minimally acceptable level of performance is required to prevent dissatisfaction – spending any more on barriers would not be appreciated by customers and would be a waste of time and money. With key drivers, your performance needs to be on-target with customer expectations, and with delighters you should aim to over-perform in order to generate positive feelings and promote your brand.

IDENTIFYING MEMBERS' MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS

Our analysis identified 'too small, cramped/crowded' and 'too expensive/not good value' as the most common barriers across the various segments. For class-based/boutique segments, other issues such as 'late to start/poor use of time', 'no or limited availability' and 'inflexible/restrictive' emerged as attributes causing dissatisfaction among customers.

Large clubs have a different set of barriers that include elements of the physical environment – changing rooms, showers, and temperature/air flow issues – as well as elements of the customer relationship such as issue resolution, communication and payment/direct debits.

Make sure you know which elements of the customer experience are deal-breakers in your segment (see Figure 1, p73) and ensure that those elements are delivered to the minimum expected standard. If not, you'll have a whole raft of dissatisfied customers who could potentially harm your brand.

WHAT WOWS CUSTOMERS?

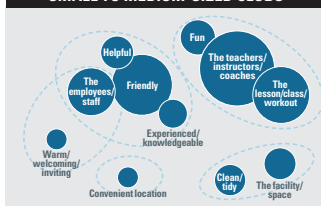
Friendliness is what delights many customers across a variety of club formats (see Figure 2, p73). Other common delighters include the employees/staff and the atmosphere/environment.

Meanwhile, being enjoyable and having plenty of variety/options delight customers in the yoga, boutique, children's programmes and small to medium-sized health club segments.

FIGURE 4: NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE AT SMALL TO MEDIUM-SIZED CLUBS

TOP NEGATIVE THEMES

- Equipment with limited availability and not well-maintained
- Equipment crowded in too small a space in the facility
- Lessons/classes/workouts scheduled at inconvenient hours and not challenging enough
- Teachers/instructors/coaches that fail to provide guidance and are too noisy/loud
- Dirty changing rooms, exercise mats
- A booking/scheduling process that is inconsistent

FIGURE 5: POSITIVE EXPERIENCE AT SMALL TO MEDIUM-SIZED CLUBS

TOP POSITIVE THEMES

- Fun teachers/instructors/coaches and fun lessons/classes/workouts
- Employees/staff who are friendly, helpful, experienced and knowledgeable
- Employees/staff who are warm/welcoming/inviting
- A convenient location

health sport activity



“Working together for a brighter future”





Top negatives include unavailable equipment and crowded spaces

► CONNECTING THE DOTS

So how are the different elements of the customer experience related?

In the second part of our analysis, we looked at the relationship between the critical touchpoints and attributes, both in terms of what contributes to a negative experience and what contributes to a positive experience.

Using an analysis of small to medium-sized clubs as an example, we can begin to understand how the dots connect for customers (see Figures 4 & 5, p74).

In these figures, the size of the bubble represents the frequency of mentions (bigger bubbles mean more people mentioned it), while bubble proximity is linked to the co-occurrence of mentions (closely positioned means they were more likely to be mentioned together). ► ► ► ► ►

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jon Nasta is MD of Retention Solutions, whose services include Listen360 and rewards scheme Perkvill, and director of ecommerce and marketing at Xercise4Less.
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www.listen360.com www.perkvill.com

SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The analysis has provided some insight into what the customers of different fitness segments require, both to be satisfied and to be wowed. To effectively use this information, we recommend taking the following actions:

- **Conduct surveys** to measure how your brand performs on the touchpoints and attributes that most affect loyalty for your industry segment
- **Prioritise your improvement efforts** to meet your business goals. In general, we recommend prioritising the improvements in this order:
 - ① **Reduce dissatisfaction** and meet minimum expectations by improving barriers that are underperforming
 - ② **Increase customer satisfaction** and loyalty by fixing and improving on the key drivers, starting with the worst performing
 - ③ **Wow your customers** by adding or improving on your performance when it comes to delighters
- **Track your performance** over time to monitor the impact of your improvement efforts on customer loyalty and satisfaction
- **Stay up to date** on what affects customer loyalty: customers' needs will inevitably change over time. Yesterday's delighter is frequently today's key driver and tomorrow's barrier

If you know what your customers need, and you deliver on this well, you will reap the benefits of loyal customers. Earnest Hemingway once said: "I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen." Your customers are one of your biggest assets. Take the time to listen to them. ●



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WATTBIKE WELCOMES DIGITAL INNOVATIONS

The new Wattbike Hub app acts as a portable personal trainer, providing everything from fitness tests to workouts and plans, as well as feedback and workout analysis

Technology innovations are increasingly shaping the direction of the fitness and leisure industry, with the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) having recently named wearable technology as the number one fitness trend for 2016 in its annual foresight report.

Gym operators and fitness professionals need to incorporate new technology, and also be able to communicate to their members how it will benefit them. Luckily now more than ever, users are willing, if not eager, to invest time into educating themselves about their own health and wellbeing.

Recognising this, Wattbike – creators of the world's most advanced indoor bike – has launched the updated Wattbike Hub, an app that provides everything a fitness consumer now demands: tests, workouts and plans, as well as feedback and workout analysis. The Wattbike Hub acts as a portable personal trainer that users can take with them wherever they go, regardless of whether they're training on a Wattbike at home, in their gym or abroad.

THE TESTS

Initial tests through the app – such as the Wattbike three-minute or 20-minute tests – calculate users' Maximum Minute Power (MMP) and Functional Threshold Power (FTP) scores, as well as their personal training zones. From

this data, the Wattbike app makes each workout and training plan personalised to the rider, while also charting their progression over time.

THE WORKOUTS

The new workouts are standalone sessions which the user can select and ride against. They are based on the results from the tests performed on the Wattbike and use motivational 'traffic light' colour-coded dials to show whether the user is hitting their targets, or to indicate if they need to be pushing themselves harder.

THE PLANS

From the tests and workouts, the plans are created. Multi-week training programmes provide long-term training goals for the user – ideal for those who

have specific goals or planned categories relating to sport-specific training, set durations such as winter training or pre-season programmes, for instance.

With such a strong standing in professional sport, Wattbike is also able to present training plans created by elite athletes – perfect for those with a competitive nature, whether they want to follow workouts from Joanna Rowsell-Shand's 10-mile time trial workout, match the phenomenal power output that world class rugby players can generate, or take tips from some of the world's leading coaches.

Commenting on the new product launches, Richard Baker, commercial director at Wattbike, says: "There has been a rapid shift in the industry as the value of technology has been recognised. Users are increasingly using technology to

monitor performance and goals. Consumers are now savvier than ever before about what they want from their fitness equipment and trackable data.

"Our updated app provides a service that the consumers now demand: full tests, workouts and programmes to assess, plan and track fitness all in one place – the palm of their hand.

"These unique digital training solutions will significantly enhance the experience of any rider of any ability. By transferring data seamlessly through the app, riders

can not only analyse their session but carry all their data with them wherever they go – as well as sharing results through social



The new Wattbike Hub app can personalise training plans for the individual user



The app saves favourite workouts, so these can be loaded instantly



JOANNA ROWSELL-SHAND

Olympic cyclist and Wattbike ambassador Joanna Rowsell-Shand talks training and using the Wattbike Hub

I train at the National Cycling Centre, the home of British Cycling. We have a large squad based there and are supported by some of the best staff in the world, including physiotherapists, nutritionist and sports scientists. I train six days a week, usually twice a day, with a combination of track sessions, gym sessions, road rides and Wattbike sessions.

"I then train on a Wattbike at home and some of my hardest sessions are only 45 minutes long, but very intense. They are gruesome but really pay off!"

"But what's key is having the Wattbike app keep an eye on my training, whether I'm at the centre or at home on my own, especially when I'm going full gas and can't stop to think about keeping an eye on my numbers. I can focus fully on training while the app tracks everything I'm doing. The app sends the data to the cloud so I can access it anywhere and analyse my session on the go."

media channels, helping riders build a training community... and healthy competition!"

The app also introduces a library feature where the user can see recently started workouts and tests, as well as saving their favourites which can then be loaded instantly on the next workout.

As consumers are now information-hungry for trackable data, a new history section is included to give a more detailed breakdown of the workouts and tests that have been performed.

The Wattbike Hub is free to download and available on iOS and Android, working on both tablets and smartphones. The open API will allow data to be shared across personal tracking apps such as Strava. ●

For visitors to FIBO, head to see the Wattbike stand to meet the team, try out the bike and have a demo of the new Wattbike Hub

wattbike

TEL: +44 (0)115 9455450

EMAIL: info@wattbike.com

WEB: www.wattbike.com

Right on TRACK

Many clubs still see activity trackers as a threat rather than an opportunity, but some operators are now embracing this technology. **Amanda Calder-McLaren** finds out how

CES – also known as the Consumer Electronics Show – is an internationally renowned electronics and technology trade show in Las Vegas, US, attracting tens of thousands of visitors from all over the world every January. The big boys of consumer electronics – Panasonic, Samsung and Apple among them – all line up to flaunt their new gizmos and shiny screens. But this year, the talk of the town was unsurprisingly wearables.

