

health club management

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PAY & PLAY MEDITATION

Boutique studio
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Join the meditation club

Mindfulness and meditation represents a huge opportunity for health clubs – and now a new breed of boutique studio is leading the way, showing how meditation can be packaged in a way that really engages today's wellness consumer

There's a new studio concept hitting the market, only this time the offering isn't physical fitness – it's mental wellbeing. And it's being given the full boutique treatment: see page 46 of this month's *HCM* for our report into the emerging trend of boutique meditation studios.

Given the rapid growth of the fitness boutiques, it's hardly surprising that other aligned sectors have started to eye up the model and ask whether it could work for them too. But the extent to which the new-style meditation studios have mirrored the fitness boutiques is eye-catching, with their premium pay-as-you-go offering; an uber-cool, design-led experience; top quality sessions led by world-class instructors; and a focus on building a community around the brand.

Readers will be familiar with how all the above looks in a fitness boutique, but how does it translate into the meditation space?

Let's start with the pay-per-class aspect, which is perhaps even more beneficial for meditation than it is for fitness. Previously, people would have had to commit to a regular course to learn to meditate; not always easy to find the time. But now they don't have to worry. The new model is all about drop-in sessions – or what Unplug Meditation founder Suze Yalof calls 'drive-by meditation'.

With consumers increasingly expecting the delivery of wellbeing to be experiential and high-end, these new operators have also recognised the importance of venue design. They've taken meditation out of its traditional environment – people's homes, village halls and complementary medicine clinics – and are serving it up in beautifully crafted spaces with a serious 'dwell factor'.

Members already see their clubs as places to exercise out the stresses of the day; why not also cater for those who prefer to quietly decompress?

They've also recognised the role of community in a successful boutique; Tal Rabinowitz of Den Meditation in Los Angeles explains how her venue is designed "a bit like a hip, cool living room where people feel comfortable hanging out"; they serve tea and coffee during the day and wine in the evenings. This is meditation, but it's meditation in the mainstream – normalised (indeed, the new "in" thing to do) and made accessible and social.

And all of this is important for health club operators, because for the most part it's something they could replicate.



Studios such as Unplug offer 'drive-by meditation'

In our trend-spotting *Fitness Foresight™* 2017 (see page 12 of the *HCM Handbook 2017*), we identified dedicated meditation spaces as an exciting opportunity for health clubs; the emergence of meditation boutiques adds further weight to this. Members already see their clubs as places to exercise out the stresses of the day; why not also cater for those who prefer to quietly decompress and wind down?

There's certainly a good business case for doing so, both in terms of giving existing members another reason to visit and attracting new users – people who aren't overly interested in honing their physique, but who would welcome an opportunity to unwind after work. Given that meditation boutiques are charging around US\$25 per session, there's also a secondary revenue opportunity here.

So how best to implement this? One option would be to create meditation zones in the club – quiet spaces where people could simply sit, undistracted by the TV or their list of household chores.

But as the new boutiques are proving, people are keen for guidance in their meditation. Another option might therefore be to create 'club in club' meditation boutiques, in the same way we're seeing operators create 'club in club' cycling boutiques.

But there's also a halfway house. Fitness industry veteran Tony de Leede recently launched 'Move 123' virtual classes – with virtual meditation included on the list of programmes (see p24). With these sessions available on-demand, clubs really do have the opportunity to deliver a 'drive-by' approach to meditation.

It's time to get fully on-board with meditation and mindfulness.

Kate Cracknell

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Linda Evangelista: Inspiring innovative product creation at BioMimetic Laboratories

Lanserhof's Nils Behrens on aiming to be the world's leading medical spa brand

Mandarin Oriental's Jeremy McCarthy discusses the psychology of wellbeing



Ocean Park Hong Kong CEO Matthias Li on dealing with rising competition in the region

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News: skier Dave Ryding's historic achievement will put skiing into the media spotlight

Chris Grant: the CEO of Sported, who is using sport to create social change

Ruben Reddy: the architect arguing that temporary structures are more sustainable



DLL set to buy 16 Virgin Active clubs, bringing the total number of DLL clubs to 111

Dance music brand Ministry of Sound has opened a gym in Elephant and Castle, London

Sport England has unveiled the latest NGB grants, with £101m split between 25 NGBs



Luxury hotel operator Aman will open a new resort near Shanghai in Q3 2017

ESPA International chair and founder Sue Harmsworth to receive Visionary Award

Pullman Hotels has designed a wellness offer based on fitness and spa for Millennial travellers



A new report predicts 10 per cent growth through to 2021 due to shift in consumer taste

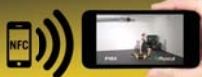
IAAPA has named Seaworld's Doug Stagner as its new COO and executive vice president

Universal's Volcano Bay waterpark is set for grand opening on 25 May 2017

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An open approach to data will help get more people active

Dominic Fennell, co-founder, imin

Speaking last November at the Open Data Institute (ODI) Summit 2016, the inventor of the World Wide Web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, noted that, in order to help people "find their way towards being healthy, we should...put sports data online".



Dominic Fennell

For the fitness sector, OpenActive represents a huge opportunity. By putting real-time information about physical activities at people's fingertips, we mirror consumer-centric models seen in sectors like travel. We can finally bring to our sector the much-revered holiday-booking experience whereby people can easily find and book their holidays across a multitude of apps and websites.

This satisfies a key feature of Sport England's new strategy; that

says we must "keep pace with the digital expectations of customers, making it as easy to book a sports court as a hotel room".

And this is where imin is now focusing its attention – facilitating the 'one-click buying' experience on a wide range of online platforms, including the Olympic Park website and London Sport's Get Active London activity finder; imin enables the consumer to find and book a physical activity without leaving their platform of choice.

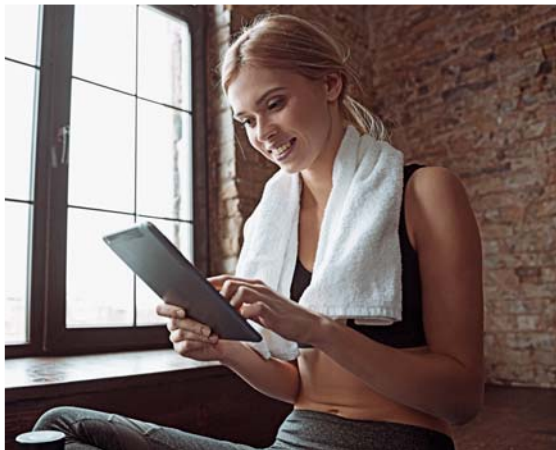
The benefit is not solely to the consumer; however. For those looking to attract more participants to their activities or facilities, this approach means that real-time, bookable activities can be advertised across a wide range of online services. A number of leisure operators have backed the OpenActive initiative, and one with nationwide coverage has already agreed to work with imin on a pilot early this year.

And for those organisations building online communities, behavioural change tools or the next big app, there's now easy access to real-time activity data, helping consumers immediately find ways to be active and healthy.

"This open approach means that real-time, bookable activities can be advertised across a wide range of online services"

The thinking is that an open approach will allow people to more easily find information on physical activities (simple things like what's happening, when and where) across a wide range of online platforms – from health-focused apps and local authority websites to the wave of emerging chatbots.

This message came after nearly three years of work by imin to garner support for this open approach. In 2015, imin co-founded OpenActive with the goal of bringing together public and private organisations from across the UK and beyond to work towards an open data approach to physical activities. Today, OpenActive is an ambitious, sector-led initiative co-ordinated by the ODI and supported by Sport England, working to increase the understanding of, and grow the momentum towards, using open data to help more people be more active.



It should be as easy to book a sports court as it is to book a hotel room online

Sports Coach UK should clarify how REPs purchase will affect industry

Jenny Patrickson, managing director, Active IQ

► **I am concerned** that the news about Sports Coach UK purchasing the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) may cause confusion in the active leisure industry. The

recent launch of the CIMSPA Exercise and Fitness Affiliate scheme has been clear and concise: training providers, awarding organisations, trainers and trainees can all see what it offers.

With the sale of REPs there is likely to be a period of adjustment, and people currently training on courses that carry REPs points may be unsure where they stand. I sincerely hope that Sports Coach UK will clarify this at the earliest opportunity.

The fitness industry is under scrutiny at the moment with employers calling for more robust training and comprehensive,



Providers must check their training is fit for purpose



Jenny Patrickson

“There is likely to be a period of adjustment, and people currently training on courses that carry REPs points may be unsure where they stand”

reliable endorsements from established and respected bodies. We welcome this, as it would ensure people are trained to a high standard and able to perform effectively and professionally.

While the CIMSPA Affiliate scheme establishes itself and while REPs undergoes

whatever changes are planned, I would urge training providers to refer to Ofqual-regulated awarding organisations to ensure their training is absolutely fit for purpose and their trainees are receiving the best possible professional tuition with a qualification that will stand the test of time.

Body scanners are key to changing perceptions of health

Elaine Denton, group health and fitness manager, David Lloyd Leisure

I was pleased to read the Editor's Letter in *Health Club Management* February 2017. Kate Cracknell's points on making metrics more user friendly and understandable are key to helping people become healthier. The V0₂ max measurement means very little to most people, but being able to climb the stairs without getting out of breath is both a clear goal to strive for and an indication of improvement.

Adding a metric that shows exactly what the individual's heart and lung health currently looks like and how this could affect them in the future is hugely motivating.

We have introduced Boditrax in David Lloyd clubs, and taught our personal trainers to assess



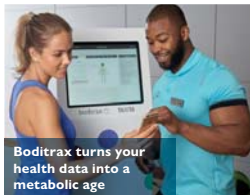
Elaine Denton

and explain the metrics in an easy-to-understand way that relates to specific goals. In response, we have seen a huge change in the perspective of our

members, who have moved from focusing just on their weight and body fat percentage to thinking about their overall health.

As Kate mentioned, when people learn their metabolic age compared to their real age, the focus shifts to trying to reduce that. Gym members are now looking at levels of visceral fat, hydration, bone density and muscle mass instead of just weight and body (subcutaneous) fat. This is a positive result, not just for the fitness industry, but for the NHS.

I believe that if Boditrax and similar systems were accessible



Boditrax turns your health data into a metabolic age

to the general public, this would improve people's understanding of their own health, giving them the motivation to make long-lasting lifestyle changes. ●

“Our members have moved from focusing on just their weight and body fat percentage to thinking about their overall health”



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I don't worry about retention. My service is a stepping stone to get the confidence to join a gym



JULIE CREFFIELD

FOUNDER, TOO FAT TO RUN

How did Too Fat to Run come about?

Ten years ago, I was a sedentary office worker with an unhealthy lifestyle. A sobering performance at a local fun run spurred me into action and, after participating in the London Marathon and the London Triathlon, I turned my experience into a business. My goal is to convince people they don't have to wait until they're thin before they start to run.

Too Fat to Run started out as a personal blog in 2010 – an online diary about my training, which I set up to keep myself accountable when I secured a place to run the London Marathon. After a few months, I started to get a following of overweight runners who said they could identify with me.

In 2013, after having a baby, I decided to turn the blog into a business. I now have 40,000 followers; 2,000 women have done my courses; and my online running club, The Clubhouse, has 250 members.

Because I've faced the same challenges as them, I've managed to inspire many overweight women to get active. My members are the type of inactive people the government is trying to reach.

The club creates social connections: it's not just about the running but about overall wellbeing. Many of my members suffer from depression or anxiety, so we talk a lot about self-care.

How does the model work?

Membership costs £59 a year, which includes access to training programmes, a Facebook group, a weekly email with a task and a video message, and discounts for additional services such as our annual retreat.

Around 30 per cent of my members have been with me from the start, but I don't worry too much about retention,



Creffield wants to reach one million participants with her service

because my service is a stepping stone for people to get the confidence to join a running club, a gym or suchlike.

Do you push the weight loss message?

No. Too Fat to Run is about getting active, not losing weight, although this is often a by-product. Lots of our members cancel their diet club subscription and start training for a marathon, so they find themselves naturally shrinking.

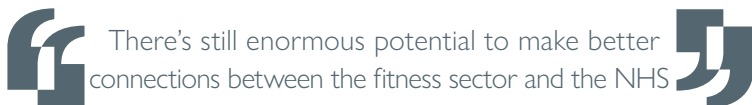
What are your future plans?

I have proven solutions to get women active, so my initial plan is to get financial support from the government, or from Sport England, so that I can expand what I'm doing.

I'd like to train more coaches and sell licences to lead Too Fat to Run running groups. I'm also looking for industry partners, so we can run more programmes and expand my One Big Fat Run concept – a monthly 5k run which people can do on their own or in groups. Time doesn't matter. It's all about participation. So far, 8,000 men and women have taken part, but I'm aiming for one million.



Too Fat to Run focuses on activity, not weight loss



There's still enormous potential to make better connections between the fitness sector and the NHS

DR NICK CAVILL

PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERT & DIRECTOR, CAVILL ASSOCIATES

How active are we now compared to 20 years ago?

Research suggests that physical activity levels have remained more or less stable, or even risen slightly. The shocking change in the last 20 years has been in obesity, which has shot up, with diabetes rising dramatically as a result.

What can be done to ease this?

People have to take personal responsibility for their health, but it's difficult to be good when they're surrounded by sweet treats, calorie-laden drinks and opportunities to be inactive.

Sadly there's no simple solution. We need political imperatives to tax sugar and influence food manufacturers to produce less calorific food. I don't think the current emphasis on voluntary agreements works – we need stronger legislation.

We also need town planning initiatives to create more opportunities for walking and cycling, to push the active commuting and active transport agenda.

Are there any cities that do active transport well?

Copenhagen and Amsterdam are excellent examples of cycling cities, but they weren't always like that – they took a bold decision.

In the 1970s, cars massively outstripped bicycles in Copenhagen, but the city authorities decided to turn this around, mainly for road safety reasons.

By investing in a comprehensive infrastructure which favours the bike as everyday transport, they transformed the city: since 2015, more bikes enter the city centre than cars.

With cycling, there are frequently political and financial sticking points. The pro-car lobby is seen as too strong and powerful and politicians are frightened of losing votes. But look what's happened in London with the congestion charge and the cycle super-highways. These weren't easy decisions to make, but the mayor



Cavill is focused on prevention

A good example is Sheffield. When I went to university there, the railway station area was grotty, but now it's been transformed: it's much more attractive and with better road crossing. The number of pedestrians in the area trebled from 2001 to 2008.

What could the health and fitness sector do to support these efforts?

I applaud the work the fitness industry is doing, and in particular ukactive's efforts with government and the Department of Health, working to integrate with broader policy issues. There's still enormous potential to make better connections between the health and fitness sector and the NHS, shifting the emphasis to prevention and health promotion rather than just treatment.

It would also be good for operators to encourage their members to do more everyday activity, such as walking and cycling between visits, or travelling to the club in an active way. Encouraging the use of activity trackers could also help, so members can see how their everyday activity all adds up.



Cavill: Town planners must create more opportunities for active travel



Instructors need to make people believe they are the person they wish to become



DR PAUL MCCARTHY

LECTURER IN PSYCHOLOGY, GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY
RESIDENT SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST, ST ANDREWS GOLF COURSE

► How important is the mind – the mental aspect – when it comes to sport and exercise?

Mindset is absolutely crucial: from having the motivation to keep training through the winter months, to being able to turn a new year's resolution into a habit, to making sure you don't choke at elite competition level. We train people to harness the power of their mind to maximise their wellbeing and performance.

How does this work in practice?

I've done a lot of research into positive emotion, and as a sports psychologist I aim to re-educate people to interpret events positively rather than being stressed by them. If we see something as a challenge we're equipped to handle, rather than something we're stressed by, our bodies respond better both physiologically and psychologically and we're far more likely to succeed.

I try to make people understand which of their thoughts are helpful and which should be discarded.

How do you do that?

One tool is to view emotions as information, and not as direction.



McCarthy: 'Mindset is crucial'

When we understand the emotions that we're experiencing, we have a much better steer on what to do with that information.

For example, some people interpret butterflies in their tummy as a sign of worry – a fear that something might go wrong – but if we think about this feeling as our body getting ready for the challenge, then we can start to view it more positively.

The same principle exists for any physical activity. We must pay attention to our emotions to understand what they're trying to tell us – what information they're providing – so we can act on this information. For example, someone might say "I don't feel like running today", but when we examine the feeling it might be that the person feels sad or disappointed, perhaps because they aren't making as much progress as they would like to.

How could gym owners apply your research to help their members?

The first thing they should do is help the people who come through the door get what they want. Most people come with a goal but don't know how to achieve it. They come with the intention and motivation but need the strategy, and then feedback, to succeed in their goals – otherwise the intention wears off.

What works universally is simple: support, encouragement, warm feedback, direction and guidance. The people who receive this do exceptionally well. Instructors need to make people really believe that they are the person they wish to become. ●



Gyms must give members the encouragement to achieve their goals

HEAR MORE AT ELEVATE

Paul, Nick and Julie will be joining an exciting line-up of speakers at this year's Elevate conference, taking place at ExCel London on 10–11 May.

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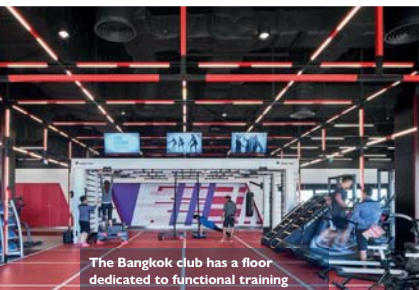
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International news



Fifth Bangkok club for Virgin Active

International health and fitness operator Virgin Active has opened its fifth club in Bangkok, Thailand, as it continues its growth and presence in South East Asia.