Wearables are nothing new – pedometers and heart rate monitors have been around for nearly 20 years – but the evolving technology is still a huge growth area, with three-quarters of online consumers saying they're likely to purchase health and fitness technology in the next 12 months (CES research).

Based on 2015 sales data, basic bands – which consist primarily of fitness trackers like the Fitbit – currently lead the way. Sales of these wearable devices exceeded 37 million units during 2015 (Canalys and IDC data), with Fitbit comfortably in the lead with 21 million units.

However, CES/ Consumer Technology Association research suggests that smartwatches will become the purchase of choice going forward; according to Canalys, Apple sold over 12 million Apple Watches during 2015, far exceeding the seven million estimate from November 2015. As the gadgets we already carry on us – watches and phones – become ever more intuitive, additional trackers are likely to become less necessary.

Data and insight are already proving powerful in the hands of today's consumers, but the question has to be: how are those at the forefront of fitness delivery embracing these innovations? The purchase of the technology – and the influence it subsequently exerts – is generally happening away from gyms and fitness clubs. How can operators best integrate this technology into their everyday operations, finding a way to link with the popular apps and wearables to create something meaningful for the customer and avoid becoming defunct as a business model?

We look at the steps some UK operators are beginning to take...

A COMPLETE ONLINE SOLUTION

Mark Talley
Group fitness development manager,
Everyone Active



"We've partnered with bounts (see also p88) to offer members rewards for being active both in and out of the centre. This works by connecting activity trackers and fitness apps to a member's personal profile on the Everyone Active website.

Connected apps and devices include Fitbit, Strava, RunKeeper, Misfit, Garmin and more, with rewards including things like in-centre discounts, drinks from local coffee shops and supermarket vouchers.

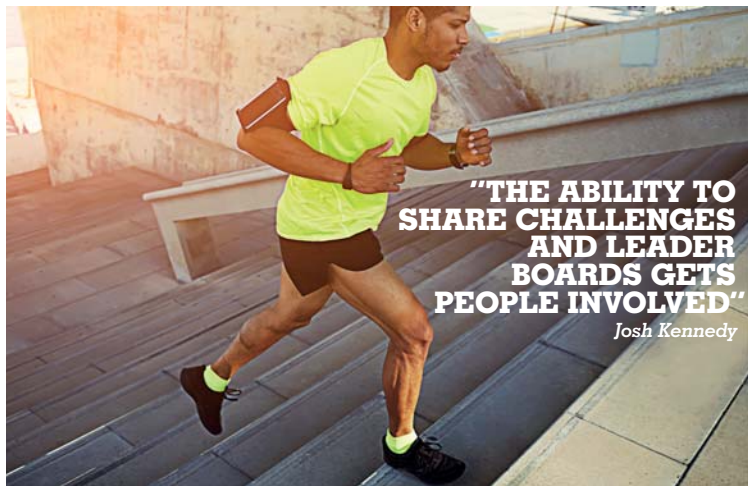
The online Everyone Active planner allows people to plan and track their activity by linking their wearable device to the equipment in the gym, as well as their movement outside the centre.

We're also adding a nutritional element to the health and activity hub, so members will be able to see all their data in one place. Personalised meal plans will help members achieve a healthy, balanced diet and enhance goal achievement. They can even generate a shopping list from their meal plan, or have ingredients delivered to their door.

"Staff engagement is vital to ensuring we fully leverage all of this. All our employees have access to the products through their colleague memberships, so they can incorporate them into their own exercise programmes – which means they're far better equipped to promote them to our members."



Everyone Active's hub links to trackers such as Garmin



**"THE ABILITY TO
SHARE CHALLENGES
AND LEADER
BOARDS GETS
PEOPLE INVOLVED"**

Josh Kennedy

THE PT'S PERSPECTIVE

Josh Kennedy
Personal trainer,
Strength Matters

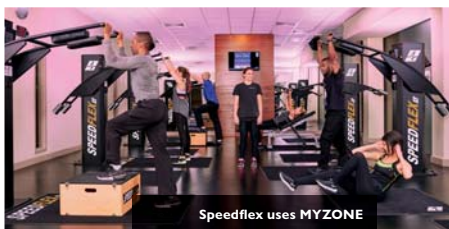


I have a few key apps that I think all trainers should consider. I would highly recommend The Training Notebook app, for example – it's one of the more expensive apps on the market, but is very easy to set up and use. Assessment is essential and I'd encourage all trainers and coaches to assess their clients regularly. Someone much smarter than me once said 'if you're not assessing, you're just guessing'. The Training Notebook allows you to add assessments and track clients' progress through pictures and simple graphs, which is fantastic.

Then there's Snapchat. It isn't strictly speaking a fitness app, but it has the potential to be really impactful. The immediacy, and the fact that Snaps only last 24 hours, keeps people coming back for content. Top trainers are sharing workouts, hints, tips and stories and getting people involved in their daily lives. [For more information, turn to our social media influencers feature on p56.]

For customers, I would say that any app or wearable that encourages them to move more and move better is a great thing. Many of our team encourage their clients to use Fitbit, as it tracks all the usual information like steps, calories and heart rate – but the key is community. With the ability to share challenges and leader boards among friends and family, it gets people involved.

Community is the future of apps and wearables. People want to be part of a community, they want to belong to something, and you only have to look at the success of CrossFit to see this in action. Apps that keep people engaged – that keep them coming back and make them feel part of something – will be the most successful."



Speedflex uses MYZONE

HEART RATE TRACKING FOR A SAFER WORKOUT

Matt Bolam

Training manager, Speedflex



Speedflex as an exercise concept is all about high intensity interval training, so being able to track users' heart rates in real time is key. We've therefore invested in heart rate monitoring technology MYZONE, to give our customers the most accurate data possible without turning the training room into a scientific laboratory.

MYZONE allows our customers to integrate their training easily with their lifestyle – because they can track their activity outside the studio as well – and also gives them the option to track effort levels and progress over time.

It's a great coaching tool for our PTs too, not least because it helps us be inclusive: the MEP (MYZONE Effort Points) system means users are rewarded with points based on their personal effort, so it really is all about the individual. Trainers can also work alongside customers to ensure safe levels of intensity are reached, and can match workouts directly to people's personal capabilities."



Dr Paul Bedford (UK)



Dr Melvyn Hillsdon (UK)



Dr Niels Nagel (Germany)



Molly Kemmer (USA)



Selda Gamzeli (Turkey)



Tiffeny Gould (UK)



Aaron Williams (UK)

Austin Court
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retention-convention.com



GLL gym staff are trained to interpret data

CLOUD-BASED FOR INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

Andrew Jeffs-Watts

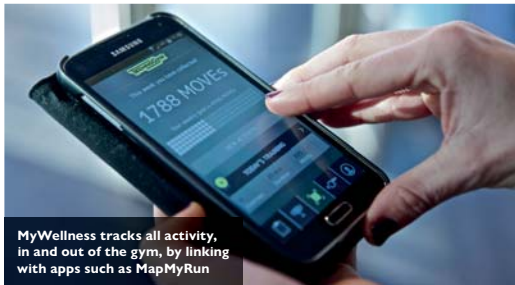
Health and fitness project manager, GLL

"We want to provide a 360-degree solution for our customers, and we achieve this through our link with Technogym and its MyWellness Cloud and Key solution. This allows the customer to log all their activity within the gym, while also linking with third-party apps such as MapMyRun to give a more holistic view of activity levels.

Staff are required to attend ongoing training to interpret the information gathered, and personalise responses and interactions with customers. It provides our staff with more insight into a customer's overall activity behaviour and not just what happens within the gym or leisure centre. We can then try to influence behaviours outside of the traditional workout environment and encourage customers to be more active more often, based on their individual habits and goals.

We're also piloting Boditrax at a number of centres, integrating its body composition monitoring solution into our in-centre and online customer journey – both as a free-to-use service and a paid-for service dependent on membership type. A main driver of member gym visits is to lose weight or tone up; using Boditrax, our fitness staff can educate customers in what these terms actually mean, set goals against targets, and get a better understanding of how a change of activity can impact the member's physical make-up. We'll then analyse the impact of the product from both a retention and a financial performance viewpoint.

We believe that apps and the growth of the smartphone/watch will diminish the popularity of the current wearable offering. At the same time, we believe our typical customer is becoming more interested not only in activity data but in overall health and wellbeing information – diet, sleep, environmental factors and so on – so we will continue to evolve and collaborate to ensure end users' needs are met."