Virgin Central Festival EastVill is 4,200 sq m (45,200 sq ft) across four floors, with one floor dedicated to strength and functional training and another to its two high-energy studios, which can be made into one larger studio measuring more than 300 sq m (3,230 sq ft). The club will offer more than 200 classes each week, including Zuu, Pulse powered by Clubbercise and Zumba, among others.

Catering for locals living in eastern Bangkok, the club is the first in the region to offer Active Crew, a dedicated health and fitness programme for children between the ages of 7 and 15.

[Read more online](#)

Roam Fitness gym opens at US airport

Roam Fitness has opened a 1,175sq ft (109sq m) gym at Baltimore-Washington International Airport in Maryland, US, with its sights set on opening 20 more clubs at airports, including London Heathrow Airport.

The Baltimore-Washington club has space for up to 21 people and includes a range of cardio equipment, free weights and designated stretching space. Travellers can store their carry-on luggage and personal belongings while also charging their mobile devices.

All members have access to private shower rooms

with complimentary towels and shower products. Membership also includes complimentary rental of lululemon clothing and Brooks Adrenaline GTS 17 running shoes.

Discounted introductory membership will be US\$25 (£20; €23) for a day pass, US\$150 (£119; €140) for a monthly pass and US\$500 (£398; €467) for the year.

The company is in talks to open gyms at US airports in Charlotte, North Carolina, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Atlanta, Georgia.

[Read more online](#)



IHRSA launches accessibility programmes

The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) Foundation has launched five access pilot programmes in its clubs across the US in an effort to remove barriers to physical activity for people with chronic health conditions.

The ACCESS Health Initiative is the foundation's five-year strategic plan to take down barriers through participant-focused, multi-dimensional wellness schemes.

One pilot programme, funded by the organisation and the American Council on Exercise, is to serve cancer patients in San Diego health clubs. The foundation will also be addressing the needs of people with disabilities, with projects across the states of

Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and New York.

To support the initiatives, the IHRSA Foundation has launched a website, ihrsaoundation.org.

Joe Moore, IHRSA's president and chief executive, said: "We are delighted to have this new platform to showcase the great work being done through the IHRSA Foundation's ACCESS Health Initiative to improve people's lives through physical activity."

Moore added: "Now that the pilot programmes have begun, ihrsaoundation.org will help us to get the word out, and of course, assist in raising much-needed funds for additional programmes."

[Read more online](#)

The project aims to remove barriers to exercise





The lessons take place within the museum's galleries

Art museum introduces dance exercise classes

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art has introduced health and fitness sessions before public opening hours, offering its audience the chance to go on a two-mile journey as they dance their way through the museum's exhibits.

Hosted by the Monica Bill Barnes & Company – a contemporary American dance troupe that 'brings

dance where it does not belong', the 45-minute workout travels on a route curated and narrated by illustrator Maira Kalman.

Instructors hosting the sessions act in a dual role as trainer and docent, travelling through the museum at various speeds, incorporating marching, speed walking, jumping and jogging into the

dance workout.

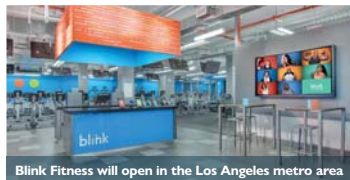
"Through constant movement, exercises and light stretching, led by choreographer Monica Bill Barnes and dance partner Anna Bass, participants experience an awakening to their surroundings unlike any other Museum tour," said a Met statement. "Connecting with the art and the

overwhelming power of the galleries by activating one's own body and mind makes this new work so radical."

A commission of MetLiveArts, the event debuted on 19 January and will continue until 12 February, running every Thursday to Sunday between those dates.

[Read more online](#)

Blink Fitness enters West Coast of United States



Blink Fitness will open in the Los Angeles metro area

US-based budget health club operator Blink Fitness is set to expand operations to the US west coast by entering the Los Angeles (LA) metro area in 2017.

California's first Blink-branded site will be located inside a former 1930s cinema, the Park Warner Theatre, located at Huntington Park. The historic site has been vacant since the mid-1990s, when it closed its operations.

While exact details of the new club are yet to be confirmed, Blink has revealed it will look to preserve the historic elements of the building, including the marquee and original painted art deco designs. Blink confirmed that it plans to open the location by the end of 2017.

[Read more online](#)

F45 Training nears 100 sites in the US

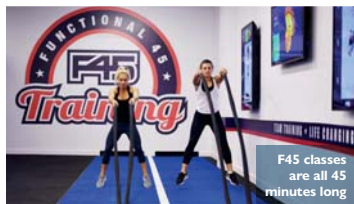
Australia-based fitness franchise F45 Training has secured a site in Austin, Texas, bringing the number of F45 studios in the US close to 100.

The Austin studio will be owned and operated by David Bohrer, a sixth-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. Scheduled to open in early April, the club will deliver 32 group classes a week.

"All members need to do is commit 45 minutes to our team each class to see results, build community and have fun with their weekly workouts," Bohrer said.

Each F45 club offers a high-intensity, interval training (HIIT) regime based on 45-minute long sessions.

[Read more online](#)



F45 classes are all 45 minutes long

Quarter of the UK population now inactive

Sport England has ushered in a new era of data collection by publishing its first ever *Active Lives Survey* results, which reveals that a quarter of the population is totally inactive.

Replacing the often-maligned *Active People Survey*, *Active Lives* takes into account people's patterns of behaviour over a 12 month period as opposed to the four week block its predecessor used to measure.

It also counts activities such as cycling for travel, walking for leisure and dance, as well as traditional sports and physical activity.

Headline figures covering the 12 month period from November 2015 revealed that while the majority of the population (60.7 per cent, or 27m) are physically active for 150-plus minutes a week, there were 11.3m (25.6 per cent) who did less than 30

minutes of activity per week.

These are the people Sport England has been tasked to reach under requirements laid out in the government's *Sporting Future* strategy.

The quango has earmarked £250m (US\$315.4m, €294.2m) over the next four years to concentrate on getting the inactive active.

Of Sport England's sample of 198,911 participants, it was found that the most inactive people in society were long-term unemployed or had never worked at all. More than a third of the people (37 per cent) took part in less than 30 minutes physical activity per week. Those in managerial and professional occupations were less likely to be inactive (17 per cent).

Walking for leisure was the most popular activity (41 per cent) for adults taking part in at least 30 minutes



Sedentary lifestyles are becoming more prevalent

of physical activity, twice per week over 28 days.

Sport (35 per cent), walking for travel (32 per cent) and general fitness (31 per cent) were also popular for physically active people.

A clear gender gap was still prevalent, with 27 per cent of females (6.1m) inactive compared to 24 per cent (5.3m) of males.

[Read more online](#)

Each workout is guided by a heart rate system



Fifth studio for YourZone45

Fitness studio franchise YourZone45 is planning to open a fifth site in West Yorkshire this spring.

The business, which has partnered with wearable technology firm MyZone for its UK expansion, has four studios in Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester, all in Essex, and Colliers Wood in southwest London.

Each franchise is 2,000-3,000sq ft (186-279sq m), with a target of 300 members per studio.

Developed by personal trainer Chris Elms, YourZone45 offers 45-minute interval training workouts. Each workout is delivered by a coach and guided by a heart rate system. The goal is for members to achieve 84-100 per cent of their maximum heart rate for at least 12 minutes so they continue to burn calories for up to 36 hours after their workout.

[Read more online](#)

Anytime to open 90 sites

Anytime Fitness plans to have 200 UK franchises by the end of the year as it accelerates its growth strategy. The company, which opened its 100th UK club in North West London in December, has 113 franchises in the country and is confident of hitting its target for 2017 despite economic uncertainty surrounding Brexit.

Speaking to *Health Club Management*, Brett

Edwards, Anytime Fitness UK general manager, said: "We've accelerated growth at the moment. We aim to have 200 clubs open by the end of the year. We are very comfortable with the properties we have and the ones we are negotiating on. "We will open 90 clubs this year, with a target of 550 clubs by the early 2020s."

The business, which has 100,000 UK members, employs five acquisition managers in its property team looking for sites typically between 4,500sq ft (418sq m) to 5,000sq ft (465sq m). The process from finding a property to opening it usually takes between six and eight months. More than £30m (US\$37.4m, €35.3m) will be spent on new locations in 2017.

[Read more online](#)

Brett Edwards



DLL set to buy Virgin Active sites

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has exchanged contracts to buy 16 Virgin Active health clubs for an undisclosed sum.

The deal will bring the total number of DLL clubs to 111 and is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2017.

The clubs are in Berkshire, Brighton, Clearview, Dorset, Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Lanarkshire, Lancashire, Lichfield, Norfolk, Northwood, Surrey, Thorpe Wood, Warwickshire and Wearside.

DLL operates 83 clubs in the UK with a further 12 in the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain, including its latest club at Aravaca, Madrid which opened on 1 February.

Since being acquired by private equity company TDR in 2013, DLL has embarked on a major programme to improve existing clubs. To date the company has

invested more than £120m in refurbishing and developing its estate, including the opening of five new-build clubs.

The Virgin deal underlines DLL's aggressive growth strategy in the UK and across Europe. Five clubs have opened in the last 16 months in Newbury, Rouken Glen (Glasgow), Colchester, Antwerp in Belgium, and Madrid in Spain.

Commenting on the Virgin deal, Glenn Earlam, CEO, said: "The acquisition of these new sites will be a great move for us, and will greatly accelerate our medium term growth plans in the UK, allowing us to concentrate more on our move into European markets. Most importantly they move DLL into several important new areas of the country, meaning that more people can benefit from our clubs."

[!\[\]\(6a9b39b98eb945faa14c645ec99e4eaa_img.jpg\) Read more online](#)



Glenn Earlam, DLL's chief executive officer

JD Gyms to expand portfolio by 25 per cent

JD Gyms is expanding its portfolio from eight to ten sites with new facilities in Birmingham, West Midlands, and Batley, West Yorkshire. The Birmingham gym will be a 26,000sq ft (2,415sq m) three-floor facility at the Alcora Building on Newtown Middleway, off the Aston Expressway.

JD Gyms, part of JD Sports Fashion group, has obtained planning permission to open a gym at the office complex and is pumping £2m into the project.

Featuring more than 200 pieces of cardio, strength and functional fitness equipment, the gym will also have male and female saunas, a ladies-only gym and a free weights zone. Two large studios will host more than 300 classes a month.

[!\[\]\(83bbbd261710c59db0214aa27b2edc0d_img.jpg\) Read more online](#)

Fitz Arkey (left) and Dhiren Varand will manage the new JD Gyms club in Birmingham



The club is the US chain's flagship in Europe



Xtend Barre enters London

Design studio Amos Goldreich Architecture have completed a "dynamic and tranquil" health club in London for Xtend Barre, with the site earmarked as the American fitness brand's first flagship European studio.

Located on Marylebone High Street, the 3,000sq ft (278sq m) club is a contemporary space for Xtend Barre's "adrenaline-fuelled" training classes – a fusion of ballet, dance and Pilates that enhance flexibility, improve balance and challenge the core.

The design team were tasked with transforming a

low-lit and "poorly planned" basement office into a welcoming and calming space.

The original interior was stripped down and reconfigured to create an airy studio, with enough room for the brand's all-important barres – stationary handrails, typically used by ballet dancers, that provide support during various exercises.

Xtend Barre has 62 franchised locations around the world and 99 licensed studios, including in Indonesia, Japan, China, Singapore, Australia and the US.

[!\[\]\(eff7520f80aa06fb7298beb68337d76d_img.jpg\) Read more online](#)

Barry's Bootcamp to open west London studio

Boutique fitness brand Barry's Bootcamp will be opening a third London studio later this spring.

Barry's West, located on Queensway, will accommodate classes of up to 53 customers. It will feature Woodway 4Front treadmills, trademark red lighting, a nightclub-grade sound system and changing rooms.

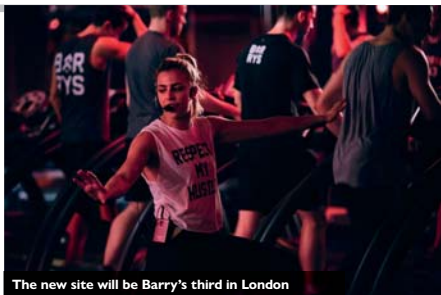
Alongside digital lockers and a complimentary towel service, the studio will also boast Barry's Fuel Bar, which will serve post-workout protein shakes, as well as offering a range of Munch Fit Food healthy meals.

Originating in Los Angeles, Barry's Bootcamp

offers clients hour-long cardiovascular and strength workouts that work to "shock" the body in an efficient and effective way to improve the cardiovascular system, burn fat and build muscle. The high-energy classes will be taught by expert trainers, with classes running from 6-9pm every day of the week, with each day targeting a different muscle group.

The latest studio follows Barry's Central, which launched in January 2013, and Barry's East, which opened in January 2015, also in the capital city.

Sandy Macaskill, Barry's London co-owner, said:



The new site will be Barry's third in London

"The opening of Barry's West is part of a considered expansion strategy for the brand that ensures our high quality workout, trainers and sense of community are maintained. Our Central and East locations are extremely popular and we're pleased to be bringing the workouts to a new part of London."

On opening in west London, he said: "With imminent plans to develop this part of West London into a premier retail and leisure destination, the opening of Barry's West has come at the perfect time."

Classes will start at £20 and prices will vary depending on the package purchased.

[Read more online](#)

Ministry of Sound opens central London gym

Dance and house music brand Ministry of Sound has opened a gym – The Arches Ministry Does Fitness – in Elephant and Castle, London.

The training studio has a fully licensed bar, offering protein shakes, beers, wine and cocktails, and has the same sound system as the nightclub. Personal trainer Harry Jameson has designed classes focused around seven purpose built training stations. Each station features equipment including treadmills, kettlebells,

weights, TRX, an XCUBE fitness frame, slam balls, battle ropes and benches.

"We're ripping up the rule book," said Ministry Does Fitness general manager, Olivia Braffman. "Life is all about balance and not slaving away in the gym with only a carrot at the finish line. We want our customers to come to The Arches to sweat, have fun and celebrate a good work out at the bar where the party continues."

[Read more online](#)



The association has more than 1,000 members

Fitness professional union affiliates with Unite

A personal trainer hoping to secure contracts and minimum levels of pay for fitness professionals has received backing from the largest union in the UK.

Ashley Simcock – a PT from the north west – launched the Fitness Professionals Association just before Christmas in 2016, and has now been backed by Unite. The association already has 1,000 members.

Simcock told *Health Club Management* that the idea to launch the group was

born out of a frustration at the level of pay he and his contemporaries were being offered by large gym chains to lead classes.

He said that fitness professionals were being paid around £15-£20 per class, while £30-£40 was more fair.

"I didn't realise how bad the pay actually was," he said. "The gyms decide the rate. Give me another profession where the customer decides how much they want to pay."

[Read more online](#)



The new Ministry gym has a fully licensed bar

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Tech news

Wexer and Move 123 partner for virtual training concepts

Leading fit-tech company
Wexer has launched a suite of new virtual fitness classes.

Produced by Move123, the content has been created to meet the ever-evolving demands of today's consumer – including a growing interest in mindfulness and meditation.

The new meditation classes aim to promote mental and

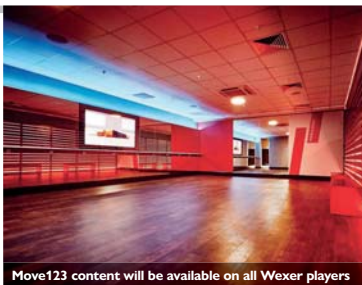
physical calm, as well as deeper breathing to quieten the nervous system.

"More and more, we're seeing club groups refer to virtual fitness as the new must-have, but to be successful it requires current fitness videos which meet consumer demand, and this is exactly what we're getting from our partnership with Move123," said Paul Bowman, CEO for Wexer.

Move123 has also produced a Senior collection of workouts targeting older members. The content has been designed to help this population group develop greater mobility, which in turn will positively impact their day-to-day lives.



Wexer CEO
Paul Bowman



Move123 content will be available on all Wexer players

Other Move123 categories include Fight workouts, Stretching, Pilates and Dance.

"Working with clubs of all sizes, we've used our knowledge and designed our classes specifically with fitness clubs in mind," said Tony de Leede, founder of Move123. "Our partnership with Wexer

Virtual allows club groups to meet the growing demands of members by providing current and fresh group exercise content."

The Move123 Meditation and Fight content is now available on all Wexer Players.

[Read more online](#)

LeisureDB releases latest social media report

Budget gym chain

Xercise4Less finished 2016 as the top ranking private fitness brand on social media.

The firm was followed by Pure Gym and Virgin Active,

who came second and third respectively, in LeisureDB's Q4 edition of the *Social Media Fitness Index*.

Facebook remained the most popular social media platform for the top 20 private fitness brands in the UK, with the number of likes increasing by 31,000 across the quarter to 1.07 million.

While Twitter continued to be the second most fertile platform for fitness companies, with 285,000 combined followers, many experienced a surge in Instagram followers in the run-up to Christmas. Across the 20 brands, there was a 12 per cent increase in Instagram followers over Q3.

However, the number of YouTube views declined by 13 per cent across the board. But despite losing 1.5 million views across the period, The Gym Group increased its subscription base by 10 per cent.



Mobile is the key platform for social media interaction

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

[Read more online](#)

Fitbit to cut jobs as revenues slow down



Is the US wearable market becoming saturated?

Wearable fitness tech provider Fitbit has said it will be cutting its workforce by up to 6 per cent following a slowdown in revenue and sales.

Announcing its financial results for Q4 2016, the company said it had entered a "temporary slowdown and transition period" and that revenue for the quarter would be "somewhere between US\$572m and \$580m". Fitbit had earlier forecast fourth quarter revenues to be between US\$725m and US\$750m. For the full-year 2016, Fitbit expects annual revenue growth to be 17 per cent from the previous forecasted growth of 25 to 26 per cent.

"Fourth quarter results are expected to be below our prior guidance range," said James Park, Fitbit co-founder and CEO.

"To address this reduction in growth and what we believe is a temporary slowdown and transition period, we are taking clear steps to reduce operating costs."

Park confirmed that as part of the cost-cutting exercise, Fitbit will conduct a "reorganisation of its business".

[Read more online](#)



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3. It gives me the opportunity to meet up and socialise with other Industry leaders within their field.



**Michelle Dand, Group Health & Fitness Manager,
David Lloyd Leisure Ltd**

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Supplier and training news

Training providers 'must strengthen digital offering'

Education and training providers in the health and fitness sector need to embrace learning technology solutions or risk losing out to more innovative suppliers, awarding organisation YMCA Awards has warned. Increasing numbers of students in the sector now expect access to on-demand

learning, so they can study at a time and place that suits them, according to a report published by YMCA.

The report surveyed 250 students about their study routines and found that 68 per cent of e-learning is done outside of the traditional 9am-4pm hours using digital

resources, and 16 per cent is done during the weekend.

Almost half of students surveyed said they had used a smartphone in their studies over the past 12 months. The document said: "Over the past year, smartphones have surpassed desktop computers for internet searches for the first time – meaning providers should incorporate mobile methods into their teaching."

The report also found that the majority of learners (82 per cent) preferred a mixture of digital and print materials to support their learning, with 46 per cent favouring resources that can be used offline.

Of the learners questioned, 60 per cent valued small, bite-sized learning content of five to 10 minutes, while 59 per cent like multimedia to be included.



Rob May, director of YMCA Awards

Commenting on the findings, Rob May, YMCA Awards director, said: "It is clear from our research that providers are still at various points in their digital learning journey; there's still work to be done to make strides towards industry-wide adoption."

[Read more online](#)



59 per cent of learners favour the use of multimedia

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The leaders programme is now in its second year



ukactive launches 2017 Future Leaders programme

Up-and-coming professionals in the physical activity industry will have the chance to further their careers with a week-long leadership programme, courtesy of ukactive.

Companies in the sector are being encouraged to put forward high-achieving employees for the organisation's Future Leaders 2017. The second edition of the programme will see successful candidates flown out to Barcelona to take the course at the esteemed IESE Business School in 2017.

However, Future Leaders 2017 consists of more than just a week-long course. Participants will be required to produce a 100-day plan to put lessons learnt into practice in their workplace. This year's programme will also include the Matrix LeadAbility Scholarship Programme, which aims to fast track disabled people into senior leadership positions within the physical activity sector.

[Read more online](#)

Sports Coach UK acquires REPs

The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs), has been taken over by Sports Coach UK "in its entirety". The deal was announced on 24 January 2017.

Mark Gannon, CEO of Sports Coach UK, who joined the organisation in May 2016 from British Gymnastics, said: "Coaching is no longer solely about acquiring and honing technical skills for sport, it's about improving people's experience of sport and physical activity by providing specialised support and guidance which is aligned to their individual needs and aspirations.

"Our investment into one of the most recognised registers in the fitness industry will mean we're able to improve our services for members of REPs."

[Read more online](#)



REPs was founded in 2002 by SkillsActive



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Active IQ appoints new chief medical advisor



Dr Vishnubala is a physical activity champion for Public Health England

The doctor of both the Great Britain men's basketball team and York City Football Club has been appointed chief medical advisor of Active IQ.

Dr Dane Vishnubala, who has more than 14 years of experience in the health and fitness industry, will have the job of developing and refreshing Active IQ's Level 3 Diploma in Exercise Referral, its Level 4 qualifications and health-based CPD content.

He will also deliver bi-monthly webinars focusing on technical content to complement the launch of Active IQ's refreshed Level 3 Diploma in Personal Training.

Dr Vishnubala will write bi-monthly blogs, provide a monthly 'Ask The Expert' service via Active IQ's monthly

e-bulletins and social media platforms and support Active IQ events and forums.

As well as being the doctor for the British men's basketball team, Dr Vishnubala is an NHS sport and exercise medicine doctor, Public Health England GP clinical champion for physical activity and a sports medicine physician.

He is also the Royal College of GPs' lead clinical advisor for physical activity and executive member of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine.

Vishnubala said: "There is a clear need to have fitness professionals who are qualified appropriately in both physical activity and lifestyle advice."

[Read more online](#)

ukactive strengthens senior team

ukactive has bolstered its senior team in an effort to drive forward the physical activity agenda in 2017.

Jack Shakespeare, Joe Robinson, Lara Lill and Steve Scales have all joined the not-for-profit health body in the past two months.

Shakespeare joins ukactive as head of ukactive Kids to help champion the children's activity agenda. He has spent the last 10 years with Fit for Sport, developing and implementing multi-stakeholder physical activity

campaigns and projects for children and young people, both nationally and internationally.

Robinson is the organisation's new creative director and will be responsible for implementing and delivering a creative strategy. He has previously worked on projects in the hospitality, retail and commercial industries.

Lill, former head of health and wellbeing at the Amateur Swimming Association, has joined as ukactive's health associate. In her role, Lill will focus on physical activity, particularly in the workplace.

Finally, Scales has joined as lead for local government engagement, having worked for local authorities in his career. Most recently, Scales has worked in the private sector as national strategic sales manager for the public sector at Matrix Fitness.



Jack Shakespeare is the new head of ukactive Kids

[Read more online](#)

Lynch takes over at fitness tech giant



Lynch is a veteran of the consumer technology sector

Fitness tech group Peloton has appointed William Lynch as its new president. Lynch joins Peloton after a successful career managing some of the world's most innovative and disruptive consumer technology companies.

As the CEO of Barnes & Noble – a Fortune 500 company and the largest bookseller in the US – Lynch was credited with transforming the group into the leading retailer of content, digital media and reading devices. Among other innovations, he was responsible for the world's first Android color tablet and the touch eReader.

In his new role at Peloton, Lynch will be tasked with scaling the business and expanding it into new categories and markets. Lynch will manage all aspects of Peloton's operations.

[Read more online](#)



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The ultimate fitness experience for fitness instructors and enthusiasts, offering three days of dance, aerobics, step, combat, conditioning, lectures, workshops and mind body sessions designed to enthuse and motivate. www.chrysalispromotions.com

22-25 | ECA World Fitness Conference / OBOW Show Marriott Marquis Hotel, New York City, NY, US

ECA World Fitness is an international organisation representing the fitness and wellness sectors, with annual shows in New York and Florida. The new ECA360 INSPIRE Conference will showcase the best presenters, products and leaders in fitness, health, dance and movement www.ecaworldfitness.com

25-26 | The OM Yoga Show Glasgow SECC, Glasgow, UK

The total yoga experience under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, workshops, children's yoga and hundreds of exhibitors covering all aspects of yoga, pilates, ayurveda and natural products. There are also shows in Manchester (19-21 May) and London (20-22 October). www.omyogashow.co.uk

CHARITY EVENT

3-4 June 2017 TrekFest, Brecon Beacons, South Wales, UK

Trek through Brecon Beacons National Park – the training ground of the SAS – and raise money for the charity of your choice. Choose from the 25km or 50km routes, both of which provide inspiring scenery, steep climbs, steep descents and challenging terrain as you summit one of the highest peaks in South Wales, the Pen y Fan (886m). Registration starts at £85 per person. <http://www.trekfest.org.uk/>



CHARITY EVENT

10-11 June 2017 (more dates available)

Channel Row Challenge, Dover Harbour, Kent, UK

Imagine being able to tell people you've rowed the English Channel. The AHOY Centre is making this dream a reality for you and six friends. Perfect for team bonding, this challenge sees you row 23 miles from Dover Harbour to the International Buoy midway across the channel and back again.

No experience is needed, just a team of seven people and minimum fundraising of £12,000 per team. The AHOY Centre works to change the lives of disabled and disadvantaged people through sailing and rowing. www.ahoy.org.uk

29-30 | Active-net 2017 Eastwood Hall, Nottingham, UK

A networking event for suppliers and operators with a focus on the public leisure sector. Seminars and a networking event take place alongside keynote presentations and one-to-one meetings. www.active-net.org



APRIL

5 | European Health & Fitness Forum Congress Center Nord, Exhibition Centre Cologne, Cologne, Germany

Following on from the success of last year's sell-out event, EuropeActive and FIBO invite visitors to join them in Cologne, Germany, for the 4th European Health & Fitness Forum (EHFF), which will be held as the opening event of FIBO 2017. www.europeactive.eu/events/ehff2017

6-9 | ACSM Health & Fitness Summit & Expo Town & Country Resort, San Diego, CA, US

The Summit, ACSM's signature fitness conference, gives students, fitness enthusiasts, personal trainers, certified professionals, and others the full spectrum of programming from scientific to practical application. www.acsmsummit.org

GREG OLIVER

There's a new fitness giant in Australia – and the Fitness & Lifestyle Group has plans to spread its wings even further, as its CEO explains to **Kate Cracknell**

The fact that Quadrant, a well-respected private equity firm, has invested in us is a real coming of age moment – not just for us, but for the whole of the Australian fitness sector." So says Greg Oliver, CEO of both the Fitness & Lifestyle Group and Goodlife Health Clubs, one of the group's businesses. "It's recognition that fitness is a worthwhile investment."

Oliver is referring to the recent deals which, in the space of just two months last summer, saw Quadrant populate its newly created Fitness & Lifestyle Group by acquiring a number of health club brands. In August 2016, it bought Goodlife Health Clubs and its weight loss brand Hypoxi from Ardent Leisure – a deal worth AU\$260m – as Ardent switched its focus to becoming an exclusively attractions and entertainment firm. Also in August, Quadrant acquired fitness franchise Jetts. Then, in September, it bought Fitness First Australia (see 'Growing a fitness empire', p34).

The combined group currently sits at 76 Goodlife clubs, 66 Fitness Firsts, 178 franchises and 34 corporate clubs in Jetts' Australian estate alone, plus 19 in-house Hypoxi studios. The group is headed up by Oliver, who alongside Quadrant has been instrumental in bringing the various deals to fruition.

And Oliver has exciting plans for this combined portfolio of "highly complementary" brands: Fitness First at the premium end of the market, as it always has been in Australia; Goodlife in the mid-market; Jetts a market leader in the low-cost segment; and Hypoxi a boutique offering designed to get non-traditional gym-goers into a health club setting.

CREATING USPs

"Goodlife has already evolved significantly over the last couple of years, particularly in the areas of technology and partnerships," Oliver explains. "We were a bricks and mortar business and we saw the online fitness phenomenon emerging: people were creating their own personas and providing online programming and getting a huge audience. Most operators would have looked at that as a significant threat to the industry. I saw it as an opportunity."

"One of our key partners is now Emily Skye, one of the world's leading online fitness personalities with 11 million followers. Emily has created group exercise programmes for us, which are already available in 63 of our 76 clubs. We're leveraging her influence to broaden our appeal. In return, she's able to give even more to

her followers: a safe environment in which to do her workouts, with all the support and equipment they need."

He continues: "Then, on the technology side of things, we have Hypoxi – the studio concept based on the equipment of the same name. Hypoxi combines low-impact exercise and nutritional advice with vacuum and compression technology for weight loss. It's an in-club boutique concept, but rather than being designed for the already fit as so many boutiques are, it's focused on figure shaping, targeting those who might otherwise be lost to the fitness industry."

"I firmly believe that, as a sector, we exist to change people's lives and improve families and communities – so weight loss and figure shaping is something we really should be offering. But our sector has consistently failed to do so, even though the demand is there: Hypoxi is a significant contributor to the financial performance of the overall Goodlife business."



The group has partnered with social media influencer Emily Skye



We started to open
our full-service
businesses 24/7, which
took away some of the
low-cost sector's key
selling propositions

— Greg Oliver





GREG OLIVER: A LIFE IN FITNESS



Greg Oliver – CEO of Goodlife Health Clubs since 2010, and now also CEO of private equity firm Quadrant's Fitness & Lifestyle Group, which owns Goodlife – has a varied background in the fitness sector, encompassing club management, corporate wellbeing,

club ownership and even software.

As head of Goodlife Health Clubs, Oliver worked alongside the CEO of Goodlife's owner – the Ardent Group – to build what he calls "a meaningful gym fitness club portfolio". This involved the acquisition of a number of smaller operators – Fenix Fitness, for example – as well as a number of Fitness First clubs outside that operator's core territory of New South Wales, taking Goodlife to a total of 76 clubs.

"I always had a strong desire to build not just a business, but a business that would have some legacy, a leader in its field that would be well thought of by the wider sector. Ardent was a willing and suitable partner to deliver on that."

The next phase of growth was even more dramatic. "For many years, Fitness First and Goodlife had essentially built around each other: Fitness First was incredibly strong in New South Wales and Victoria, so we mostly avoided building there – Goodlife only has four clubs in NSW – and equally they avoided our stronghold areas. So there was always going to be a point in time when it made sense to put the two businesses together.

"In the end, the timing was really interesting for us all. Fitness First had reached what we felt was the right time in terms of its performance. Quadrant felt the same, just as Ardent was reviewing its investment strategy and deciding to divest its health club division. That's how we were able to move so quickly."

And now? "Now we'll be able to serve our members even better, with one single view of the customer across all our brands and a size and scale which allows us to negotiate even stronger partnerships to make a difference to our members' lives."

Goodlife clubs have switched to 24/7 operation

- "It's also helped broaden the appeal of our clubs – a great way to introduce people into the business. We get them results that enable them to progress into the general population of the gym.

"There are currently around 80 Hypoxi studios across Australia, of which we own 21; the rest are standalone franchises. We bought the licence for Australia and New Zealand and we support the existing network, but the key strategy in Australia is to use Hypoxi as an added service and a USP in our own clubs. It will be an important opportunity for Fitness First: we've already identified some 20–35 clubs where we'd like to introduce it.

"Overseas it's another matter: we're keen to roll it out as a franchise in the United States, for example. We've already launched the franchise package there, with two flagship studios open in Arizona. I think we could reach 150–200 Hypoxi sites in that market over the next five years, whether inside clubs, standalone or in partnership with other weight loss offerings."

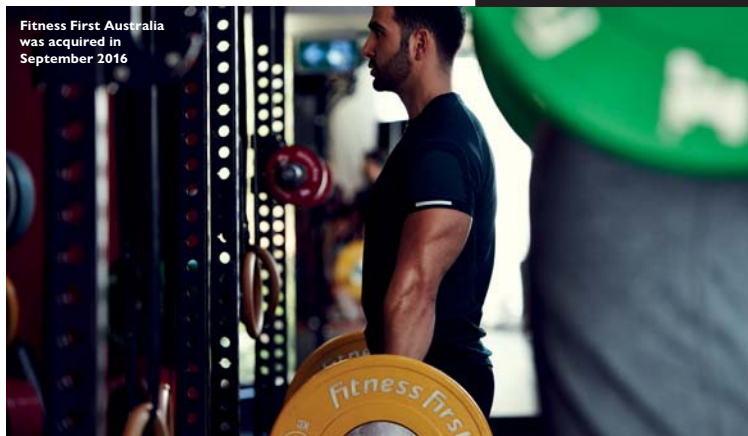
OPEN ALL HOURS

Goodlife also made a ground-breaking decision two years ago to switch to 24/7 operation. "We'd had 16 quarters in a row of constant growth between 2010 and mid-2014, but then we



The Hypoxi brand will expand beyond Australia

**Fitness First Australia
was acquired in
September 2016**



took a dip for a couple of quarters. That led us to re-evaluate the member proposition: where we were falling short and where the opportunity gaps lay. Convenience – and specifically 24/7 access – emerged clearly, so we got the board's support and started to open our full-service businesses 24/7.

"I was keen to do this because it took away some of the key selling propositions from the low-cost sector. And we've never looked back: we've experienced extraordinary member growth over the last 18 months – a growth of over 30,000 members.

"We've converted over 50 of the Goodlife clubs already and the rest will follow. We now plan to do the same with Fitness First."

He continues: "There's been a huge investment in the Fitness First estate over recent years: some AU\$83m of CapEx. They're wonderful facilities. But the plans we have for the chain – 24/7 opening and the addition of Hypoxi studios – will be extremely compelling additions. And of course, for both Goodlife and Fitness First, we have the opportunity to continue to open new clubs in under-served areas; we'll select the most appropriate brand for each location. It isn't a numbers game, but the footprints will continue to grow."

And how about Jetts – what plans for that franchise brand? "We'll be looking at buying back some of the franchises to continue to pump up the corporate earnings. We're already in the process of buying back all the New Zealand clubs.

"There's also a significant opportunity in offshore franchising: it's already underway in Asia, as well as Europe and the UK. Asia in particular is a focus for us at the moment. We want to make sure we have the right offering there, which may be a 'Jetts Plus' – a hybrid of Goodlife and Jetts, including some group exercise which is important in Asia. We're working on that at the moment."