MyWellness tracks all activity, in and out of the gym, by linking with apps such as MapMyRun

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30

cutting edge solution
providers on hand to
discuss industry trends
and impending projects



80%

of buyers have said
they prefer the
format compared to
an exhibition



OVER 100

personalised itineraries
created for perfect
business collaboration



65

sport professionals in
attendance to network
and share best practice



1-2-1

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RAISE THE BAR IN 2016

The Sports & Leisure Facilities Forum is specifically designed to bring together the latest cutting edge technology, sports equipment, facilities and services to help improve and enhance the performance of elite sporting clubs, arenas, authorities and organisations.

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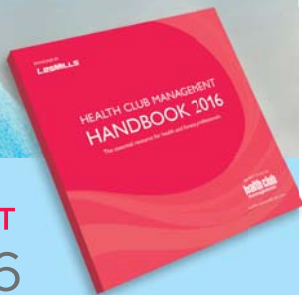


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**The Health Club Management Handbook
is available to purchase at £50**

Smart BRAS

As wearable fitness tracking becomes the norm for many exercisers, we look at some of the new smart bras that combine technology with support

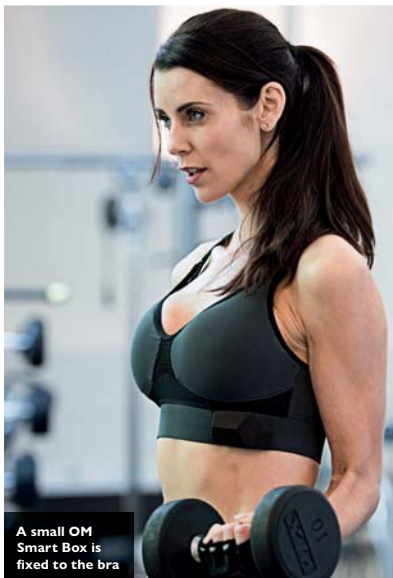
BIOMECHANICS BY OMSIGNAL

The new OMBra by OMSignal records biomechanics to give users more information about their workout and fitness. Real-time biometrics – including running distance, cadence, pace, heart rate and calories – are detected by inbuilt sensors in the back of the bra and recorded in a small OM Smart Box fixed to the bra. Stats are then sent to the user's iOS device via an app.

Features of the bra include four-way stretchable fabric in a range of colours, which is designed to adapt to different shapes, absorb pressure and reduce stress on the back and shoulders. Antimicrobial and sweat-wicking mesh panels are integrated on the front and back of the bra for breathability.

The OMBra is designed for secure movement in three dimensions and has adjustable straps, lateral stitches and double-layered compressive sides. It also has a racerback design to dissipate the straps' force to the side of the bra instead of the back.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **OM SIGNAL**



A small OM Smart Box is fixed to the bra



SENSORS FROM SENSORIA

Wearable fitness technology firm Sensoria, creator of the Sensoria smart sock, has added a new sports bra product to its collection of smart running garments.

The Sensoria Fitness Sports Bra is a medium support smart bra onto which heart rate monitors can be directly clipped – no need for an additional strap. It's compatible with the Polar H7 and Garmin Premium, but use of the Sensoria heart

rate monitor is recommended; this can be paired with the Sensoria Fitness mobile app to track the wearer's fitness activity.

Made from 74 per cent polyamide, 18 per cent polyester and 8 per cent elastane, the Sensoria Fitness Sports Bra is designed to be light and breathable to minimise body temperature fluctuations. Sweat wicking technology is also used to remove humidity.

The bra is machine washable and antimicrobial, and comes in the colours of white, red, royal blue and neon green.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **SENSORIA**

MYZONE: CLOSE TO YOUR HEART

The MYZONE Sports Bra with integrated training technology, launched at the Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show 2016, is a soft, one-piece bra featuring a built-in sensor strap and clip-on MYZONE module that measures heart rate and calorie burn.

MYZONE fitness tracking is designed to let the user know how much effort they're putting in during a workout – both cardio and weight training. It also offers calorie-crunch data, in conjunction with personal body metrics, for accurate and personal calorie-burning calculations.

Manufactured from sweat-proof, quick-drying fabric, the MYZONE Sports Bra comes in small, medium and large and has no rear fastening. It will be available in a range of colours.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

MYZONE



UNLEASH THE ATHLETE INSIDE YOU

As official supplier to six Olympic and Paralympic Games, Technogym has helped create thousands of champions in over 100 different disciplines worldwide, and has first-hand knowledge of the training methods needed to be the best. SKILLMILL™ is the newest power tool in its portfolio

INTRODUCING SKILLMILL

SKILLMILL was born from Technogym's Olympic heritage, putting Athletic Performance Training at its heart. SKILLMILL is the first ever product capable of training all the body's energy systems in a single solution. From sprinting to power development right through to efficient metabolic conditioning, it enables every day users to elite athletes to improve their Power, Speed, Stamina and Agility, and enjoy the benefits of professional sports training in a safe, engaging and effective way.

MULTIDRIVE TECHNOLOGY

The MULTIDRIVE technology (Patent Pending) enables users to select different levels of reactive resistance, from zero to max. In one simple motion users can switch from resistance-free running to an all-out sled push. MULTIDRIVE technology significantly benefits SKILLMILL users in two ways:

Firstly, it boosts metabolic rate. Increased oxygen consumption thanks to SKILLMILL's resistance function results in raised energy expenditure for users when power walking with resistance, compared to walking at the same speed on a traditional treadmill or non-motorised treadmill without resistance.

Secondly, it encourages maximum muscle activation. According to electromyography studies carried out at the Sports & Rehab Engineering Lab at the University of Padova, Italy, the maximum resistance sled pushing exercise on the SKILLMILL delivers "significantly higher activation of the posterior chain, in particular glutes and hamstrings, compared to traditional treadmills." SKILLMILL offers greater activation of the hip extensor muscles than traditional treadmills, and the same level as glute-targeted exercises.

SPORT-SPECIFIC DESIGN

SKILLMILL's sport-specific design accommodates any athlete, no matter the discipline or level of the user.

The dual handlebar design enables users with different body sizes, shapes and goals to assume the correct position for performing highly effective exercises such as high and low pushes, maximising their muscle activation and increasing their workout variety.

Thanks to its non-motorised design, SKILLMILL is operated and controlled exclusively according to the force applied by the individual user; it goes the same pace as the athlete, putting them in total control.

BUILT TO RESIST

Designed and engineered for Athletic Performance Training SKILLMILL is built to endure the heavy usage of professional athletes, ensuring maximum durability and reliability for any facility.

Enhance your facility's offering with SKILLMILL's easy to implement range of training solutions.

BOOST YOUR BUSINESS WITH CLASS TRAINING

The Class Training Solution is ideal for operators of high-energy fitness studios looking for innovative performance-orientated programming. Members are



SKILLMILL's non-motorised design means it's powered with force from the individual user



TRAIN ALL THE BODY'S ENERGY SYSTEMS

SKILLMILL allows users to expand their work capacity by reinforcing the main physical skills – Power, Speed, Stamina and Agility.



POWER

Using the high resistance mode SKILLMILL users can dynamically increase their lower body power using exercises such as low, high and lateral pushes and pulls



SPEED

The ability to quickly accelerate from walking to full sprinting capacity without any adjustments allows SKILLMILL users to carry out speed work tailored to their ability



STAMINA

SKILLMILL allows users to increase both aerobic and anaerobic capacity by performing specific workouts for speed and stamina



AGILITY

Using agility drills SKILLMILL users can improve neuromuscular co-ordination and specific sports skills, perfecting ability

organised in large groups and work together as a team, bonding over the rigor of training like professional athletes. Under the trainer's supervision, participants perform complete functional sessions that help them become stronger, faster, leaner and more agile.

PERSONALISE WITH SMALL GROUP CIRCUIT TRAINING

The Small Group Training solution allows a higher level of personalisation and is therefore ideal for smaller groups such as PT, strength and conditioning, and rehabilitation. Trainers can deliver a varied training experience aimed at improving sport performance, power, speed, stamina and agility in a motivating environment.

MAXIMISE YOUR INVESTMENT WITH VIRTUAL TRAINING

The Virtual Training solution is ideal for operators wanting to increase their service offer and maximise SKILLMILL usage during non-supervised hours. Users can choose from a set of virtual training video programmes either individually or as part of a class and can access these by scanning the QR code on the SKILLMILL product.

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Pay back time: Rewards must be desirable and worth making the extra effort for

ACTIVITY = REWARD

Are physical, tangible rewards the best way to get members to stick to their exercise routines?

Katherine Selby reports on the growing category of activity reward schemes

Motivation is a tricky business. What gets one person out of bed and into the gym, or setting their alarm to book an exercise class, will not get the next person moving.

But what if you actually reward people for being active – not just a pat on the back, or a reliance on long-term weight loss or fitness goals to keep people motivated, but an immediate, tangible, material reward?

Different people will of course be motivated by different rewards. Some will respond to monetary incentives (discounts), others to material items (freebies). Some will be motivated more by quick wins – a ‘little and often’ approach – while others will save up reward points for bigger items like three months’ free gym membership or even a free wearable.

The trick is to offer a range of rewards to motivate different personality types.

But provided the right rewards are on offer – and the activity levels needed to earn them are realistic – rewards can be used very effectively in goal-setting.

Offer a desirable reward that’s worth making the extra effort for – and ideally allow members to track progress, so they can see how close they are to securing it – and watch as people instinctively step up the effort to reach a reward that has come within reach, boosting their activity further. The sense of achievement is wonderful – and addictive. Which is good news for all concerned as the new goal is set, the next reward established and the effort redoubled...

Unsurprisingly then, exercise-related reward schemes are growing in popularity, with many combining sophisticated software platforms and clever technology to deliver truly personalised programmes. We look at some of the main players in the market.



It all adds up: Regular gym visits can bring great rewards, such as free cinema tickets

Within five months of launching Perkvilla at Xercise4Less, 2,036 members sent referral emails and 517 new members signed up

Marty Regan, sales director, Perkvilla



PERK UP!

Scheme: Perkvilla

Fresh from the US, reward scheme Perkvilla is gaining ground in the UK and looking to build its position as a leading member retention and referral programme. Participating clubs typically enjoy a 30–40 per cent Perkvilla registration rate among members, with 30 per cent likely to refer a friend and a similar percentage staying up to 45 days longer than non-Perkvilla members.

"We're currently in 2,200 locations across 25 countries, with several million registered club members actively using the system," says Marty Regan, sales director at Perkvilla.

"We launched in 2010 and set out to integrate with club management software to automate the member loyalty programme for club operators and members. Our system rewards members for things like checking in to the club, making purchases, posting on social media, referring friends and more besides.

"We entered the UK market in August 2014, launching the Perkvilla Rewards System with Xercise4Less. Within five months, 2,036 members sent referral emails to 12,595 friends and 517 new members signed up to Xercise4Less."

"Perkvilla has been a massive driver in improving our holistic membership experience," confirms Joe Hall, head of customer engagement for Xercise4Less. "Not only has it increased customer loyalty, but it has also driven our ancillary revenue and maximised our engagement with members on social media. It's been a game changer for us.



Free PT is a popular reward at Xercise4Less

"Over 4,000 members have joined in the last year as a direct referral from the Perkvilla platform. We've also seen thousands of free PT sessions redeemed, leading to an increased use of our personal trainers."

Rewards typically include free passes for friends, PT sessions, free memberships and discounts with preferred suppliers – so long as these discounts are better than those that can be found elsewhere online.

"The benefits of Perkvilla are three-fold," adds Regan. "Firstly, members are retained by earning points for each visit to the club, so they come more often and stay longer. Secondly, our referral component drives members to refer friends for bonus points. And thirdly, our members post on social media about their experience, which drives more content on both Facebook and Twitter."

► **BOUNTY HUNTER****Scheme: bounts**

Bounts is an increasingly familiar name in the UK market, with around three million members and a consistently high ranking on the UK App Store.

Launched in 2011, the exercise reward tracking app allows members to receive reward points – or ‘bounts’ – for taking part in physical activity. The app links to activity trackers such as Fitbit, Runkeeper and MapMyFitness to keep a log of exercise done; web-enabled gym equipment such as Precor, Life Fitness and Technogym can also be connected, so activity done on this equipment counts towards your bounts tally. The bounts reward points can then be redeemed as vouchers for things like the cinema, food outlets and sports stores.

Two recent studies from bounts make a good case for clubs to engage in reward schemes: they show people are twice as likely to keep using their gym membership for 12 months or more when they belong to bounts. Furthermore, bounts has been shown to motivate totally inactive people: in one programme, 85 per cent of its users referred by GPs and deemed by the GP to be inactive completed a 12-week exercise plan, compared to only 25 per cent of people who weren’t signed up to bounts – making this a great tool to help keep new members on track in those critical first few months.

“bounts is very rewarding for users, while operators gain valuable insight into their members’ patterns of behaviour



Equipment such as Precor can be connected to bounts

both inside and outside of the club, their venue dwell times, activity choices and durations,” says Danny Woods, retention manager at bounts.

“We can personalise the programme by sending bespoke, in-app messages to members’ mobiles on behalf of the organisation. These might offer discounts, offers within venues – reduced tennis court fees, for example – or promote products such as PT sessions.

“We have a number of operators using bounts – organisations as diverse as the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), Everyone Active, Cancer Research UK and the RFU.

“Meanwhile, Gladstone Health & Leisure integrates bounts into its existing membership software and online booking systems. It can be used to promote quieter times – for example, offering extra points for attendance during quieter days/times – or to drive interest in specific classes.”



85 per cent of bounts users referred by GPs completed a 12-week exercise plan, versus only 25 per cent of people who weren’t signed up to bounts

Danny Woods, retention manager, bounts

IN FINE FETTLE**Scheme: Fettle**

Fettle is the latest programme to enter the fitness industry following a successful pilot with CrossFit in the UK. “We put our money where our mouth is,” says Brent Kelly, Fettle CEO. “We believe that healthy behaviour deserves healthy rewards, so we’ve put together a top-class package of perks and treats – from free coffee and cinema tickets to heavily discounted gym memberships and fitness equipment – to keep our customers happy and productive.

“As a pioneer in the health protection industry, we’re using the latest digital technology to incentivise and reward our members for making healthy choices. Our unique Active Credits system is a total game-changer: activity converts to credits which can be cashed in against the cost of a gym membership or fitness equipment,

meaning we keep our members healthy, protected and rewarded – whatever their fitness preference.

“CrossFit members love Fettle: 76 CrossFit sites signed up within two months, and we had 70 individuals wanting to sign up on Facebook on the day it launched. To date, over 1,300 CrossFit members have cashed in more than £600,000-worth of rewards through Fettle.

“Now we’re seeing health club members taking an active interest in their own exercise – checking their heart rate, being conscious of what they’re doing between exercise sessions, and generally being more aware of the positive impact their activity is having on their health.”

“When I first heard about Fettle, I wondered where the catch was,” says Chris Templeman, director at CrossFit Clitheroe – the first CrossFit club to register. “With 15 years’ experience in the fitness industry, I’ve seen some gimmicky incentives. But Fettle is a great programme that rewards people for being active and healthy.”



To date, over 1,300 CrossFit members have cashed in more than £600,000-worth of rewards through Fettle

Brent Kelly, Fettle CEO



"Ridgeway were heavily involved in the refurbishment of over twenty Fitness First reception areas. They helped develop our key signature pieces by building prototypes and supplying samples. Their knowledge of materials, joinery and manufacturing allied to a rich understanding of the customer experience proved a crucial asset, and contributed to the prompt roll out of fully optimised reception areas across the estate. We're thrilled with the final product, and are delighted to recognise Ridgeway with the Fitness First supplier award for 'delivering most outstanding service'."

Harry Kay – Property Director at Fitness First

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Based on the success of the Running Heroes rewards scheme, Skiing Heroes and Cycling Heroes have also been created

► ACTIVITY-SPECIFIC

Schemes: Running Heroes & Bitwalking

While Perkhille, bounts and Fettle have a broad spectrum approach, rewarding most forms of movement and activity, there are other 'points for exercise' schemes that operate at an activity-specific level.

One of these, Running Heroes, harnesses the myriad running apps and converts the tracked miles into reward points. "You simply connect your running app to Running Heroes, enjoy your run and see your effort converted into points for some well-deserved rewards in the form of exciting and exclusive offers from our partners," says Quentin Auberger, UK country manager.

"With around 200 brands linked to Running Heroes – such as Nike, adidas, Reebok, Saucony, Mizuno, Brooks, ASICS and New Balance, as well as Holiday Inn, Spotify, Uber, Jabra, Ultimate Ears and Gousto – there really is something for everyone.

"Running Heroes has 250,000 members worldwide, and since we launched in the UK in June 2015, 25,000 people have signed up in that market. The average run is around five miles, and the average running time per week around two hours. Cumulatively, Running Heroes members have covered a combined distance the equivalent of running around the globe more than four times."

Running Heroes has 250,000 members worldwide, and since we launched in the UK in June 2015, 25,000 people have signed up

Quentin Auberger, UK manager, Running Heroes



He continues: "We'll be introducing new functionalities very shortly to make the platform more social. That will include a Session tool to find running mates by creating your own session online, a Community tool to find and add friends, and a Forum to exchange tips. In addition, we've just introduced Skiing Heroes and will be launching Cycling Heroes in the coming weeks."

Meanwhile Bitwalking is a new app that converts your steps into Bitwalking dollars. The principle is straightforward and rewards people for doing the simplest form of exercise: walking. People earn one BW\$ for about every 10,000 steps taken and can spend their BW\$ via the in-app market or with third party partners.

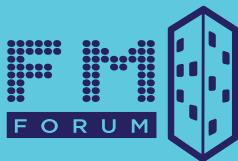
Bitwalking is now looking for health club partners to offer services such as a classes, day passes or a reduction in membership in exchange for Bitwalking dollars.