A BROADER REMIT

Finally, the group has its sights set on acquiring other complementary businesses, as Oliver explains: "The 'lifestyle' element of Fitness & Lifestyle Group is very important. We don't want to limit ourselves to the four walls of health clubs, so we'll be looking at other opportunities... wellbeing, beauty, health-related technology. I don't want to go into any specifics at this stage, but we're not being closed-minded about the remit of our group.

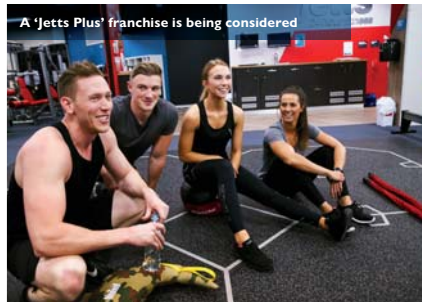
"I'd also like to look at other adjacent areas of business. Building a relationship with insurance providers is one area I'm very interested in, for example."

He continues: "Ultimately, the base strategy for Fitness & Lifestyle Group is taking our clubs 24/7. It's growing Jetts in Australia and continuing to develop the brand in Asia. It's putting Hypoxi into more of our clubs in Australia, as well as rolling it out in the US and Canada.

"But we're well capitalised, so we have a strong opportunity to look at what 'adjacencies' we can add into the existing businesses to add value to our members. I'm passionate about this at a personal level – making a genuine difference to people's lives is why I've been in the industry for so long, from instructor level up.

"At face value, that thinking – focusing on adding value for members above all else – might not always be aligned with conventional investment thesis. However, adding extra services doesn't only help us serve the member better. Commercially it also creates more revenue per member, which is something the fitness sector really needs to get better at doing. At the end of the day, if you have a strong member value equation, profits really do follow." ●

A 'Jetts Plus' franchise is being considered



PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Can you be sure all members, of both genders and all ages, feel equally comfortable in your gym? Or do some feel overlooked while others feel too exposed? **Kath Hudson** reports

Like spa therapists, personal trainers have to be very aware of the boundaries between themselves and clients. There's no research to show how often this boundary is crossed, but a Google search shows it happens. It may often be inadvertent, spending just that little

bit too long chatting with an attractive young member while other members go unnoticed. But for some, that will be enough to make them feel uncomfortable.

There have also been some high-profile liaisons: the father of Madonna's first child was her PT while the Swedish Crown Princess Victoria married hers.

Clients can come to rely on their PTs – sharing confidences, using them as unofficial counsellors, putting them on a pedestal – so it's important that PTs are mindful of keeping things professional, and that they're trained to do so.

How does the sector ensure the right balance is struck? We ask the experts.



Chris Grant
CEO, Spotted

I've been a member of a busy, London-based budget gym for about five years and have witnessed a lot of casual sexism on the gym floor in this time. The atmosphere can sometimes be akin to a nightclub, with the same sexual politics. Personal trainers frequently act in a way that wouldn't be considered appropriate in other industries: touching young women and encroaching on their personal space during one-to-one sessions.

Their interactions with young women often come across as chatting them up, whereas older people are generally ignored. I think, if you looked at the CCTV footage of who they engage with, it would be very telling. There have been

times when I've wanted to tap into the expertise of the personal trainers, but I've always had to take the initiative. As a male in my 50s, they've never approached me and rarely acknowledge me.

My daughters, who are both in their 20s, feel uncomfortable in this environment and have decided to stay at the posher, more expensive family-orientated club which we all used to go to together. I wonder how many other women have been driven away from gyms because they feel uncomfortable?

As far as I can see, most of the time this behaviour is not with nasty intent: it's ignorance, and in some ways might be seen as compensation for a lack of professional confidence. These instructors need to be taught how to behave in an appropriate way around women, and to be mindful about dealing with all members equally.

In my opinion, an official code of conduct is needed – one that sets the boundaries for how fitness instructors relate to customers, and particularly female ones, in terms of personal space, touching and what women are asked to do. There should be a mode of interaction, so women don't feel they're being chatted up if they're

having a PT session or being engaged in gym-floor conversation. It should be part of their training and qualifications, and the gym management should also have a duty of care to their clients.

I'm concerned that, at present, there appear to be no clear boundaries, and that this issue isn't being addressed in training or taken seriously by some operators. The manager of my gym was baffled when I mentioned it to her.

No-one seems to be talking about this, or even interested in it, which suggests that – when it comes to some of the most basic elements, and potential pitfalls, of human interaction – gym culture is really still in the Stone Age.

Personal trainers frequently act in a way that wouldn't be considered appropriate in other industries
– **Chris Grant**



Personal trainers should adhere to strict boundaries when working with clients



Rob Johnson
Deputy head, YMCAfit

This is a really interesting topic and it's important to start the conversation. I wasn't aware it was such an issue until a number of my female colleagues told me they'd experienced sexism in gyms, at various levels.

Although we're endeavouring to be ever-more inclusive with our training programmes, sexism is something we haven't addressed yet. It's important we

do: if women don't feel comfortable at the gym, they'll simply stop attending.

YMCAfit is already redeveloping its entry-level training programmes to embed more soft skills and really focus on inclusivity. These will soft launch in April.

I think we'll also go so far as to discuss sexism in our instructor training, and we'll look to get more evidence about the current situation and reports on female participation.

So what can operators do? I think it's important to have a mixed workforce with strong female role models, as this engenders a more inclusive environment and breaks down stereotypes. We frequently find we

have groups of lads on our courses who think they're the bees knees, but when matched with strong female tutors this bravado turns into respect.

Senior management training is also key. Managers need to ensure their staff are engaging with all members, and not inadvertently creating barriers that will lead to lost custom. In fact, many trusts are feeding back to us that they're looking for fitness instructors and PTs who are well-rounded and can relate to a wide range of people. The more empathetic they are with all types of member, the more successful the business will be.

It's important to have a mixed workforce with strong female role models, as this breaks down stereotypes – Rob Johnson



▶ Callum Towler

PT manager, Everyone Active

Everyone Active has put in place processes and procedures to ensure our fitness instructors and personal trainers perform to high professional standards.

All our trainers are required to sign our code of conduct, which sets out boundaries in personal relationships, behaviour on-site, behaviour off-site when in uniform, and data protection alongside a whole host of other points. Employees and freelancers alike sit down with managers at the outset and go through these expectations and operational standards.

Many younger PTs can have the perception that only younger people will want to invest in PT, so they can be inclined to focus their efforts on a narrow market of people like themselves. Also, they often feel more comfortable



Everyone Active is committed to building a more diverse team of PTs

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

interacting with people their own age. Although this may come across as discriminatory, it's usually down to a lack of confidence and training and can usually be easily rectified.

Everyone Active seeks to address this by giving additional training to our PTs on how to market themselves, close sales, approach new clients and what the role of the PT really is.

We encourage our team to broaden their view of who may want to buy their personal training services, and we ensure that they're equipped with

the skills they need to interact with a wider variety of people.

Sometimes it can be difficult not to cross boundaries: some PTs develop a strong rapport with clients and become friends, but we encourage them not to use this as a comfort zone and gravitate only towards the people they know in the gym to the detriment of other members.

Finally, Everyone Active aims to build a diverse group of personal trainers. A diverse range of PTs means that we're better equipped to deliver services to a diverse range of members.



Geraldine Tuck

Operations director, ukactive

There's no doubt sexism remains a major issue for society, and something I know many women have faced. But as someone who has spent most of their career in gyms, I don't think this is more of a problem in our sector than anywhere else, and there isn't any robust data to suggest otherwise.

Given the number of misconceptions that gyms already come up against, we at

ukactive feel it's important to stand up for the sector and challenge assertions that detract from it without any solid evidence.

The notion that the gym is an unwelcoming environment for women doesn't stand up to scrutiny when you consider our sector has one of the highest levels of female participation.

In terms of procedures to guard against such issues, physical activity professionals have a duty of care to their clients to behave with respect and integrity at all times; this is enshrined in the code of ethical practice from REPS and the new CIMSPA Code. There's also

the legal framework of the Equality Act to safeguard against sexism, as well as standard employment contracts which govern behaviour at work. If ever an exercise professional fell below these standards, I would expect their employer to quickly show them the door.

It's clear that as a society we still have a long way to go to reach gender parity, and the most practical step we as a sector can take to address this is to look at our staff make-up. There are still too few women in senior management roles. We must redouble our efforts to address this glaring shortcoming as soon as possible. ●

Sexism remains a major issue for the whole of society. I don't think this is more of a problem in our sector than anywhere else – Geraldine Tuck

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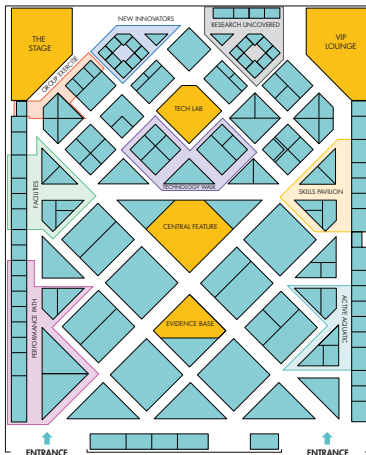
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PREMIUM McFIT

The German market leader has launched two brand new club concepts – and they're both a far cry from the company's low-cost roots. Kate Cracknell invites two mystery shoppers to share their thoughts on the new clubs

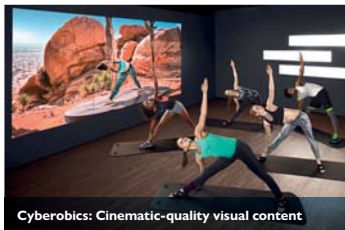
The grandfather of all low-cost gyms – German operation McFIT – is, it seems, no longer content with dominating the budget segment.

Up until mid-2016, the company was still focused on its traditional budget club territory: the original McFIT brand – now hundreds of clubs strong and operating across multiple markets including Germany, Austria, Poland, Spain and Italy – had been joined in the portfolio by HIGH5, launched in 2015 as a smaller footprint, but still low-cost, model focused on functional training.

But the McFIT Global Group is now spreading its wings with two brand new club concepts that move it away from this familiar realm of low-cost and into the experiential, premium end of the market.

The two brands in question – virtual-only WORLD OF CYBEROBICS and Millennial-focused, design-led JOHN REED Fitness Music Club – are united by one key element: cinematic-quality virtual class content, into which McFIT has reportedly poured millions of Euros of investment. Shot in specially selected locations in the US and fronted by famous names such as actress Kate Hudson and trainer to the stars David Kirsch, this virtual content is branded CYBEROBICS – showcased at the World of Cyberobics, but also a key feature at the John Reed Fitness Music Clubs.

The World of Cyberobics 'concept store', located in the heart of Berlin, is positioned as a tourist attraction as much as a gym and is a one-off. The design of the €10m



venue is highly futuristic, with one of the largest LED walls in Germany helping to deliver an immersive experience for all the senses. Cyberobics members have access to the training rooms from 8.00am–10.00pm on weekdays, and 10.00am–10.00pm at weekends – but even outside the training area, World of Cyberobics is hoping to draw the crowds and earn a place on Berlin's tourist map.

ROLLING OUT THE NEW BRANDS

It's logical to surmise that the store's *raison d'être* is to drive consumer demand for virtual fitness – and Cyberobics' content in particular, which is now being rolled out across the McFIT low-cost estate. There's also a franchise package for would-be Cyberobics studio owners, as well as on-demand Cyberobics on Sky in Germany and Austria.

But while World of Cyberobics might therefore be seen primarily as a marketing tool, the speed of roll-out of the John Reed Fitness brand suggests this has been identified as a significant growth opportunity for McFIT. Indeed, just a few months in, clubs are already open in multiple markets – Germany, Austria and Italy – with many more in the pipeline.

We'll be speaking to the McFIT team in the next edition of *Health Club Management* about the opportunities they've identified for these two new brands, but for now, what are the clubs actually like? We asked two impartial observers to pay a visit and share their thoughts. This is what they told us...





John Harris, a club owner since 1983, paid a visit to the John Reed club in Salzburg – venue for a “party in your sweatpants”



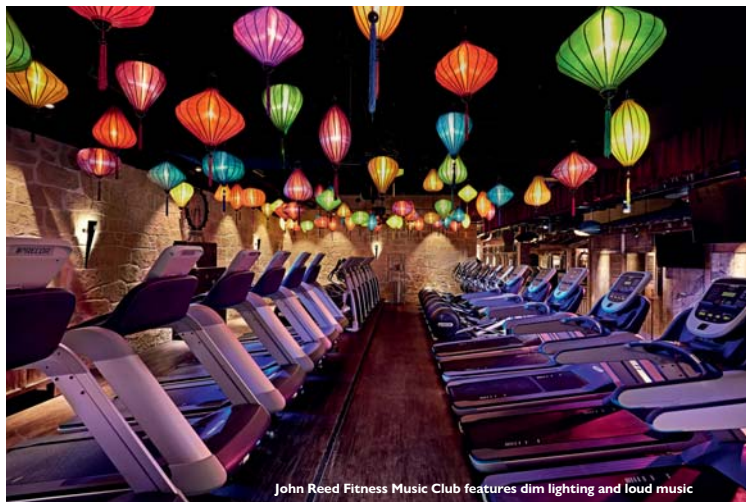
John Reed Fitness Music Clubs is a cool new premium brand from McFIT



Paul Bowman, CEO of Wexer, believes Berlin's World of Cyberobics concept store gives a great feel for the power of virtual fitness



The Cyberobics concept store also features a training area



John Reed Fitness Music Club features dim lighting and loud music

JOHN REED FITNESS MUSIC CLUB: A PARTY IN YOUR SWEATPANTS

JOHN HARRIS, FITNESS CLUB OWNER/OPERATOR IN EUROPE SINCE 1983, VISITS THE JOHN REED FITNESS MUSIC CLUB IN SALZBURG, AUSTRIA



When I asked friends in Salzburg what was going on in the fitness scene, the answer was immediate: "John Reed!" It had just opened,

with a major Austrian television star presiding over the ceremonies, so the club had achieved a name recognition and image that usually takes years.

So I headed off to the John Reed Fitness Music Club – a new brand developed by McFIT where, promised the website, I'd discover "a party in my sweatpants".

The brand has already been rolled out in several markets and numerous cities. In Salzburg, John Reed is located in a 1940s cinema that's been converted into a fitness centre, with cardio equipment replacing the seats in front of the screen. There are lots of other rooms for weights, virtual classes and 'leisure'.

The décor of John Reed is unique for a fitness club (though I expect to see knock-offs soon): dim lighting, lots

of black and a noise level suited to Millennials but intolerable for most over-40s (the website proudly declares John Reed is louder than other clubs).

Huge, overstuffed fake leather sofas sit between training areas, shelves are lined with fake leather books which are glued down, there are fake marble fireplaces, giant golden Buddhas.... Think gym meets English private members' club meets nightclub meets Buddhist temple. But of course they aren't trying to fool anybody: it's all so over the top, so beyond kitsch, that the effect is not vulgar but entertaining. People smile when they take a club tour. Over the top taken up a level. Goal achieved.

HEALTHY PARTYING

John Reed, in addition to a high-powered sound system, has regularly scheduled DJs to bring the energy level up even higher; discos in Salzburg which cater to the under-25s will soon feel the competition. And it's a healthy option, where young people can go through their mating ritual while pumping (iron) and Spinning and

slugging energy drinks rather than boozing and smoking and popping. The only health threat here is to the eardrums.

The price structure diverts radically from the usual McFIT 'one price, one programme' approach (usually €19.90 a month on a one-year minimum contract). John Reed offers 12 membership options according to duration and club access. Single club for 24 months is €20 a month; access to all John Reed and McFIT clubs for three months is €50 a month.

And just in case anyone might be unsure about the exact location of the "party in your sweatpants" promised by the website, the two models illustrating the motto (or mission statement) make it clear: the sultry young blonde's sweatpants are low-riding, with a long dangling drawstring. The male has his hand wrapped firmly around a dumbbell pressed to that part of his pants where a zipper would be if sweatpants had a zipper.

It might not be quite the club for me, but John Reed clearly knows its clientele, and I have no doubt they will love it.

"It's all so over the top, so beyond kitsch, that the effect is not vulgar but entertaining. People smile when they take a club tour"



The club takes its design influences from different cultures around the world



Wood and dark colours are a key feature in the interior décor, and the whole effect is one of an “English private members’ club meets nightclub for Millennials, meets Buddhist temple”, says mystery shopper John Harris



► CYBEROBICS' VIRTUAL WORLD

PAUL BOWMAN, CEO OF VIRTUAL GROUP EXERCISE PROVIDER WEXER, PAYS A VISIT TO THE NEW WORLD OF CYBEROBICS SITE IN BERLIN, GERMANY



I would advise anyone who's thinking about virtual fitness to visit the World of Cyberobics in Berlin. Opened in late 2016, I believe it was the

first virtual-only studio worldwide, and they've set the bar high.

The store (because this is a concept store and showroom for the new Cyberobics virtual class content) isn't without live personnel: on arrival, I was welcomed by a very enthusiastic Cyberobics team, keen to get visitors active in one of the classes. But the classes themselves are all entirely virtual.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

So what are the classes like? In my opinion, Cyberobics is one of the most advanced virtual content providers on the market – it's easy to see where the millions of Euros invested by McFIT has gone, with great detail and editing, eye-catching landscapes and unique trainers, including celebrities like actress Kate Hudson.