Bitwalking is a truly global programme, with its roll-out dictated by demand – the countries with the most requests will get the scheme first. Nevertheless, it's been designed with developing markets front of mind: while users in First World countries will be able to earn themselves a free coffee or two each week, people in developing countries – who walk far further each day, often simply in order to survive, such as to get water – can earn many more BW\$ and gain rewards that will genuinely transform their lives. ●

FIND OUT MORE

www.perkhille.com
www.bounts.it
www.teamfettle.com
www.uk.runningheroes.com
www.bitwalking.com

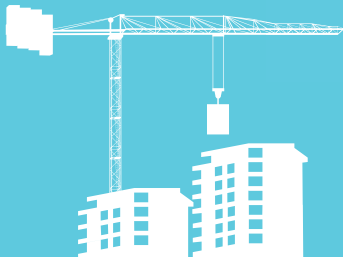
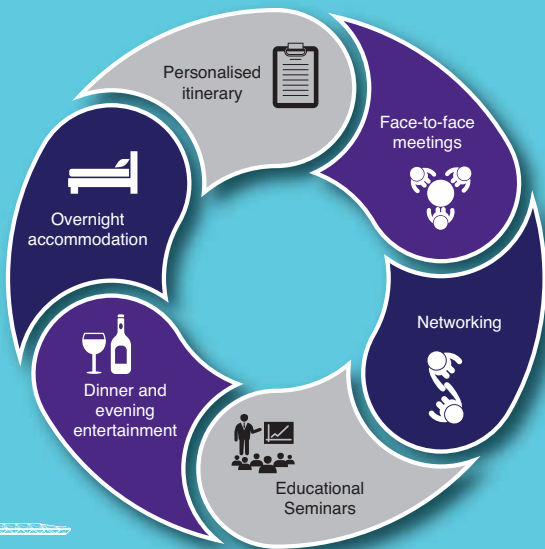
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BOOSTING ACTIVITY WITH CFM

Creative Fitness Marketing has been helping operators attract new members for 26 years. Director **Dean Godfrey** explains how it can make your business more profitable



A six-week campaign can attract 200–500 new members on average

What does CFM do?

We help health clubs, leisure trusts and multi-site operators to attract new members through our innovative Memberdrive campaigns. We sold more than 30,000 memberships last year alone.

What does your Memberdrive campaign involve?

Our Memberdrive is a marketing solution that aims to increase your membership base, boost your monthly cash flow and ultimately improve the profitability of your facilities by tapping into the inactive population in your local community.

Running for four to six weeks, we provide a complete package for your sites incorporating telemarketing, direct mail, guerrilla marketing and a corporate outreach programme.

The campaign is run by a dedicated CFM marketing manager working on-site alongside a CFM sales person.

Our marketing campaigns are strategically developed to tap into new markets and maximise your brand awareness. This unique sales and marketing programme

generates additional monthly cash flow for your health and fitness clubs and provides security from local competitors.

As national partners of the government's Change4Life scheme, we can also use Change4Life branding on all advertising materials and can foster direct relationships with other partners such as Tesco and Asda who may be located in your area.

I already have a membership team – how would I benefit from CFM's sales consultants?

Recruited for their experience, education and work ethic, our sales consultants have worked in clubs of all sizes and demographics, overcoming the specific challenges faced by each particular site to attract hundreds of new members in just six weeks. This gives them unique insight and experience that your own sales team can learn from.

The role of the dedicated CFM marketing manager is to manage the promotion, implement guerrilla marketing initiatives and give regular updates to the club manager on the day-to-day progress of the campaign.

The assistant's role is to meet, greet and to enrol the prospects generated from the marketing campaign onto a long-term membership. Together, they manage the entire process leaving the club to work with their new members.

How many new members are you able to attract?

On average, our campaigns attract 200–500 new members in six weeks, generating our customers between £2,000 and £10,000 per month. We agree a promotional membership price and terms with you. Memberships are for a 24- or 36-month term, giving you regular, long-term income. We take a share of any monthly income generated, which will depend on the pricing structure agreed with you.

What are the risks?

There is no financial outlay for your club. We pay for all the marketing costs and as our model is self-funding, there is no financial risk for you.

We have helped thousands of clubs secure new memberships, including:

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What would 300 new members mean to you?

315 NEW MEMBERS AND OVER £300,000 IN REVENUE

"Partnering with CFM proved to be a **great success boosting memberships** in 2 selected resorts during tough market times.

The association with CFM and Change for Life has **raised the awareness of the Champneys brand** positively in the local community by **encouraging many to exercise who have not used the gym/Club before**.

The organisation and professionalism of the CFM staff are excellent. The support has **far exceeded expectations**. Time is taken to understand the brand and even provide **sales training to help maintain sales** after they left.

Highly recommended."

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Killing the cliché

Mark Hutcheon, strategy director for ukactive, looks at how a number of UK fitness brands changed the conversation in their January 2016 ad campaigns

Something significant happened in January as the UK gym industry spat out the cliché of 'New Year, New You' resolutions to go conversational. Some even went controversial. We witnessed a welcome reframing of the message and a gear-shift in terms of positively changing attitudes to exercise – a rejection of the New Year's resolution cliché in favour of joining in with consumer conversations about life, commitment, dating, achievement and feeling part of something much bigger.

And when brands start having these sorts of conversations, rather than just selling to people, interesting things start to happen. More people join in, get fit and ultimately delay the onset of the lifestyle diseases bankrupting the NHS.

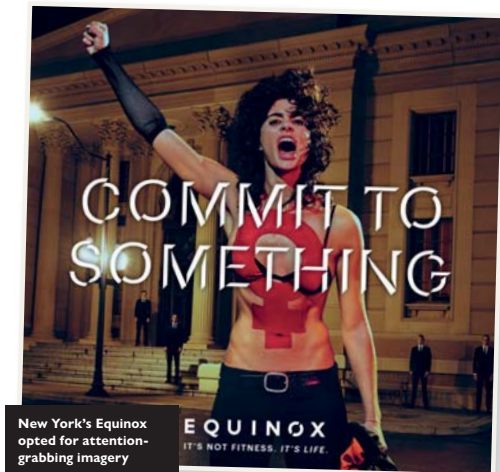
While still early days, unofficial evidence suggests the sector had a very strong January for joiners, validating this shift in marketing strategy.

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

So who triumphed in the January campaigns? Equinox, the New York palace of vanity, opted for Gucci-style effrontery, with fashion-photographed weirdness and nudity brought together under the appeal to "commit to something".

At the luxury end of the market, the buyer is anti-conformist and the idea wrapped up in this campaign is a very real contemporary social dilemma: in a fluid, social world, what are we committed to?

Virgin Active, for me, takes the honours. Its 'We've Got a Workout for That' campaign had trademark cheeky Virgin humour and a central promise that this is



New York's Equinox opted for attention-grabbing imagery

the club for the life you want to live. Dating, Instagram and looking good go together – so why not correlate them. I've found the gym sector too often afraid to find its voice outside of the narrow language of getting fit. More of this please Virgin.

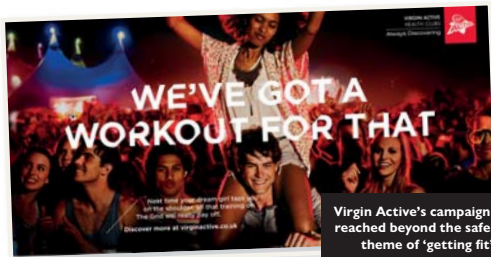
Fitness First, through its Australian arm, got in on the act with its 'How did I get here?' campaign, inviting intrigue from

new users by showing real members living a more interesting life in the moment. Scenarios included the 75-year-old grandma on a night out in a gay club, and the woman climbing halfway up a sheer cliff face. Provocative, outside of the narrow gym conversation and invitational to the curious consumer.

What of the budget gym titans? Pure Gym let us know 'everyone is welcome' and The Gym Group asks us to 'find our fit', juiced up with these brands' compelling product proposition of no contract, 24-hour access, great facilities and all for a surprisingly small price tag.

An honorary mention to Kwik Fit and its free 30-minute fitness class campaign to help customers 'lose their spare tyre, by using a spare tyre.' Genius.

Finally, Protein World played against brand and went with a safe, derivative 'new year, new you' message – perhaps put off by 2015's furore over its beach body campaign – though we were distracted from the banality of it by the use of Instagram's 10 fitness models.



Virgin Active's campaign reached beyond the safe theme of 'getting fit'



Fitness First's 'How did I get here?' campaign used images of members living a more interesting life

Marketing that's positive, conversational, strikes a chord, is shareable and enables me to join in looks like a new blueprint for promoting activity



Events like Color Run and Tough Mudder appeal to consumers' desire for more meaningful experiences

SO WHAT?

Well, on one level, these ad campaigns demonstrate that the gym brands and owners want to connect to their customers beyond providing access to a building. Up to 50 years ago, activity was a necessity – many jobs were physical – or our recreation of choice. Today it competes as just another leisure choice, and frankly not that appealing compared to the pub, a box set or Call of Duty.

The trend for fitness as experiences – Color Run, Tough Mudder – partly shows the way. Brands are rejecting transactional communications wrapped up in self-help messages and appealing to consumers' emotions. Sport England's *This Girl Can* campaign turned the premise of how to market exercise upside down. Despite a vague call to action, it triumphed.

Marketing that's positive, conversational, strikes a chord with me or identifies with my desires or fears, that's shareable and enables me to join in, looks like a new blueprint for promoting physical activity. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Hutcheon is strategy director at ukactive and a former global comms director at Fitness First Group during its successful rebrand.



**health club
management**
Public Affairs Media Partner

Good vibrations

TVS Sports Surfaces provided a range of cutting-edge acoustic surfaces to Body Zone Fitness in Newcastle to alleviate noise and vibration, and create a calming gym environment

Body Zone Fitness is an independent fitness facility operating within a mixed-use development in the city centre of Newcastle Upon Tyne. The gym has approximately 200 pieces of fitness equipment, housed over two levels and with well over 2,000 active members. The landlord, who also operates the gym, was keen to alleviate noise and vibration disturbance (caused by gym activities) to other areas of the building and turned to TVS Sports Surfaces and parent company, Total Vibration Solutions Limited, for help. The long-term protection of the subfloor was also important to the client.

THE SOLUTION

After the initial assessment of the problem, TVS specified an acoustic build-up of materials for installation in the free weights section of the gym. This system is designed to lessen the transmission of impact shock caused by falling heavy objects such as barbells and dumbbells and this area was finished with interlocking TVS SPORTEC Style Tiles, as they provide a suitable performance platform for heavy weight lifting to take place.

Throughout other areas of the gym, TVS SPORTEC Color-15 sheet rubber was specified on this occasion, as this material is extremely durable, tough and highly resistant to mechanical wear. It's also easy to maintain, available in a wide range of colours and provides enough cushioning underfoot for exercisers to work out safely.

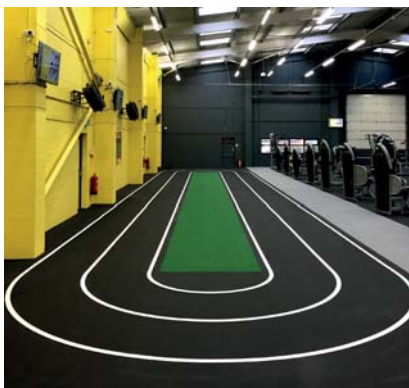
RESULT

TVS Sports Surfaces helped the client by providing an innovative solution that addressed the issues identified. Noise and vibration was controlled in the free weights area of the gym and neighbouring tenants were not disturbed by gym activities. The floor finishes used throughout the gym provided extra protection to the concrete subfloor.

TVS Sports Surfaces is a leading provider of flooring materials and supply products suitable for sports, leisure and playground facilities. As well as material supply and installation, TVS offers bespoke line marking services, custom sprint tracks, acoustic solutions and playground accessories. Materials can be supplied for indoor and outdoor areas.



Acoustic solutions were supplied to Body Zone Fitness



TVS offers custom-designed sprint and sled tracks for clubs



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TVS Sports Surfaces

FITNESS FLOORING SPECIALISTS

MOLLY KEMMER

The EXOS/Medifit exec and outgoing IHRSA chair reflects on the new ideas, challenges and changes that the past year has brought to the fitness sector

You're about to conclude your term as chair of IHRSA's board of directors. What can you tell us about the past year?

The year has gone very fast, but it's provided a tremendous opportunity for me to learn, grow and connect with others to better understand the needs of our industry and the people we serve. My position, as the regional director of community services for EXOS/Medifit, is certainly enlightening, but the IHRSA role has broadened my global perspective.

Talented, passionate people are spreading our industry's benefits across the globe, but each market around the world is unique, with its own nuances, challenges and opportunities. Some cultures employ a more conservative, traditional way of thinking while others, anxious to be first, eagerly embrace innovation and change. For example, the boutique model is exploding in Europe.

No matter the location, culture or business models involved, industry leaders on every continent are predicting growth. However, each market does so at a pace and with a rhythm all of its own.

What, in your opinion, is the most dramatic industry change that's taken place during your tenure?

I can think of several, including the rapid growth of the studio, boutique and niche models, and the continued proliferation of low-cost fitness facilities.

The emergence of offerings that are positioned as 'premium low-cost' warrants some serious study to determine the long-term opportunity and market impact they may present.

In addition, the health and fitness market's obvious appetite for new technology suggests traditional club models are at risk if they fail to study what works and adapt to address consumers' changing needs and expectations.

And what hasn't changed in that time – something you'd like to have seen more progress on?

Just one? Well, as an industry, we still haven't moved the needle on obesity or physical inactivity – both global issues. I'd implore each IHRSA member to look in the mirror and ask themselves: Why? What haven't we tried? What could we

do better? What could we do together? I'd further urge them to consider the impact it would have – on global health, as well as our industry's bottom line – if we could bring even 1 per cent of the world's inactive population into our clubs.

Do you see technology as a threat or an opportunity?

Disruption is hard evidence that a consumer need or desire is being met by a process, product or service – a solution – that wasn't generally available before. In the case of our industry, it has a lot to do with the access, information and convenience afforded by virtual connectivity.

The key question, though, is why are consumers so interested in virtual access, data, tracking, cloud-community participation and so on? What are they craving? And beyond that, how can clubs satisfy this need via their membership experience in a positive and productive way? We should also ask what experiences clubs can provide that can never be replaced or replicated by technology alone.

Find the answers to these questions and you'll create a unique and engaging

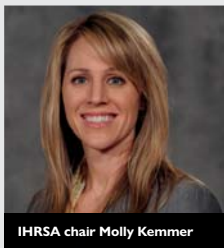
INTRODUCING MOLLY

Molly Kemmer entered the fitness industry as a group exercise instructor at the age of 18. Next came a personal training certification, and a master's degree in exercise physiology and health promotion from Illinois State University.

After concluding her formal education, she became assistant manager of a small club, and subsequently assumed positions of increasing responsibility at the Greenwood Athletic and Tennis Club, Pura Vida Fitness and Spa, and the Lakeshore Athletic Club-Flatiron – all located near Denver, US.

In 2012, Kemmer joined global fitness and wellness management firm EXOS/Medifit, serving as general manager of the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center at the University of Colorado; in 2014, she became EXOS/Medifit's regional director of community services.

She joined IHRSA's board of directors in 2012 and in 2015 was elected chair. Her one-year term ends in June 2016.



IHRSA chair Molly Kemmer



Clubs must understand why virtual fitness is growing, and what people are craving

experience – one that will have a lasting impact – for your members.

EXOS/MediFit is a global fitness and wellness management company that works in spheres like corporate wellness. What makes a successful corporate programme?

Let's be honest: lots of corporate fitness and wellness strategies haven't enjoyed long-term success. Today, the data is showing that it's not just one thing that makes a difference. Rather, success requires a layered, multi-faceted approach – one that's supported by a culture with aligned values, and one that produces measurable and sustainable results.

We've also discovered that reward systems that are balanced between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and buttressed by environmental and social support, produce better outcomes than ones that rely solely on financial incentives.

It's also important to offer the programming and physical environment that provide the motivation, inspiration and convenience for employees to work out at work, as well as helping them remain connected to achieving their goals even when they're not at work.

What advice would you offer club operators wanting to tackle the corporate sector?

Keep in mind that what works in a traditional health club setting may not translate seamlessly to a corporate environment. You need to do your homework to determine if you're equipped to produce the value and outcomes that are expected in an on-site facility, and in a way that's scalable.

Also, ask yourself if pursuing corporate fitness opportunities will really enhance or detract from your core business – and be honest in your response.

Managing clubs requires you to focus on balancing a number of critical factors, including the member experience, the team members' roles in providing it, the sustainability of the experience, and the club's unique relationship with the community.

As a management company, though, we function as a partner. We focus on each of our partners' 'care-about's, and on providing them with unique value, solutions and efficiencies. Sometimes this resembles a more traditional club model, but sometimes we deliver value via programmes or technology. We also focus on the scalability of our solutions and resources in order to produce a broader, sustainable impact.

Finally, what advice would you like to offer the next chair of IHRSA?

My advice would be to continue to challenge the thinking of the leaders of our industry and of the association. Think bigger. Think differently. And, when we know better... do better! ●

A longer version of this article appears in the April 2016 edition of IHRSA's CBI magazine.

ABOUT IHRSA

Founded in 1981, IHRSA – 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 an IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com



Health Club Management is IHRSA's European Strategic Media Partner

GET SET FOR 2017

From spring 2017, the pound coin changes to a new 12-sided coin. Are you ready?

The Royal Mint made its last circular coin in January. The impact on the leisure industry will be wide ranging, especially in locker management. Current £1 coin return locks will in the main NOT work with the new coin, which is a slightly different size and shape.