But content is only one of three important factors for success in virtual

fitness provision. Even more important is the virtual installation itself: creating the right atmosphere in the right space is key to driving participation.

At Cyberobics, the immersive experience began in the entrance lift: with its video feed onto all four walls of the lift, it acted as a sales tool to help you instantly understand the concept. After the lift ride, I was greeted by a multimedia panorama show on one of Germany's biggest LED screens. With sweeping light and sound effects, it created a memorable first impression.

The third factor, and often the biggest challenge for fitness operators, is making

sure members know virtual exists. World of Cyberobics definitely ticks the box here: the store is positioned as a fun tourist attraction, which brings virtual fitness onto the radar of far more people. It introduces them to virtual fitness in a memorable but also unthreatening way.

Indeed, thanks to the way the 'store' is marketed, World of Cyberobics is able to engage with those who don't feel a gym is for them – people who feel too intimidated to take part in a live group exercise class. Going to the gym can still be daunting for many, but World of Cyberobics' immersive experience doesn't feel like going to the gym at all.

Meanwhile, Millennials are already an important fitness market – and for them, digital is an expectation, not a luxury. World of Cyberobics' futuristic feel engages this cohort, introducing them to a new way of taking part in group exercise.

EMBRACING TECH

If we as an industry want to drive change and engage the next generation of fitness consumers, we must offer more than just memberships. We have to offer personalisation, convenience, support, progress reports and ongoing interaction through the use of technology.

Cyberobics is at the forefront of this journey, bringing world-class fitness and technology together seamlessly. I was very impressed by its new concept store. ●



The store has set the bar high for virtual-only clubs



Users are introduced to virtual fitness in a highly compelling way

"Going to the gym can be daunting, but World of Cyberobics' immersive experience doesn't feel like going to the gym at all"



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BRAIN GYMS

Boutique studio model meets mindfulness: Kath Hudson reports on a new generation of meditation centre that's offering drop-in sessions for those wanting to take time out from the stress of daily life

As the world gets faster, more stimulating and ever more saturated with technology, rates of depression and anxiety rise. The need for mental stillness has never been greater.

Sitting down and clearing the mind is an insurmountable challenge for many

people – it's something they simply don't know how to do. But help is at hand. Following in the wake of the successful boutique yoga studio brands comes a new concept: meditation boutiques, which are bringing mindfulness and meditation into the mainstream.

This trend remains US-centric for now, but it's easy to see how it could spread its wings and reach any shores where the pace of life threatens to overwhelm people.

We speak to the people behind a number of the trailblazing brands that are beginning to occupy this space.

SUZE YALOF

FOUNDER, UNPLUG MEDITATION, LOS ANGELES, US

Launched in 2012, we believe Unplug Meditation to have been the first standalone meditation studio in the world. We've driven the trend. No-one was writing about meditation in 2012, but we hit all the media – *Vogue*, *New York Times*, *Glamour* – which was the start of meditation going into the mainstream. Now we get visitors from all over the world, who come to see what we're doing so they can open a studio elsewhere.

When I was a fashion editor, my mother-in-law taught me a three-minute breathing technique to go from

stressed to calm. I was impressed and wanted to find out more, but the only options to learn meditation were to take a Transcendental Meditation course for US\$1,400 over four days, to go to Buddhist temples for two hours at a time or to do a six-week programme at a hospital. None were practical – I wanted 'drive-by meditation', but it didn't exist.

I told my husband I was going to quit my job and open a meditation studio and he said I should probably learn to meditate first! So I did hundreds of courses and downloaded every podcast. I realised meditation is very simple, but it's often made complicated.



Yalof wanted to offer 'drive-by' meditation to consumers

We're different because my approach is as a consumer, not a teacher. I want every class to be suitable for my husband, who is not a meditator.

We were instantly busy as soon as we opened our doors, and we're growing month-on-month. We now have 50 classes a week and the only marketing we do is word-of-mouth. Last night we maxed out with 75 people in our evening class. Classes cost US\$24 each, or unlimited membership costs US\$150 a month.

Most of our teachers have been re-trained to be relevant and modern and we keep the content fresh, with talks from writers on the circuit such as Ariana Huffington, Deepak Chopra and Dan Siegel.

In the next five years, we want to expand not only nationally but also globally. We've just launched the Unplug app, which will make us global.



Unplug Meditation in LA now offers 50 classes a week



Den Meditation in LA has a casual vibe, like a 'hip, cool living room' where people like to hang out

TAL RABINOWITZ

FOUNDER, DEN MEDITATION,
LOS ANGELES, US

After a long career in entertainment, I was ready for a change but unsure of my next move. Seeking clarity, I turned to meditation, but struggled to establish a daily practice. I was frustrated that the type of meditation studio I was looking for didn't exist. I didn't have the time to go somewhere for two hours – I wanted a drop-in place to go after work, like the boutique yoga and pilates studios.

The idea crystallised to open my own meditation studio. I wanted it to feel accessible: you don't have to be vegetarian or teetotal to join, but equally you can be. Ultimately I wanted to create a place where everyone felt they belonged – where you could come after work in a suit, or from picking berries on a farm. Somewhere that was aspirational without being alienating.

Den Meditation opened in February 2016, offering classes before and after work, as well as during the day to help people establish a regular meditation



Rabinowitz's Den: A place where everyone feels they belong

practice. Classes vary from 30 to 45 minutes and there are also retreats and workshops. We offer memberships or pay as you go. It has a casual vibe – a bit like a hip, cool living room, where people feel comfortable hanging out. During the day we have tea and coffee, and wine in the evening.

With a good location and hitting the market at the right time, the studio was busy straight away. Meditation can be hard initially, but no matter how people find their first attempt, they all leave feeling more relaxed. This is enough to bring them back.

We're just about to start construction on our second studio, in the Los Angeles Valley, and I believe more meditation studios will open up besides our own. There's a trend towards wellness and taking care of yourself, plus people are burning out before they get to the end of their careers. We're constantly hooked up to email, life is moving too fast and we need to slow down.

More meditation studios will open. Life is moving too fast and we need to slow down

– Tal Rabinowitz

► LODRO RINZLER

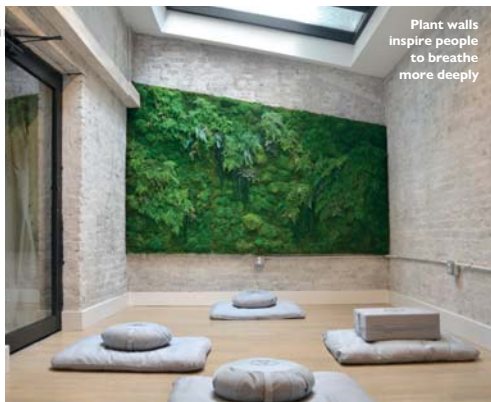
CEO, MNDFL, NEW YORK, US

About two and a half years ago, my business partner Ellie Burrows approached me about opening a studio which embraced all types of meditation techniques. She wanted to try out different practices under one roof without it involving too big a time commitment, and proposed that if I could sort out the content and teachers, she could design the look and feel of the place.

Run along the lines of the yoga studio model, MNDFL has drop-in sessions of



MNDFL CEO Lodro Rinzler



Plant walls inspire people to breathe more deeply

PHOTO: MONICA LEE

Within a few years, I predict meditation studios will be as mainstream as gyms

— Lodro Rinzler

30 to 45 minutes, with around eight or nine classes offered each day starting at 7.00am. It's a very calming space: the full plant walls immediately inspire people to breathe more deeply.

We attract a real mix of people: all ages, races, genders and socio-economic backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of New York City. Some

come once a week, some come every day. Most are brand new to meditation, but for those who have been coming since the start, we now run advanced classes.

As an introduction, we offer unlimited usage for US\$75 for one month, after which people tend to buy a package of their favourite classes. Classes range in price from US\$10 to US\$25, depending on the length of the class and the experience of the teacher.

This trend is definitely here to stay. Meditation is more mainstream now and there's a lot of scientific research to show how beneficial it is to the mind and body, helping people sleep and boosting the immune system.

We're getting enquiries from across the US, the UK and Australia, so it won't be long before studios open internationally. Within a few years, I predict meditation studios will be as mainstream as gyms.

However, while we now have two studios in New York and are launching a third, we aren't planning a mass rollout. Instead, we'll be supporting the existing studios with online content.



MNDFL in New York will soon start to offer online content



PHOTO: NATALIE BAXTER

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► LIONELA TORREIRO

FOUNDER, INFINITE YOU, COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA, US

Shortly after moving to the US from the Ukraine in 2001, my body collapsed through the stress of putting myself through college, learning a new language and being a single parent. To say meditation changed my life would be an understatement: it helped me deal with the tremendous everyday stress and restored my physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing.

This gave me the idea of opening a centre to help others. After a few months searching, I found a beautiful place with a special vibe in a small town of Costa Mesa. Open to people from all cultural and religious backgrounds, the centre offers individual sessions and group meditation classes.

My experience suggests meditation studios are currently still an urban trend. People in smaller towns like Costa Mesa don't embrace it as readily as those in larger metropolitan areas – they still see meditation as an individual practice.

However, I'm sure this will change in the future, with meditation becoming



Torreiro sees meditation growing rapidly

a daily practice for many people in my community. A variety of educational programmes will emerge online, targeting a wide spectrum of the population. Our society is also slowly transforming from one that values material achievements to one with a larger emphasis on balanced lifestyle, eco-friendly environments and broader education.

I expect meditation studios to grow in the same way yoga studios have: in 2001, there were good yoga teachers, not great studios. Now we have beautiful, specialist yoga studios. The same will happen with meditation – I expect it to be huge in 10 years' time. It will also become more specialised, people will do meditation for specific issues, such as to help with cancer, their creativity or concentration. ●

Meditation will become specialised: people will do it to help with cancer, their creativity or concentration – *Lionela Torreiro*



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THE PULL OF PILATES

Since it was developed in the early 20th century, pilates has evolved and grown in popularity. Our expert panel tell **Steph Eaves** what they're currently most excited about in the field of pilates

DOMINIQUE DAY

FOUNDER,
BOOTCAMP PILATES



At Bootcamp Pilates, we're seeing a dramatic rise in demand for fusion classes that combine at least two disciplines. It's important to us that

our members have fun and see results fast, and these workouts deliver on that – they challenge your muscles in new ways and ramp up your calorie burn.

"Fusion classes challenge your muscles in new ways, so members make the most of their workout"

We've responded to this demand by adding 30-minute high-intensity interval pilates (HIIP 30) classes to our weekly timetable. These fusion classes, with reformer pilates at their core, have proved extremely popular since their launch in January, with our members really loving the variety and intensity of the shorter sessions.

We're also developing a boxing/reformer pilates class concept, soon to be added to our timetable. We expect this hybrid class to appeal to the growing number of men who are now discovering the benefits of pilates, as well as our female members.



MOTR classes use smaller equipment

KEN ENDELMAN

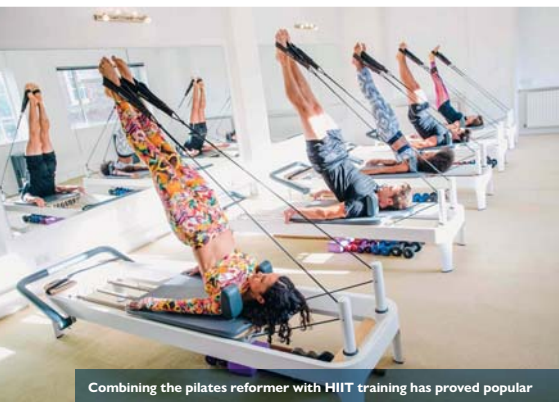
FOUNDER AND CEO,
BALANCED BODY



The thing I'm most excited about isn't necessarily traditional pilates, but incorporating pilates and mind-body movement into pieces

of equipment found in a commercial setting. With the current rise of circuit training, we've been getting the question from group exercise instructors and personal trainers: 'Can you combine the fitness essentials of cardiorespiratory training, strength, neuromotor training and flexibility with the principles of pilates and mind-body movement? And can that be transferred to pieces of equipment or props that we already have on-hand?'

We think the answer is an absolute 'yes' and we're working on developing a programming system called ThinkFit to deliver on this. The challenge is not just in coming up with a system that combines the above elements, but also in creating enough material to keep things fresh and fun for these classes.



Combining the pilates reformer with HIIT training has proved popular

LINDSAY G MERRITHEW

PRESIDENT AND CEO,
MERRITHEW FITNESS



The most exciting thing for me is the way pilates is expanding and evolving. For years, it was seen as a niche exercise for select groups, practised by a relatively small, dedicated community. But today pilates is everywhere, from yoga studios to gyms, and from university fitness facilities to therapeutic clinics and rehabilitation practices.

The vast healing and strengthening potential of pilates is being widely recognised, from rehabilitation and vocational practices to injury prevention, athletic conditioning, performance and strength training. At Merrithew, we're tapping into this with programming that builds on the foundation of STOTT PILATES and applies this knowledge in new



Merrithew is developing new and diverse training options

and challenging ways, all while maintaining the important mind-body connection.

Meanwhile, the work we're doing on our branded programmes – ZEN-GA, CORE Athletic Conditioning and Performance Training, Total Barre and Halo Training – is in line with the

broad 'mindful movement' trend that's seeing increasing interest across all fitness, wellness and health sectors.

Finally, I'm very much looking forward to seeing the unique ways pilates is used in the future, especially in the growing area of fascial movement and research.

SUE HALL

PILATES MASTER TRAINER,
FUTURE FIT TRAINING



We've seen a significant rise in the number of people attending our training courses in the last three years, with many training to be pilates teachers because they've been inspired by practising pilates themselves.

The growth of pilates in gyms and clubs – including fusion classes – means the discipline is reaching a wider, more experimental audience. We're finding more and more people coming to us with an appreciation of the benefits of pilates, such as improved body awareness. It's exciting that they wish to share that by training as a teacher and spreading the word.

Once qualified, we have a number of additional CPD courses that extend our students' knowledge and skills: pilates with small equipment, pilates for common orthopaedic conditions, and pilates for pregnancy are our most popular. The scope is broad and awareness is growing all the time.

Future Fit has seen a rise in the number of people doing teacher training



"People increasingly have an appreciation of the benefits of pilates. It's exciting that they wish to share that by training as a teacher"

Pilates equipment has improved greatly as technology has evolved



► RAE L ISACOWITZ

OWNER AND FOUNDER,
BASI PILATES



Over an almost four-decade career in the pilates industry, I've seen many exciting developments and, admittedly, had some moments of concern.

The most exciting developments in the industry today involve the evolution of the equipment and the use

of technology to enhance the learning experience. I believe in remaining true to the intent and philosophy of Joseph Pilates, but at the same time I also believe in embracing change based on scientific research and knowledge. We must keep pilates current to meet the needs of society today.

Growth is good and Joseph Pilates dreamed of seeing his work practised

by the masses. But we must preserve quality. To do this, we can harness the power of technology: online vehicles such as Pilates Interactive and Pilates Anytime are great examples. Information is available on-demand, anywhere in the world.

The growth is exciting, but the integrity of the method developed by Joseph and Clara Pilates must always be preserved.

"I believe in remaining true to the philosophy of Joseph Pilates, while also embracing change"

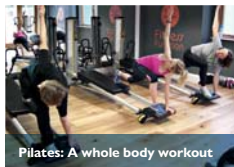
JULIE BURFOOT-BROWN

FOUNDER AND OWNER,
THE FITNESS FUNCTION



The most exciting thing about pilates is how we can bring it into the 21st century, incorporating movement for the way we live today.

At The Fitness Function, we do this by blending functional movements with a repertoire of exercises that involve




Pilates: A whole body workout

the Total Gym Gravity Training System. This equipment acts as resistance or assistance, so people of all fitness levels can perform normal, day-to-day actions with comfort and ease.

Our thought process is still aligned with the principles of Joseph Pilates, but pilates in the 21st century isn't just about the mat. We use mats, body weight and equipment to create a whole-body workout. ●

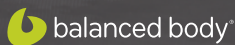
"Pilates in the 21st century isn't just about the mat. We use mats, body weight and equipment to create a whole-body workout"

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

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GETTING ENGAGED

If your employees are passionate about their jobs and committed to your organisation, it has a direct impact on the profitability of your business.

John Coldicutt explains why – and how you can drive engagement levels



aving an engaged workforce intuitively sounds like a good thing. Who wouldn't like to go to work every day and

see their employees happily getting stuck into the tasks at hand?

Engaged employees are more than just a nice-to-have. They're also more productive, more innovative, more invested in the outcome of their work, more interested in providing a satisfying experience for customers – all of which means they're more profitable for businesses.

Meanwhile, disengaged employees are the ones too busy texting to stock any shelves, or who are there but aren't really there, zombie-ing their way through their days. When an employee is actively

disengaged, they can become bitter and resentful, responding rudely to customers, negatively influencing other employees and actively undermining the business.

Let's take a deeper look at why engagement is so important to business profitability, and how you can encourage deeper engagement at your workplace.

ENGAGEMENT PAYS






CustomInsight defines employee engagement as the "extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organisation, and put discretionary effort into their work". It also goes on to clarify that "employee engagement is not the same as employee satisfaction". Ostensibly, an employee could be satisfied with their


job if it required sitting around watching Netflix and eating chocolate all day, but that wouldn't mean they were engaged.

Forbes defines employee engagement using an emotional framework. It says: "Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organisation and its goals. Engaged employees use discretionary effort."

In a recent *Harvard Business Review* survey of leading executives, 71 per cent ranked employee engagement as critical to employee success, with 72 per cent adding that recognising high performers had a positive impact. Of those that put a high priority on measuring employee engagement, 77 per cent found that employee engagement had an impact on customer satisfaction.

FIGURE 1: PLANDAY'S EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

 Meaningful work	 Hands-on management	 Positive work environment	 Growth opportunity	 Significant customer relationships
Matching skills to job	Clear, transparent expectations	Culture of feedback and praise	Training and support on the job	Feeling of personal impact
Smaller, independent entities	Mentorship	Work/life balance	Expanding horizontal skillset	Nurturing consistent relationships
Ability to affect change	Management accessibility	Empathetic workplace	Affirmation of personal development	Time for customer engagement
Autonomy	Inclusive collaborative management	Positive peer relationships	Peer-to-peer training and support	Facilitating community



Listen to your employees and incorporate their opinions in any strategies

{ 93 per cent of highly engaged employees experienced 147 per cent higher earnings than their less engaged counterparts }

However, only 24 per cent reported employees in their organisation as being engaged. Meanwhile, the *Gallup Employee Engagement Insights Report* concluded that 93 per cent of highly engaged employees experienced 147 per cent higher earnings than their less engaged counterparts. Those who ranked in the top half of employee engagement scores also produced 22 per cent more profit, were 21 per cent more productive, and experienced 37 per cent less absenteeism than those in the bottom half.

The business case doesn't stop there. According to a 2014 AoN study, companies rated as great places to work had considerably higher growth and share return, while those that ranked poorly experienced the opposite.

It's clear that employee engagement is worth investing in. But where to start? We've put together a comprehensive employee engagement framework (see Fig 1), as well as a list of key questions to ask your employees to help boost engagement.

MEANINGFUL WORK

The first part of the framework involves creating meaningful work for employees: matching their skills to their job; making

them feel they have the ability to bring about change; and making them feel like individual, creative entities – part of a team perhaps, but with autonomy in what they do.

To further your efforts in this area, you might consider asking your employees:

- Do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
- Do you feel your team can take the course of action that makes the most sense for you?
- Do you feel that you can make changes at work?
- Do you feel your manager trusts you to get work done on your own?

HANDS-ON MANAGEMENT

Just as you'd like your employees to be engaged, they'd like you to be engaged too – a supportive manager who cares about the outcome of their work, as well as their day-to-day happiness.

A hands-on manager will offer clear, transparent expectations. They'll provide mentorship and will be easily accessible to employees. Perhaps most importantly, they'll be inclusive and collaborative in decision-making. This doesn't mean giving

the vote over to the mob, but it does mean listening to employees, trying your best to incorporate their thoughts into any plans moving forward.

A few questions you might ask staff:

- Do you know exactly what's expected of you at work?
- Do you feel that your manager cares about your personal and professional development?
- How available is your manager for meetings and catch-ups?
- Do you feel your manager asks for and values your input?

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Unsurprisingly, a positive work environment is also key to engagement. Make sure there's positive feedback and praise, especially when an employee has gone out on a limb and tackled something challenging. Offer work-life balance, with plenty of understanding for external demands on an employee's time, whether that's family or childcare, or any second job they might have. Don't forget their need for time off to recharge and live a fully rounded life. ▶

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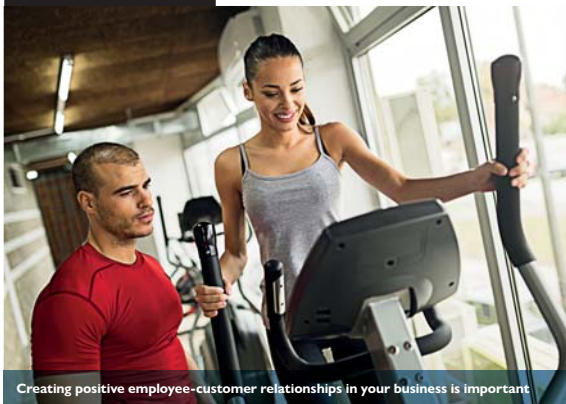
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Creating positive employee-customer relationships in your business is important

- ▶ Ensure the workplace is an empathetic one, where employees feel listened to and cared for, no matter what's happening in their lives. Encourage positive relationships with peers, whether that means having casual pizza Fridays, going to the pub, or simply allowing more time for chit chat.

A few questions you might ask:

- How often do you receive feedback or praise when you're at work?
- Do you feel you can fit your personal commitments into your work schedule?
- Do you feel your manager and co-workers care about you as a person?
- Do you have a best friend at work?

GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY

Employees are naturally more engaged when they're regularly challenged with interesting problems, and when they feel they have the opportunity to move up. After all, no-one likes working in a dead-end job.

Provide regular training and offer on-the-job support to implement newly learned skills – and don't neglect the horizontal skillset, so employees feel they're growing even within the job they already have. Offer affirmation of personal development.

Encouraging peer-to-peer mentorship – support from the people that they're working with day-to-day, who can most easily guide them – is also recommended.

A few questions to ask:

- Do you feel that you have sufficient opportunity to keep developing your professional skills at work?
- Are you encouraged to learn new skills related to your job?
- In the last six months, has someone talked to you about your progress?
- Do you feel your co-workers teach you new skills and support your growth?

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Everything we've explored so far affects an employee's relationship to their customers in impactful but roundabout ways. But actively creating positive employee-customer relationships also matters.

Employees should feel they have a personal impact on the experiences of their customers. Ideally, employees will nurture relationships with customers who return repeatedly; time should be allowed for customer engagement, rather than putting too much emphasis on efficiency.

To foster these connections, ask your employees the following questions:

- Do you feel you make a difference in the lives of your customers?
- Do you have the opportunity to develop relationships with consistent customers?
- Does your manager give you plenty of time to interact with customers?
- Do you feel like you and your customers are part of a community?

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS

Investing in employee engagement is of the utmost importance, as engaged employees have a direct impact on your bottom line. Make sure that you have all the tools in place to enable your employees to do what they do best on a daily basis. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Coldicutt is chief marketing officer for staff scheduling software provider Planday.
Twitter: @John_Coldicutt
LinkedIn: <https://dk.linkedin.com/in/johncoldicutt>





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*Nielsen Global Fitness Consumer Survey (2013)

LOVE YOU OR LEAVE YOU?

RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND MEMBERSHIPS

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Xercise4Less topped the list in the Leisure Database Company's latest fitness industry social media survey. The operator's social media guru **Joe Hall** explains his recipe for success

We live in an era where people can turn themselves into a squeaky talking fox on Snapchat, or hit an 'angry' button at a piece of news content on Facebook. In fact, the nature of what you can do has become so varied that the whole concept of 'social media' – what exactly this now is – becomes quite hard to define.

I'd consider social media to be a mass get-together which no longer takes place in the park or in the pub, but in a Millennial third space: online. There might not be a see-saw or a pint of Tetley's Smooth Flow in sight, but humans interact in this digital social media space in much the same way as they do offline in the local park or pub. That's a result of psychological traits and human instinct.

But social media goes one step further: it amplifies human behaviour. It cuts out the routine, unexciting, dreary, monotonous matters that happen in the real world and just gives us the more dramatic, action-packed, high-end pleasure or high-end pain experiences.

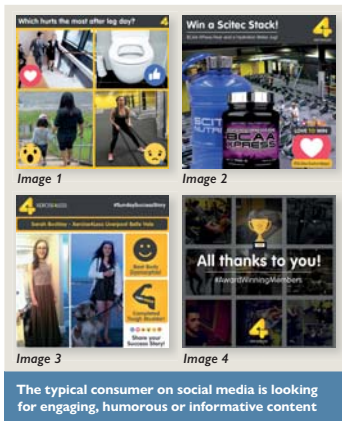
As marketing decision-makers, we need to respect that the end consumer on social media is out for the thrills and spills. They're certainly not scrolling through Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat to bask in any dullness or absorb meaningless promotional waffle.

At Xercise4Less, it's my duty to ensure our social media appeals to our audience's wants and needs. I've outlined four ways in which we do this.

DELIVER EMOTIONAL CONTENT

Social media content is only shared if it makes people feel something – whether that's happy, angry, frustrated, hateful, excited, content, sad, confused, ashamed, guilty or satisfied. If your social media plays on the heart-strings of your audience, it's much more likely to be shared.

As a brand, it's quite difficult to deliver content that focuses on eliciting negative emotions from your audience without drawing that negativity onto the business, so you need to focus on the positive emotions. On Facebook, for instance, Xercise4Less shares a lot of short, funny videos



and polls. These tend to drive more engagement than any other types of content. See image 1 (above) – 'Which hurts the most after leg day?' – as an example.

CONTESTS AND GIFTS

If you give something away, then people are more likely to give something back – it's what's known in social psychology as 'reciprocity'.

In the real (non-social media) world, if you buy someone lunch one week, you're more likely to get one back in return. With social media it's the same, although the mutual exchange can happen much quicker.

Whatever the next big social craze is, human behaviour will remain the same. Deliver emotional content, be mindful of reciprocity and create feelings of belonging



Xercise4Less consistently posts about the success of its members on its various social media channels

On Instagram, Xercise4Less hosts a weekly competition each Saturday where members can win some goodies. The criteria to win is that the audience needs to show the post some love. That's reciprocity. We give something away, and in return people will like our post. The average competition on Instagram achieves over 150 likes and 30 comments, and we don't spend a penny. A recent example was our 'Win a Scitec stack' competition – see image 2 (p60).

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Make people feel connected. Love your audience. In real life you wouldn't ignore people who say 'hello' to you in the gym, because it's rude and you don't want to cause offence to them – so don't think that it's acceptable to blank fellow humans on social media either.

At Xercise4Less, we don't just respond to every single person who tweets us, but we also reply with a GIF that's relevant to their tweet. The use of the GIF makes the user feel more joy and a deeper connection with us.

We also reach out to people who have achieved success in the gym and ask if we can feature their story on social media. By contacting a member first, we bring them closer into our community – and it also allows us to curate better, more engaging content. Xercise4Less' success story posts typically foster more than 100 likes and an audience reach of around 15,000. For example, Sarah Buckley's story (see image 3, p60) is a great example of this.

POST FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

The best piece of advice: stop talking about yourself and start talking about others. Humans like attention, so make your social media reflect this. The more you do this, the better your social media will be.

I've read many guidelines suggesting you should make your online content 80 per cent about others, 20 per cent about your brand. This is not a good guide! If one-fifth of your content is all about your brand, that's still way too much. Instead, only post about your brand when it matters and when you must. Make all the other content what your audience really wants to see.

Even when Xercise4Less was nominated for the Best Use of Social Media by the Leisure Database Company, we ensured the announcement was very much all about our members (see 'All thanks to you' – image 4, p60).

WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR THE WORLD OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

I hope your main takeaway from my article is that human behaviour and psychological traits should always be at the heart of any social media and marketing strategy.

Who knows what will happen next? Snapchat Spectacles might manage to turn you and your gym partner into the Incredible Hulk. Home workouts on Facebook Live might become the next big phenomenon. But whatever the next big social craze is, you must remember that human behaviour will always remain the same. Deliver emotional content, be mindful of reciprocity and create feelings of belonging. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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TAKING IT HOME

Tom Walker explores the apps that are using virtual exercise content to extend the reach of fitness far beyond the walls of the gym

Insight by Les Mills shows that 82 per cent of gym members already train at home. More interestingly, perhaps, nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of those who work out at home use virtual fitness apps and digital platforms to guide and aid them. This suggests that online-based classes and exercise programmes are no

passing trend: digital, virtual fitness is now a sector of its own and is most certainly here to stay.

We spoke to some of the leading online fitness providers to see how they make their content available, and how clubs could benefit by prescribing a total at-home and in-club fitness solution.

BEACHBODY ON DEMAND



THOMAS PARROTT
Vice president, Beachbody UK

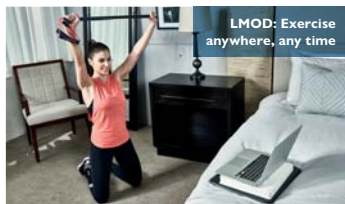
Broadly, our On Demand service is another iteration of our successful DVDs – a huge library of exercises targeting all ages and abilities. The platforms we're on include iOS (iPhones and iPads), Amazon Fire TV, Chromecast and Roku. We're very close to launching on Android too.

We have a huge On Demand library – if you were to do all the workouts included in just our basic package (£12.95 a month) without sleeping a wink, you'd be exercising for around 25 days continuously. However, we've made it very simple to navigate and choose workouts and programmes.

There's also a large library of premium content available for purchase, such as the popular Core de Force programming. We're constantly looking for new things. For an example, we recently added a 21-day yoga retreat programme and a food section to the app, showing users how to cook healthily – so the app's content isn't just about fitness. It's about wellness.

The content is currently available in English and Spanish. French and other languages will come online as we grow and expand – we currently have just short of one million users globally.

But we want to work with clubs, not against them. For example, some of our content can be streamed directly to a screen in a club. Meanwhile, some users are taking their phones to clubs and using the gym equipment to do our workouts.



LES MILLS ON DEMAND



MARTIN FRANKLIN
CEO, Les Mills UK

The Les Mills On Demand (LMOD) service is available as an app on a large number of devices – on iOS (iPhones, iPads, Apple TV4), Android, Roku and Amazon Fire TV, as well as through online streaming on any web-enabled device. It was launched in response to consumer demand – people are already exercising at home and are looking for content, so it's a space we felt we needed to enter.

LMOD features a huge back catalogue of Les Mills classes, all customised for online video access. It's the only app that has this content – we do have partnerships with virtual partners who screen our classes in clubs, but no other service can offer Les Mills classes outside the club environment.

If you consider that, in January, we launched the 100th release of BodyPump, that gives an idea of the huge back catalogue of content we have to keep the On Demand service fresh.

Subscription costs £9.99 a month and that includes all the content. There's no premium content you have to pay extra for. There's also a social platform – Squad – where people can share their Les Mills experience.

As for clubs, On Demand can help them break down their four walls and boost retention by offering members more. If members subscribe to LMOD through their club, they get a 20 per cent discount. In addition, after every film and activity, there's a link to "find a class near you" which directs the users to local clubs offering the class they just did.





YOGAIA

**MIKKO
PETÄJÄ**
Founder and
CEO

I had the idea to set up an app that offered live, interactive online yoga about three and half years ago, when I was looking to attend real, live classes online and couldn't find any. I saw it as an opportunity, as pre-recorded videos don't really offer the same levels of engagement as live classes.

Yogaia is an early stage venture whose biggest owners – apart from myself – are Nokia Growth Partners, Inventure, Point Nine Capital and Sanoma, alongside a few angel investors and close to 100 crowd funders. All the employees are shareholders too.

Yogaia is available as a web service and as an app on the Apple App Store and GooglePlay. Premium users have the choice of attending live classes with or without webcam – with a camera on, the user gets personalised instruction during the class.

We do offer on-demand too: all live classes are automatically recorded and available as recordings after the event. Classes can also be downloaded for use without internet connection.

Membership costs between £7.49 and £14.99 a month depending on the billing period and it's always all-inclusive. A free-to-use option offers limited recorded class content only.



Yogaia now has over
200,000 users, with
the UK a key market

We have around 50 new English-language live classes every week (alongside the 50 classes in Finnish). The bulk of the content is yoga (largely vinyasa flow and relaxing, but also other types) and also barre tone, stretch, pilates, core, total body workout and meditation. The class lengths vary from 10–75 minutes. We also offer special content such as talks and workshops.

Our mission is to make yoga more accessible to more people: we already have over 200,000 users and our biggest markets are Finland, the UK and the US.

We haven't yet partnered with a health and fitness club, but have been in talks with some in an attempt to find a model that adds value to both parties.

MAX MY MINUTES

FINLAY MURRAY



Founder, Max My Minutes

Max My Minutes is a platform that allows its users to upload, host and broadcast video to be played either by streaming or offline, on smartphones or mirroring to larger screens. The app has been developed with versions for both Apple and Android devices.

The idea is that, by opening up channels for any creator to offer their content to consumers, we can tap into the latest ideas and innovations. The content is then filtered by users to highlight the best videos, with ratings based on play popularity.

We wanted to provide a hub that connects content creators and players and where people discover new and exclusive content. We therefore offer two main user functions: 'content player' and 'content creator'. Users can be both players and creators.



Max My Minutes is a
content-sharing app

The 'player' can browse workout video content on a play dashboard, organised by popularity of plays. They can rate the workout, track creators, track minutes played and can compete with other users.

The 'creator' can upload and tag video clips, mix or sequence clips into workouts, tag workouts and broadcast workouts. They can open their channel on the platform, where they can curate a library of clips and workouts that can be broadcast as they like.

We leave the content to the creators and we're already seeing workout videos covering everything from calisthenics, martial arts and boxing to dance, yoga, general conditioning and combinations thereof, which is where things get really interesting.

Max My Minutes takes advantage of the technological innovations that now put high quality video-making and video-editing tools in our hands, on our phones.

Our overall ambition is to enable the best content creators to broadcast their content to a welcoming audience. We're on a continuous search for the very best content creators and we're always looking to promote the latest, most innovative content.

WELLBEATS



IAN DONLEY

Managing director, Wellbeats

The Wellbeats mobile app is best leveraged when paired with an in-facility system, as the idea is to offer fitness 'on tap' wherever users are – at a fitness facility, at work, at home or on the go. There are more than 20 channels/genres and hundreds of fitness classes, workout plans and assessments – all available anytime, anywhere, on any personal device. Our user-friendly filters make it easy for users to find exactly what they're looking for.