Bev Sharpe from Ojmar's UK agency Simple Locking Solutions Ltd answers questions from various sport and leisure operators on how the change from the old to new coin could be an opportunity for change in their clubs.

What can I do now?

Ojmar locks for 2016 have been modified to work with both coins, with a new distinctive decal and a new shape lock body to avoid confusion.

Do I have to change all my locks?

No, Ojmar locks have removable cylinders which can be used in a new style lock body.

Will I definitely need to change? Can't my locks be adjusted?

Many Ojmar locks sold over the past 10 years were supplied with adjustable coin slots and these will be able to be adjusted with a tool template, new coin slots and decals so there's no need to replace locks or lock bodies. Contact us for details on how to identify an adjustable lock.

Would this be a good time to change away from coin locks?

There has never been a wider range of Ojmar locks as an alternative to the more traditional coin locks.



We are on a really tight budget – what other products would you recommend?

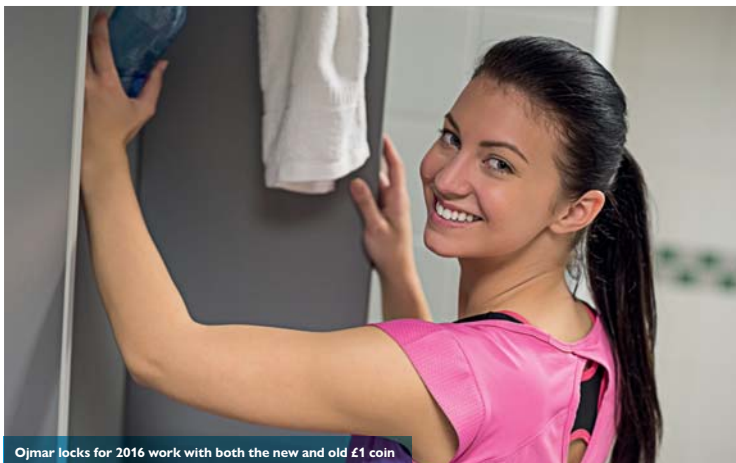
Our Hasp lock is a simple but attractive robust alternative to the coin lock which can very easily be retrofitted to the coin lock footprint.

What if I wanted to increase revenue in my club?

Our range of card/coin or coin retain locks are the simplest options.

The card/coin lock gives you the opportunity to allow members free locker access but to charge a small fee to non-members (therefore increasing the benefits of membership) and helping to pay for locker room maintenance.





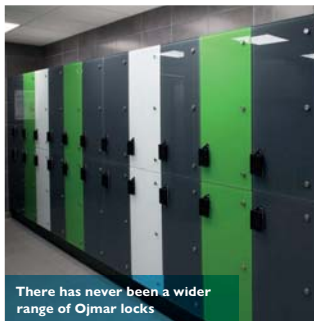
Ojmar locks for 2016 work with both the new and old £1 coin



Ojmar's NFC Programmer is a popular choice for leisure sites



The wireless system operates with bands and locks



There has never been a wider range of Ojmar locks

What about your RFID locks with wristbands?

Ojmar's market-leading OTS RFID lock is a quick easy retrofit to the coin lock.

You can utilise the strap return unit to take a small deposit on the bands and vend back a £1 coin. This can encourage secondary spend and allows you to change the cost of the locker for different groups of users fairly. Bands can also be returned in place of F&B, increasing footfall in the café.

Is there anything else that could work with the RFID lock?

Yes, you could use existing Precor bands, Gladstone access / membership bands, Technogym wellness keys and many other membership access or student cards.

I'm fed up with dealing with keys and locker reservations. Is there any other alternative?

What about our OCS digital lock? No keys, great for wet and humid environments, changeable master codes and a simple user defined code which resets every time. You can set the locks to Auto Open at night or after a few hours to maximise locker space.

When should I switch?

It may seem like we have all the time in the world, but this will affect most clubs in the UK in some way, so the sooner you take action the better. Even if that is by staging the replacement coin lock bodies over the next 10 months, it will avoid being in a panic in the weeks before the changeover.

How can I find out more?

Why not start with a conversation to see if you can improve the running of your facility? Talk to us at Ojmar or to your locker manufacturer or maintenance provider. Or visit Ojmar at FIBO to find out why less is more, or at Elevate London to discuss your options with our team.



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INTRODUCING

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This year, we're introducing Cybex Care, a web-based asset management system that wirelessly collects cardio data, then uses it to help save you money, reduce equipment downtime and manage machine usage.

Managing your equipment has never been so simple. From your personal dashboard, keep track of equipment case status, usage trends and upcoming tasks.

Get extensive insight on machine usage and member preferences. See data as "miles run" or "hours used." Even project six-month patterns. Use this information to rotate low and high use equipment, keep your equipment in top condition, and ensure that your members are getting the best workout experiences possible.

Cybex Care Benefits

Improve Member Experience

By measuring usage trends you can ensure that your equipment is optimally positioned in the gym, in top condition, and always available to exceed your members' needs.

Reduce Downtime & Optimise Performance

With advanced cardio insight, keep your equipment running perfectly and prevent disruptions before they occur.

Streamline Maintenance & Service

Determine an optimal cleaning schedule. Train staff through instructional videos and task scheduling. Predict service needs and reduce service time.

Lower Cost of Ownership

Through regularly scheduled maintenance and the rotation of low and high use machines, Cybex Care will help you extend the life of your equipment.

Higher Standards

New standard features complement Cybex Care, making our premier cardio equipment even better: power cord retention hooks, side power switches and ez-grip coax cables.



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Urban lifestyle

Cybox International UK showcases its work with URBANFITNESS London

Cybox International UK has partnered with new central London gym concept URBANFITNESS in a five-year exclusive deal to install more than 80 pieces of strength and cardio equipment at its first site in Aldgate.

The facility, which opened in February, has been designed to offer a new take on the gym experience: members have access to premium fitness equipment, evidence-based fitness programmes and group exercise classes for all levels, as well as ongoing education, for just £29.99 a month based on a rolling monthly agreement.

The gym's extensive range of cardio equipment includes treadmills from Cybox's premium 790 series, 770 series Arc Trainers and bikes, as well as the new SPARC, which recently launched in the UK. Based on Cybox's Arc Trainer and its patented Arc motion of movement, the SPARC is a self-powered resisted cardio machine designed for HIIT or circuits. Its simple adjustment and user features are matched with a biomechanical design that means the SPARC is gentler on joints.

In addition, the gym has a large dedicated strength training area equipped with 12 pieces from Cybox's Eagle NX and Prestige VRS selectorised lines, Big Iron half racks, bespoke Jungle Gym and Bravo Functional Trainers. A range of free weight and plate-loaded equipment was also installed.



The new URBANFITNESS facility offers an extensive range of cardio equipment



We're focused on building the URBANFITNESS London brand, with plans to roll out multiple sites across the capital – Jonathan Williams



Members have access to premium Cybox fitness equipment

Commenting on the launch of the new gym, Jonathan Williams, co-founder of URBANFITNESS London, says: "We aim to offer our members the absolute best across every aspect of our facility, to create an inspiring environment that helps every single person achieve their long-term active lifestyle goals. The feedback from members so far has been fantastic.

"We're focused on building the URBANFITNESS London brand and, with plans to roll out multiple sites across the capital, the relationship with our key suppliers is paramount. We view Cybox as an important and valued partner."

Rob Thurston, commercial director for Cybox UK, adds: "URBANFITNESS Sugar House's central London location, competitive pricing model and extensive range of equipment makes it a unique offering for members and one that's already providing hugely popular."

www.cyboxintl.com



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Simply functional

Simply Gym invests £1m in third functional training site in Wales in collaboration with Life Fitness

A collaboration between Life Fitness and Simply Gym has seen the creation of a high quality, low-cost gym in Cwmbran town centre, Wales, in response to the needs of the community. The total investment for Simply Gym's third site was close to £1m and the 10,000sq ft gym has proved extremely popular since opening in January 2016.

Simply Gym believes the best way to get results for sport and weight loss is through functional training, combining small group training classes with a fun class timetable and a low membership cost. Each Simply Gym has a SYNRGY360 fitness system as the focus of its functional training area, complete with speakers, a lighting rig and PTs to provide an endless supply of exercises.



Simply Gym offers a range of classes on the SYNRGY360

We offer a broad functional fitness portfolio to our members. Simply Gym is now well-known for this type of training – Richard Proctor



The major installation at Simply Gym Cwmbran consists of 68 pieces of Life Fitness equipment, making it the latest UK gym to become an official Hammer Strength Training Centre.

Products include HD Elite, Hammer Strength plate-loaded and the full Discover range including the FlexStrider variable-stride trainer and PowerMill climber. As at the other two Simply Gyms in Gorseinon and Llansamlet, SYNRGY360 is used for group training, with zones for cable training, bodyweight training, boxing and kettlebells.

Richard Proctor, CEO of Bay Leisure – which operates Simply Gym – says: "Hammer Strength and SYNRGY360 are key priorities for us across our sites, supported by well-trained staff delivering high standards of advice and encouragement to ensure members reach their fitness goals.