Because we produce our own content, we can keep costs low. For example, 500 streaming licences cost 76p per licence per month for unlimited classes. Clubs can either pass these

costs on to users, choose to make it an added-value service as part of the overall membership, or use it as an additional profit centre – charging members £4.99 a month, for example.

We aim to extend a health club's relationship with its members

outside the four walls

of the gym. The at-home fitness market is vying for members' wallet-share; clubs need to meet these needs to stay relevant and competitive in the technology age.



Wellbeats has over 20 channels

WEXER MOBILE



PAUL BOWMAN

CEO, Wexer

Wexer Mobile is a fully customisable app which allows fitness operators to deliver high quality fitness experiences to their members either through live-streaming technology or as an on-demand service. It offers a range of features including an exercise library, class timetable and booking system.

We've integrated three features that we believe will engage consumers inside and outside the four walls of the gym: result-driven fitness plans; group exercise classes on-demand (500 classes from our world-class partners); and live streaming (helping to grow the audience for health clubs' own group exercise talent).

We offer two commercial models. Operators can integrate the cost of the app into their existing membership models as an add-on member benefit or a free member benefit. Alternatively, they can offer the app separately as a pay-to-access premium service, or as a 'freemium' model where users can access certain features of the app free of charge.

Wexer Mobile is a fully customisable app



FITNESS ON DEMAND



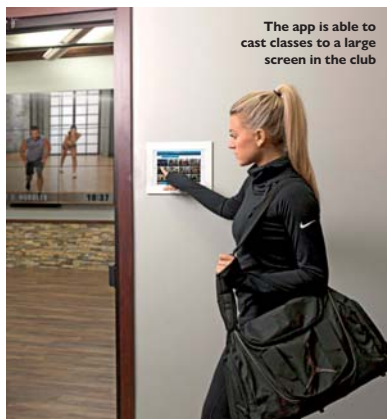
GARRETT MARSHALL

Divisional CEO,
Fitness On Demand

Launched on 9 February 2017 and available on both Android and iOS, the new Fitness on Demand app offers virtual fitness as well as allowing club members to stay connected with their gym. Through the app, members can browse and preview hundreds of virtual classes, as well as viewing and booking upcoming classes at their club. The app can even be used to cast classes to the large format video display in a club.

The free-to-member app allows gyms to showcase a mobile app timetable (live and virtual), enables them to collect class and instructor feedback (on live and virtual), and provides a workout log for group fitness classes. The workout log feature also keeps users accountable, while integrating with wearable devices via Apple Health Kit.

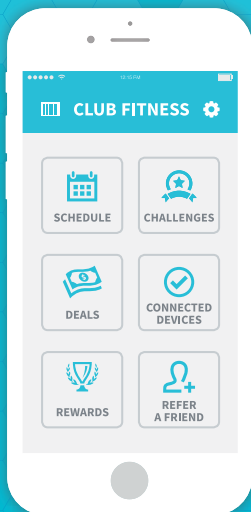
Our content library is always expanding to offer the latest trends in fitness, plus all the classic favourites. We have content on the system for all fitness levels, and even content specific for kids and seniors. The product is available in English, Spanish and Italian. ●



The app is able to cast classes to a large screen in the club

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PETER WOODS

Boutique studio operator Barrecore is looking to expand rapidly throughout the UK and Europe. Tom Walker speaks to its newly appointed CEO

What's your background?

My career in fitness began in 1992 after I graduated with a degree in sports and business studies. Over the past 25 years, I've worked in the UK and across Europe and held a number of senior positions in the private and public sectors – including stints as regional director at Holmes Place Health Clubs, operations director at David Lloyd Leisure, and chief operating officer of Aspria.

What brought you to Barrecore?

I see Barrecore as a fantastic brand. It has built a very dedicated and loyal community and occupies a significant space in the boutique fitness sector.

It was also clear that Barrecore, as barre fitness pioneers in the UK, had an excellent and unique product offering with very strong growth potential.

What's the background to Barrecore as a business?

Barrecore launched in London in 2011 and was the first specialist barre fitness studio in the UK. Barrecore's founder, Niki Rein, had recently moved from Los Angeles and realised the boutique fitness trend she had left behind was yet to arrive in London.

She recognised that Londoners needed an exercise regime that allowed them to fit a range of intelligent workouts into their busy lives. So Barrecore was born, with one ambition: to create lasting and positive change to people's fitness.



Woods sees significant growth opportunities outside London

What's the concept?

Barrecore is a workout that uses your own bodyweight as resistance. Our classes are designed to work your entire body: creating longer, toned muscles; reducing body fat; and improving posture, alignment and flexibility. Classes cost £24–28.

Barre is big in the US. What are its prospects in the UK?

As well as the US, barre fitness is already very popular in Australia. It's also rapidly growing in popularity in the UK. We see a significant opportunity to expand in the

UK and Europe in the next few years. We wouldn't want to put a definitive number on it in terms of locations, but we're keen to scale the business rapidly and to explore all avenues of opportunity.

How many Barrecore studios do you have now?

We have nine clubs in the UK: six in London and one each in Manchester, Leeds and Bristol.

What are your plans for expansion in the UK?

We'll bring Barrecore to four more out-of-London locations in 2017, as well as continuing with our London expansion.

We're delighted to have secured funding from Octopus Investments recently, as this will enable us to push ahead with our rapid expansion plans. [The sum of investment by Octopus has not been disclosed].

We're hugely positive about our growth potential. We see a significant opportunity to expand both in the UK and in Europe



Barrecore aims to offer its clients a premium boutique experience

What's your secret to making boutiques work outside London?

Many people see boutiques as a model that will only work in London. However, our Bristol and Leeds sites are performing strongly, and we believe there's significant scope for growth outside the capital.

Location and demographics are by far the most important factors. We've mapped our existing customer profiles against the rest of the UK and have used this to create an expansion roadmap. We take into account all the obvious cues such as fitness competitors too, but we also look for things like a luxury brand presence nearby.

What about growth in Europe?

We're exploring opportunities in a number of European cities, but in the

meantime, we already have significant international business through our Barrecore Online Video Workouts. Clients can take a Barrecore class at home or on the move, by streaming classes in HD quality from an extensive library.

What's the secret behind Barrecore's success?

We believe our studios are special places, not just for the lasting effects that Barrecore training delivers, but for the atmosphere and environment we create.

The quality of our instructors is also a USP. They are all selected through a rigorous interview process and then trained in-house by our dedicated instructor trainers. Every Barrecore instructor has to complete a minimum of 200 hours of teaching before they're

signed off to deliver a Barrecore class to our clients. We're very committed to maintaining this level of quality instruction, as it enables our clients to get the best results from their exercise.

Might barre be another fad?

Absolutely not! The results our clients achieve fit with a very modern desire for a longer, leaner look and a workout that not both reduces body fat and improves posture.

Are you planning any changes to the Barrecore offering?

Our offering is constantly evolving. Our most recent innovations include Sculpt, where resistance bands are used to add intensity to signature Barrecore moves, and Signature Express, where the same workout intensity is achieved in a shorter session. In addition, we're currently refreshing Nourish, our nutritional programme, and evolving our personal training offering.

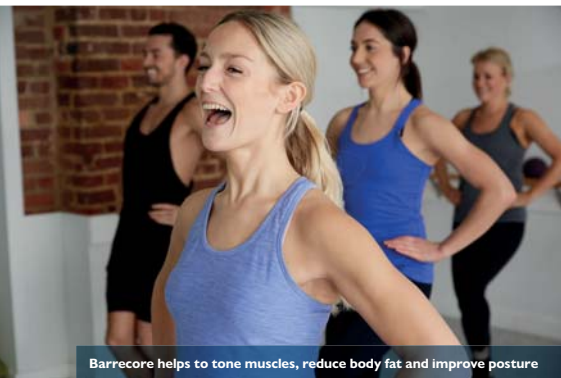
Would you ever put a Barrecore studio in another health club?

We wouldn't rule this out, but it isn't in our immediate plans.

What's the future for boutiques?

Boutique studios have been disrupting the fitness industry for some time now, as more traditional gyms are seen by some Baby Boomers and Millennials to be impersonal, less effective – and sometimes even lonely – experiences.

The boutique fitness sector is established in the UK now: it's positively booming and is here to stay. The main challenges for operators within the boutique sector are finding the right sites and then maintaining the quality as businesses grow. ●



Barrecore helps to tone muscles, reduce body fat and improve posture

PUTTING THE **FUN** IN FUNCTIONAL

With a growing number of members realising the value of functional training, a growing number of health clubs are installing striking functional zones. **Steph Eaves** rounds up some best practice examples



The Volt Gym's zone features Syngry and Hammer Strength

THE VOLT GYM – BURSCOUGH, UK

CAMERON MITCHELL, CO-FOUNDER, THE VOLT GYM



Although the traditional cardio suite will always have its place in clubs, we believe gym-goers want to get lean and strong.

In designing The Volt Gym, we therefore turned the conventional cardio-intensive health club on its head, focusing instead on functional training zones and fewer cardio pieces; we have three functional training zones within our gym.

The first thing that catches the eye as you enter the gym is the Life Fitness Syngry 360XS. This versatile piece of kit has become very popular among our

members, allowing individuals to do full-body circuits, group training, cardio and strength training in one space. Syngry was the perfect choice, as we were able to make it bespoke to our club and brand.

As you travel further into the gym, you can choose to go left down our Power Tunnel or right into our free weights and plate-loaded Hammer Strength zone. The Power Tunnel features two Hammer Strength Elite full racks, a half rack and a track with dog sled.

We've found that less-experienced members are far more inclined to train in functional areas when they're separate from the rest of the gym.

THE GYM WAY – LONDON MARRIOTT HOTEL CLUB, UK

IAN THORPE, MD, FITNESS SYSTEMS



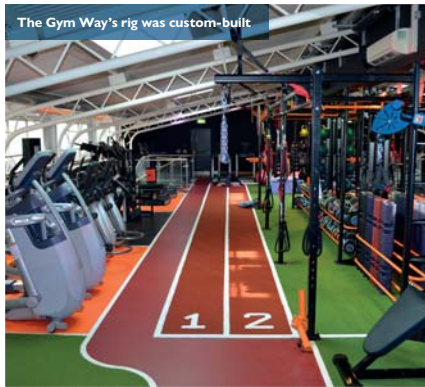
Our brief was to create an engaging, interactive training environment that would appeal to The Gym Way members as well as Marriott hotel guests. We needed something that immediately caught the attention of anyone who wanted to train. It had to be instantly clear what equipment was available and allow for plenty of users to engage in activities simultaneously.

The result is a fun functional training area with a 'climbing frame' rig as the centrepiece, complemented by brightly coloured equipment from Physical Company.

We custom-built the long rig to allow for plenty of stations to be used at once. The design allows individuals to move along the rig and small groups to train alongside each other. It encourages flow of movement, so not an inch of floor space is wasted and there are no dark corners or dead zones.

All the kit is set out on the rig, centrally placed, to invite members to try it. At the same time, it's neatly stored and safely stowed.

The Gym Way's rig was custom-built





The Best's Box is a soft, configurable plyometric step

BEST'S BOOTCAMP – LONDON, UK

MATT MORTON,

HEAD OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS, ESCAPE FITNESS



Scott Best and Lee Drabble at Best's Bootcamp had a strong vision of bringing a fresh new feel to the boutique scene, with an injection of colour. Our challenge was to take that vision and create something to fit the brand and attract their target market.

The design and programming had to focus on full-body functional training

through all three planes of motion. Supporting this would be a 360-degree trainer cam, full studio lighting and resident DJs to create an energetic atmosphere for maximum motivation.

Once the workout style was agreed, we created a bespoke product. The 'Best's Box' is a safe, soft plyometric step configurable at different heights, and usable on an incline or decline.

Functional training tools were chosen to complement this signature

product, enabling the club to deliver varied, high quality, engaging and results-driven workouts.

The design also features great-looking storage, positioned to ensure that the correct kit is exactly where it's needed for every workout.

I think we've created something really impressive and I'm very proud to have made a contribution to a spectacular training environment that marries substance with style.

THE LINK CENTRE – SWINDON, UK

LAUREN MYRING, NATIONAL PRODUCT DESIGN AND TECHNICAL MANAGER, GLL



GLL is constantly challenging the norm of gym design with interesting spaces. The shift towards functional training in the last decade has fundamentally altered the way our gyms are designed.

Functional spaces must cater for a diverse range of users – from older adults completing gentle movement to improve mobility and flexibility, to the younger generation moving away from traditional weight training to bodyweight training.

At the Link Centre, while rubber matting would have been a practical solution, it didn't necessarily allow the user to train in a way that would complement real-life movements. Createability therefore installed AstroTurf, as it provides a more realistic grip and feel, and is actually more comfortable. It has a greater life span in high-use areas too, and doesn't mark like the rubber equivalent – plus it looks great! ▶



Artificial turf offers a comfortable grip in the Link Centre zone

► SOLAN FITNESS – EAST GRINSTEAD, UK

RACHELLE SOLAN, OWNER, SOLAN FITNESS



We designed our functional training zone to have 'wow factor'. We placed the zone where it would catch our members'

attention, with the vibrant yellow central rig standing tall. We understand that people will judge the facility within about three seconds of entering, so we chose a Jordan Ignite Rig to offer a robust and impressive structure.

We worked closely with the team at Jordan to install a sprint track to allow

for high-intensity training, dragging, pulling and circuit training.

The sprint track is made from green turf to add a fun feel that matches the rest of the gym. The entire zone has been designed to encourage our members to be sociable, active and adventurous.

Finally, we designed the lighting and décor with precision, to ensure the whole area delivers 'The Solan Experience'. The space is fitted with adaptable lighting to create a special ambience. We've also incorporated wall murals to add unique character to the zone.



Solan's zone has been designed to have the 'wow factor'



The monkey bars are an eye-catching central feature

FITNESS FORMULA PARK RIDGE CLUB – ILLINOIS, US

JON BARAGLIA, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF FITNESS, FITNESS FORMULA



Our performance training centre is centred around functional training, with the TRX suspension training system playing a key role. As it doesn't take up any floor space, it gives us the flexibility to teach a dedicated TRX group class or use the zone in a fitness circuit using other functional training tools.

Meanwhile the monkey bars are a great addition for fitness enthusiasts, providing an eye-catching central feature and increasing the variety of exercises and workouts we can offer members.

We run two to three classes in the zone every day, using everything from TRX training to tyres, kettlebells and sleds. When there are no classes taking place, members take full advantage of the fun, functional space.

LIFE:LAB – CHISLEHURST, UK

ADAM DANIEL, CO-OWNER, LIFE:LAB



I had three key objectives when designing life:lab. Firstly, the design had to offer intelligent storage solutions and maximise the space so we could maximise member capacity. The Queenax is perfect for this, with the added benefit that I can add to the kit options as needed.

I also wanted to create a 'wow factor': there are three corporate gyms near life:lab, so I needed to differentiate our gym. The choice of kit was a clear way to do this. By using the Queenax modular system, I've been able to create a bespoke functional training area. It's often one of the first things members comment on when they join.

Finally, I wanted to inspire and excite members by creating a facility that had them asking questions about the equipment, because they hadn't seen it before. ●



life:lab offers equipment members may not have seen before

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SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

How much consideration do you give to potential issues with vibration and noise when constructing a gym?
Martin McNulty
explains why it should be a top priority

A gym is often at the top of apartment seekers' wish lists, with prospective tenants willing to pay a premium for this luxury. This demand has resulted in a surge in fitness facilities within residential and mixed-use developments, particularly in prime inner city locations – and with these locations, of course, come neighbours.

Unfortunately, most buildings are not designed for gym use so, if not planned appropriately, fitness centres can bring with them significant noise and vibration problems for neighbours – problems which are neither simple nor cheap to fix.

With 24-hour gym access now vital due to today's busy lifestyles, complaints associated with noise from gyms are on the rise – particularly in relation to treadmill pounding, free weights and resistance machines, and other high-impact activities such as dance classes.

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

In the world of acoustic and vibration consultancy, a lack of accepted industry-wide design guidance creates uncertainty when determining noise levels. This means the resolution process for problem cases can be protracted, litigious and expensive.

To complicate matters, assessing a space for a gym and predicting sound and vibration is a complex process, unique to each structure. That said, there is advice to bear in mind either when considering new locations, or when working to resolve issues in older spaces.

Whether the development is old or new, it's likely that mitigation measures



For operators using interesting old buildings not originally designed for gym use, preempting and addressing noise and vibration issues is key

will be required, and the gym operator will have a multitude of products to consider. Invariably, the final choice will be cost-driven, but most operators will also consider the technical performance stated within brochures and data sheets. At face value, these may promise an attractive reduction in noise – enough to permit worry-free gym use. However, the reality is that products frequently underperform in the frequency range of interest – for gyms, this is mainly low-frequency structure-borne noise

(the bass frequency range) and tangible vibration – and in some instances can even exacerbate issues.

We should also be alert to the extent to which noise and vibration needs to be reduced, as this will vary depending on the neighbour. Residents of a luxury apartment complex, for example, may have a greater reason to complain than occupants of a busy open-plan office. In areas shared with residential dwellings, mitigation may only be deemed satisfactory when noise or vibration cannot be perceived. Acquiring this level of control may not be practical unless working within the most forgiving of structures – for example, those which have high inherent mass and stiffness, or are orientated so there are buffer zones between properties.