"We pride ourselves on providing high quality equipment at a price that makes it available to people who couldn't previously afford to use a gym."

Simply Gym offers a free range of classes to members, with many focusing on SYNRGY360's functional training system. Keith Smith, global master trainer at Life Fitness, has provided extensive fitness education for Simply Gym's personal trainers through the Life Fitness Academy, and classes on offer include Synergy Starter,

Synergy Core, Synergy Max, Synergy Body Weight and Synergy Circuit. These sessions have proved extremely popular, so are replicated across all three gyms.

Proctor continues: "We follow a clear vision when installing equipment in our gyms, offering a broad functional fitness portfolio to our members. Simply Gym is now well-known for this type of training and its motivating SYNRGY360 sessions."

Dave Connolly, account manager at Life Fitness, says: "State-of-the-art equipment and a vibrant training environment ensures Simply Gyms deliver truly inspirational workouts, with results." www.lifefitness.co.uk



The Cwmbran site has 68 pieces of Life Fitness equipment

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technogym.com/unity

TECHNOGYM
The Wellness Company

Health checks

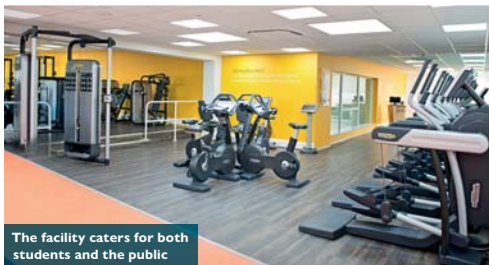
King Alfred Sport Centre 1610 has worked with Technogym to create a technology-focused dual-use site

King Alfred Sports Centre 1610 opened in December 2015, following a £450,000 investment to transform it into a state-of-the-art health and wellbeing centre. Technology and innovation are key to this dual-use centre, which is open both to students of King Alfred School and members of the public, so the centre has been equipped with the latest interactive Technogym equipment.

One of 1610's key objectives is to provide a personalised experience for its members. The integration of Tanita's professional body composition monitors with Technogym's cloud-based platform mywellness allows 1610 to offer a more holistic approach to its members' health.

When a new member signs up, they immediately begin 1610's six-stage KickStart programme, and the Tanita is an integral part of this programme, providing a wealth of baseline data which helps shape the member's goals and inform their fitness training plans.

"We've always been keen to stay ahead of the curve, adopt new trends and create unique experiences for our members, so we've been working with Technogym over the last five years to strengthen and develop our fitness offering," explains Joe Philip, fitness manager at 1610. "When Technogym first integrated with Tanita, we immediately built it into our business



The facility caters for both students and the public

plan for King Alfred as we saw it as a great addition to the member journey – and a potential secondary income stream."

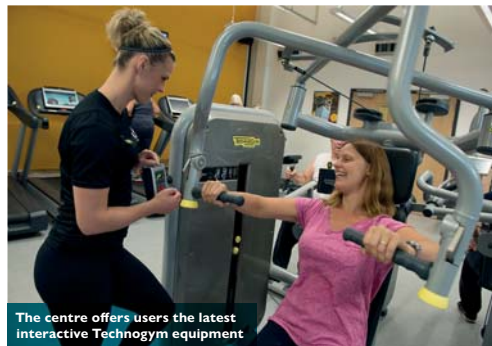
Sixty-two per cent of members with mywellness accounts at King Alfred have used Tanita since the centre opened in December. Beyond its integration within the KickStart programme, the Tanita

service is also offered for 'wellness works' members (GP referral clients or self-referral customers), allowing instructors to monitor their progress.

After the initial KickStart programme and review, members can pay £10 to be provided with a full reading of their data and a review of their existing programme..



Technology has become a huge driver. We constantly see how important it is in delivering a high level member experience – *Tim Nightingale*



The centre offers users the latest interactive Technogym equipment

As it's located on a school site, the staff at King Alfred 1610 also recognise the opportunity to have a positive impact on young people. "We wanted to interest and educate children in the importance of being more active, more often. We've set out to create an offering children will respond to, to engage those who don't enjoy PE or physical activity," says Philip.

"Technology has become a huge driver in the health and fitness industry, and we constantly see from our sites how important it is in delivering a high level member experience," explains Tim Nightingale, CEO at 1610. "Tools such as Tanita and mywellness allow us to offer new ways to enhance our members' motivation and adherence to their training plans, in turn helping them achieve their goals and make lasting changes."

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Isokinetic training can help reduce stress on joints

EGYM ADDS ISOKINETIC MODE

Digital fitness products manufacturer eGym has added an isokinetic training mode to its range of strength equipment: users can now choose isotonic or isokinetic resistance by selecting the appropriate setting. The Munich-based firm says isokinetic training reduces strain on joints, offers more precise measurement results and the ability to measure strength in joints.

The isokinetic mode on eGym varies the resistance to maintain a constant speed of movement. eGym has designed the mode with athletes and sports players in mind – to train for power and acceleration – but also for the assessment of older populations and those recovering from injury.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **EGYM**



There are five additions to the Discovery Series range

PLATE-LOADED FROM PRECOR

Precor is introducing five new pieces to its plate-loaded Discovery Series Strength range. The angled leg press, hack squat, power rack, half rack and multi-adjustable bench will be released throughout the spring.

The leg press features a 45-degree angled carriage sled and a new seat designed for precise body positioning. The hack squat seat design places the user in an upright position, while the resistance load is placed directly on the hips to recruit lower body muscles. The power rack enables the use of items like bands, chains and battle ropes alongside traditional power rack exercises, while the half rack features offers a more space-efficient footprint.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **PRECOR**



The HD Athletic Series launches at FIBO

LIFE FITNESS GETS ATHLETIC

Life Fitness will be unveiling its new Hammer Strength HD Athletic Series at FIBO 2016. Designed for facilities and clubs wanting to create a modular strength training space, the equipment has been designed in response to the growing trend of Olympic lifting.

The HD Athletic line consists of a half rack, Power Rack and half rack/Power Rack combo, along with a variety of rig configurations and add-ons for small group training needs from school level through to sports professionals. It's available in a choice of four colours (charcoal, blue, red and platinum) for uprights and pull-up options.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **LIFE FITNESS**

Inspiration:
Improved
biomechanics



NAUTILUS INSPIRATION

The Nautilus Inspiration line has been redesigned with modern aesthetics and uniform towers, as well as improved biomechanics to capture natural human movement. Many machines also have increased functionality, allowing for both bilateral and unilateral movements, while converging and diverging arcs provide a natural motion.

Other design features make the machines easy to use, including a lock and load weight stack adjustment, wrap-around assisted seat adjustment, pre-stretch and range of motion controls.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **CORE**

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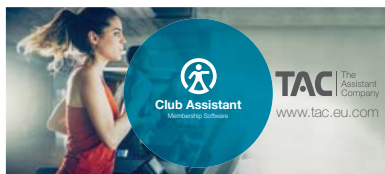
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Judgement call

Obese people see distances as further and hills steeper than their slimmer counterparts, researchers in the US have discovered



Obese people believed an object 25m away was actually 30m away

Scientists have shed new light on the challenges facing exercise professionals in getting the population moving, after new research has found that obesity causes people to see distances as farther and hills steeper than they actually are.

The findings of the study – which was published in the journal *Acta Psychologica** in March 2016 – paint the picture of a vicious circle, whereby various types of exercise are perceived to be more challenging as a person's weight increases.

Points of view

For the study, three researchers – two from Colorado State University and one

from Purdue University, US – carried out tests on 66 random volunteers.

In one experiment, the people were asked to judge the distance of a cone that was located 25m away. The researchers found that a 21-stone person saw the distance as 30m, while a 9-stone person saw that same distance as 15m.

In another test, people were asked how steep they thought a nearby hill was. The heavier people thought the incline was greater than their slimmer counterparts – which may be one explanation as to why heavier people are often more likely to take a lift rather than the stairs.

"You're not seeing the world as it is – you're seeing the world in terms

of your ability to act," says Dr Jessica Witt, a psychologist at Colorado State University who presented the findings at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in February.

Perceptual bias

"We think these perceptual biases can create a vicious circle for people with obesity. It is conscious perception of the world," adds Witt. "But it's not based on conscious perception of the body or feelings of laziness."

The phenomenon is thought to stem from a survival mechanism in early humans, designed to quickly evaluate our ability to tackle testing situations. However, the reflex appears to be counter-productive in persuading overweight people to be more active.

The researchers suggest setting easier targets for obese people who are starting out on exercise regimes, to avoid early discouragement. Using telescopic glasses to change distance perceptions was also mooted. ●

You're not seeing the world as it is – you're seeing the world in terms of your ability to act.
It's a vicious circle for people with obesity

*Witt, J et al. Perceived distance and obesity: It's what you weigh, not what you think. *Acta Psychologica*. Volume 165. March 2016

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