ACOUSTIC TESTING

So mitigation measures, and the target levels they should achieve, pose difficult questions. The most reliable way for operators to establish (and perhaps show the local authority) that a site and its proposed fit-out finishes will be fit for purpose is to undertake acoustic tests prior to any tenant agreement. This might also reinforce the gym operator's position should a dispute with neighbours arise.

Testing methods can be relatively inexpensive and crude by modern standards. In the case of free weights, all

With 24-hour gym access now vital due to today's busy lifestyles, complaints associated with noise from gyms are on the rise



Gym concepts for multi-use sites must be well tested for noise and vibration before the project proceeds

that's required is a test patch of flooring and weights representative of those to be used, which are dropped on it from a range of heights corresponding to the height of various gym users.

Testing of items such as treadmills is more difficult due to the logistics of installing a machine prior to fit-out. Furthermore, some structures may not respond to the effects of a single treadmill, so multiple machines may be needed to get the structure into motion.

That said, to an experienced practitioner, the free weight drop tests can impart a great deal of knowledge about a structure and its ability to curtail noise and vibration, and these characteristics can then be interpreted for treadmill machines.

AVOIDING ISSUES

Finally, it should be noted that in highly sensitive areas, or in structures prone to being easily excited by vibrational sources, floor build-ups designed to mitigate noise

and vibration can be excessive. In many cases, for example, an isolated concrete platform mounted on springs is required to reduce the impact of the gym on the building – but this poses questions not only about cost, but also about structural integrity given the additional loading. If this need is determined early in the site-acquisition process, an informed decision can be made about whether to proceed.

By gathering information early in the process, the operator might be saved from costly, and perhaps ultimately unfeasible, mitigation measures further down the line. If results are favourable at the outset, the gym operator can proceed knowing they have anticipated and averted problems, and are well-placed should a dispute arise. ●

NEW BUILD OR REFURB?

Refurbishments

Recently constructed or refurbishment schemes pose a unique problem, because it's unlikely there will be adequate knowledge about how the structure controls noise or vibration transmission – and the structure may also be defective. Many gym operators sign on the dotted line without testing the suitability of a location and, once in, measures can be difficult to implement.

New builds

In new-build developments, a gym operator may not have been the tenant foreseen from the outset, so it's unlikely the property will have been built with a gym in mind; robustness of the construction may have been overlooked. The incoming operator may assume that modest mitigation measures such as matting will be sufficient, but in practice such measures rarely suffice.

On a positive note, new-build schemes give the acoustician an opportunity to work with the structural engineer to design a construction that's resistant to vibration from treadmills and free weights.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Martin McNulty is an executive acoustic engineer and leader of the vibration team at Hoare Lea Acoustics, one of the largest independent acoustic groups in the UK.

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Make each visit to the gym as smooth and efficient as the last, allowing members to access their own fitness data, social media accounts and favourite apps instantly with an xID single sign on - registration couldn't be simpler, and their personal preferences will automatically load every time they log in.

For the Gym Manager, a technological offering achieving maximum results within a more compact console for an achievable budget.

- Offers exclusive training programs delivered through an optimised app interface designed specifically for fitness to engage members and keep them coming back for more.
- Wi-Fi connectivity to accommodate Asset Management - an effective system of monitoring the wear and tear of the equipment, unique to Matrix, at all times keeping an eye on the kit and servicing needs to reduce downtime.
- Opportunity to customise console interface to communicate personally with users, helping to reinforce the brand, deliver key messages and engage members with their social media community.
- Matrix Workout Tracking Network capability - a single solution that brings all the tools to help members capture their trail runs, yoga classes and circuit training together, in one place.
- Connect, engage and start building member loyalty that lasts with truly personalised, easy-to-access training with the Matrix Personal Trainer Portal.
- Create seamless entertainment experience for guests and provide facilities with the most control of their offerings through the use of IPTV.

3XE - REAL LIFE RESULTS

Improved communication and more seamless interaction between gym and member are just some of the key benefits the new 3xe has brought to independent, family-owned health club and spa, Laguna - the first site in the UK to offer its customers the new 3xe line of cardio equipment by Matrix.

Since its installation at Laguna Health & Spa in Cardiff city centre, members have been making the most of the pioneering technology in the new 3xe series which has the capacity to completely redefine the exercise experience.

The machines come equipped with consoles offering members the bestscreen available, through a touchscreen display with FitTouchTechnology, making interactions easy and effortless, and an intuitive app interface ensuring they are always connected to the outside world.

Matrix UK Hospitality Manager and Account Manager for Laguna Health & Spa, Nigel Tapping, said:

"We know that fitness equipment within a premium setting must look beautiful and needs to inspire as well as provide stunning technology to enable smooth operation and keep users focused on their fitness goals. The Matrix 3xe cardio range delivers all this, and more."

Caroline Sims, Director of Sales and Marketing at Park Plaza Cardiff, said:

"The feedback from our members has been incredible. The up-to-date technology allows us to interact with our members in a way that has never been done before; everything from events to competitions to workout results are shared easily on the consoles and between members and the fitness team."

*Photographs courtesy of Laguna Health & Spa

So from inspiring workouts designed to support members all the way to premium entertainment and beyond, there's no limit to the ways the 3xe can motivate members to keep going and mentor them to reach their goals in exciting new ways.

MAKING AN IMPACT

In the second of a two-part series, ukactive executive director **Steven Ward** explains what the organisation will be focusing on over the next few years

You've been in post for almost two years. Where do you see ukactive in another two years' time?

The ukactive board just signed off our 2017–2019 business plan and there's so much potential in this agenda – it really excites me to imagine where we could be in two years' time.

But there's a heck of a job still to do. The end goal is ultimately to make physical activity the natural choice for the whole of society, embedding it into every aspect of our daily lives – not to mention landing the major policy breakthrough that can bring this into being.

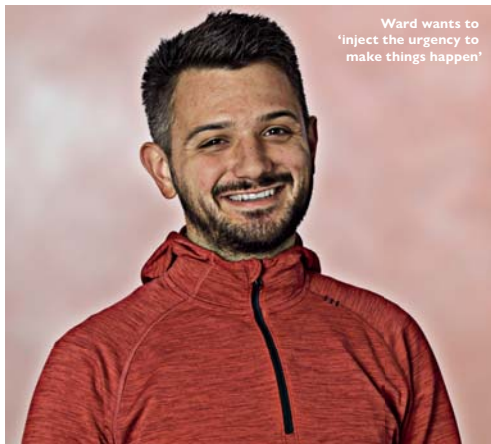
This will create huge opportunities for our sector and we want to share best practice and make the most of the themes that pull us all together.

We will also continue to make a tangible impact on our members' businesses, addressing the things that cause them pain. Bringing a new generation of leaders through our Future Leaders programme will help, but there are other areas where we can help – evidencing the impact of products and services, for example, and enhancing the reputation of the sector with investors.

For me personally, I'm determined to inject the urgency to make things happen, while building a world-class team and ukactive board to carry this forward.

What's the biggest challenge for the sector to overcome in 2017?

We're yet to really get to grips with diversity. It's 2017 and we have to ensure companies, from the boardroom to the gym floor, are reflective of the wider population. There are strategic, operational and moral reasons why this is the right thing to do. However, there



will soon be financial imperatives too, with Sport England's new funding criteria placing greater emphasis on diversity.

For our part, we're seeking to boost diversity and accelerate a new breed of leaders through our Future Leaders programme, including offering bursaries in conjunction with Matrix Fitness to fast-track outstanding disabled candidates onto the course.

Where do you think ukactive is having the biggest impact?

ukactive is probably best known for the impact of its government-facing work –

the growing focus on tackling inactivity at government level, for example.

Our campaigning work and reports have struck a chord, with both government and Sport England strategies now placing a far greater emphasis on turning the tide of inactivity.

The focus now shifts from simply highlighting the severity of the problem to the delivery of practical solutions. That's exactly what we've sought to offer through our two *Blueprint for an Active Britain* reports.

We can't just highlight the problem – we need to shine the brightest light possible on the hundreds of examples where people are making things happen, getting on with the job and having an impact. We have to help the entire sector to learn from each other, so the whole sector can grow.

There are many reasons to embrace diversity – and soon financial imperatives too, in the shape of Sport England's new funding criteria



Health and fitness operators are 'the bedrock' of ukactive's success

Are there any particular areas where you'd like to do even more going forward?

We set out to identify opportunities where we felt the sector could have an impact on national policies, and to deliver on these, but while we've taken great strides forward – the *Blueprint for an Active Britain*, which we released in November 2015, had a huge impact on subsequent strategies and investment plans from DCMS and then Sport England – actually having an impact on policy off the back of this is still a work in progress.

There have been numerous things that we championed, for a long time as a sole and lonely voice, and we're delighted to

now see them happening: for example, a focus on inactivity; increased prominence of the health agenda; an end to funding by birthright simply as a result of being an National Governing Body; and an openness to working with anyone with the ability to make an impact. But we still have more to do, for sure.

There also remains a huge amount of consensus to be built, particularly around the area of youth inactivity. That's why we're particularly eager to drive the impact of ukactive Kids: we want to standardise the measurement of activity levels in our schools, champion investment in holiday camps, and to promote active mile schemes.

Is it hard to balance your government-facing work with the needs of ukactive members?

We never forget where we've come from. The bedrock of our success are the health club and leisure centre operators who helped build ukactive with their support. We need to have an umbilical cord to their commercial agenda, understanding what's on their minds and exactly where we can help.

I recognise that I'm not an operator and never have been. I can't lecture our members on how to run their facilities. But I've made it a personal focus to be as close as possible to our members to understand what's on their minds; to make sure my team focuses on operators' core commercial agenda; to deepen engagement with them; and to use the insight that comes from this to develop services which can really add value to them – Future Leaders and the ActiveLab accelerator are two examples, helping our members with succession planning and cultivating an innovative climate in the physical activity sector. ●



Olympic sprinter Iwan Thomas leads a Daily Mile

RELATIONSHIP REVOLUTION

Technology has sparked a relationship revolution, and IHRSA 2017 keynote speaker **Seth Mattison** knows how to win it. IHRSA's Patricia Amend spoke with Mattison about his experiences

Seth Mattison has his finger on the pulse of today's changing workplace. An internationally renowned expert on workforce trends and generational dynamics, he combines insights from his personal experience in the field with cutting-edge research to develop fresh perspectives on leadership.

As the founder and chief movement officer of FutureSight Labs, Inc., based in West Hollywood, California, Mattison counsels many of the world's leading brands on the key shifts now occurring with respect to leadership, talent management and change and innovation. IHRSA sat down with him for a pre-convention interview.

Can you tell us about your keynote presentation at IHRSA 2017?

My presentation is entitled 'Relationship revolution: Building better connections in the digital age'. Success in life and work is based on our ability to form authentic and meaningful relationships. Technology is helping us to become more connected – yet, simultaneously, disconnected. Navigating this dichotomy successfully requires us to be very intentional about how we utilise these tools without losing the magic and beauty of connecting in the flesh.

It's the perfect time to discuss this, since we're all thinking about how to drive connection, collaboration and

innovation inside our organisations. We're also rethinking how to build bonds with our customers who, today, have different expectations about that relationship.

What inspired you, personally, to focus on workplace trends?

I grew up on a fourth-generation farm and witnessed, first hand, the dynamics of a family business, and how three different generations of leaders approached work and life. As a curious person, I began to study why different generations think and behave the way they do.

That interest led me to a boutique management consulting firm in Minnesota that specialised in leadership development, executive alignment and changing cultures. While there, I enjoyed collecting stories and case studies from clients in the field about what was working and what wasn't. The more I heard, the more I was able to share different perspectives with others. Helping someone view their company, their community and their relationships differently and, subsequently, make positive changes, was incredibly fulfilling and became my passion.

What other influences have shaped your career path?

When I witnessed our clients struggling to deal with generational shifts in their organisations, I decided to deepen my knowledge and expertise in that area. I

partnered with two bestselling authors in the generational space, David Stillman and Lynne Lancaster, and supported them as they wrote their second book, *The M-Factor: How the Millennial Generation Is Rocking the Workplace*, which was published in 2009.

After a few years, I launched FutureSights Labs. I've essentially been studying, speaking and consulting on workforce trends and generational dynamics for a decade now.

What do you think we've both gained and lost due to the changes in technology?

On the upside, we're more connected than ever via mobile and digital technologies. On the downside, our digitally-empowered world has given rise to what psychologists call the online "disinhibition effect." Factors like anonymity, invisibility, a lack of authority and the fact that we're not communicating in real time strip away the mores that society has spent millennia developing.

How, specifically, is technology changing the workplace?

It's expanding the amount of information available. The democratisation of information throughout organisations is going to prompt societies to re-examine the hierarchy, and the distribution, of power.

Factors like anonymity, invisibility, a lack of authority and the fact that we're not communicating in real time strip away the mores that society has spent millennia developing – Seth Mattison



Live from IHRSA 2017:
Seth Mattison will be
the keynote speaker
on Weds 8 March

Social media platforms also present new realities. It will be critical to use them to increase communication and develop healthier relationships, and to ensure they don't distort reality and damage human connections. Ideally, these platforms will be used to empower and to solve social issues.

How is the culture of health and fitness clubs likely to change now that the younger generation is taking over?

Because the line between work and life has blurred, younger generations will try to achieve a greater balance, and flexibility will be key.

Leaders will be more likely to have an open-door policy, encouraging employees to drop by and discuss their concerns, and they'll wander around the club to find out how things are going.

Engagement research also shows that millennials crave opportunities to collaborate with their peers, so millennial leadership will look for ways in which to support this.

Finally, businesses will give back to their communities, support non-profits and become more involved, because

millennials have a strong interest in corporate responsibility.

What else can leaders do to thrive in this new world of rapidly morphing relationships?

We see three "mind shifts" that leaders are going to have to make: the growth mindset, the humble mindset and the abundant mindset. With the growth mindset, you push yourself to learn new things, and understand that failure presents an opportunity to grow.

With the humble mindset, you're willing to say, "I don't know," admit when you screw up, and ask others how they would have done things differently.

With the abundant mindset, you assume that, instead of scarcity and hoarding, there'll always be enough time, budget, resources, ideas and support to go around.

Bottom-line, the question we need to be asking is: 'how can we make the workplace more humane?'

The answer – by adopting the growth, humble and abundant mindsets, and managing in a more collaborative way. If we do that, we'll radically alter the culture of our organizations. ●

FUTURE INSIGHTS

Seth Mattison
will speak at
IHRSA's 36th
Annual
International
Convention &
Trade Show in Los
Angeles, on the
topic of 'Relationship Revolution:
Building Better Connections in
the Digital Age' (8 March,
10.30–12.00). For more
information about the schedule,
log on to ihrsa.org/convention



SAVE THE DATE

**17th Annual IHRSA
European Congress
Monday-Thursday, October
23-26, 2017
London, England**
Please visit www.ihrsa.org/congress
for details and to register.



GET READY FOR FIBO 2017

More exhibitors, new trends – here's what to expect at FIBO 2017

FIBO with its reputation for educating, motivating and shaking up the health and fitness sector, is set to be bigger than ever in 2017. The leading international trade show for fitness, wellness and health is expected to attract approximately 1,000 exhibitors and 150,000 attendees from around the world when it takes place in Cologne, Germany from 6–9 April 2017.

FIBO 2017 will focus on competence and practical knowledge. "We've put

together a packed yet to-the-point programme," says FIBO director Ralph Scholz. "Everything revolves around continuing education, networking and inspiration for the entire fitness industry."

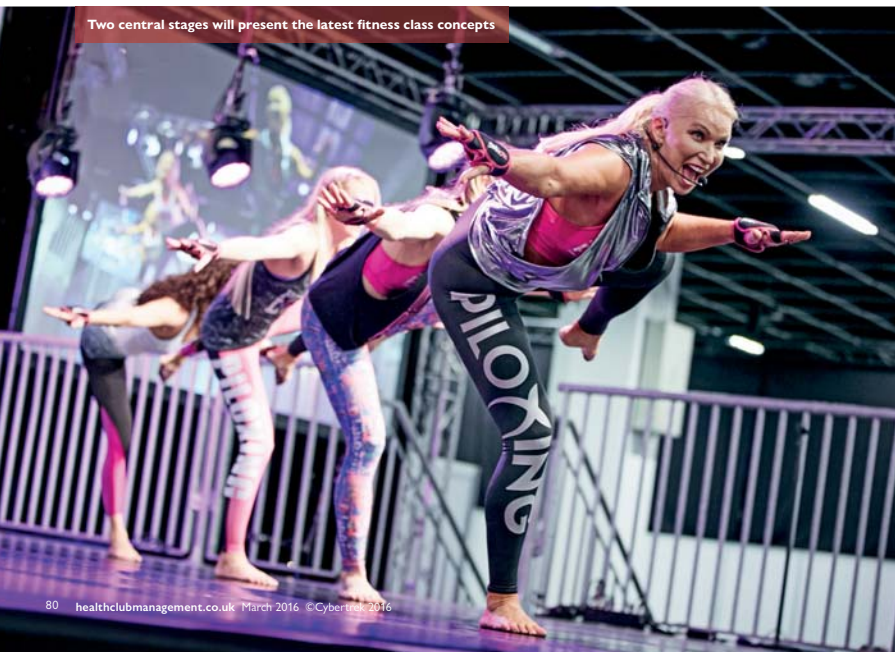
This is possible thanks to FIBO's extensive network, which includes such organisations as FISAF International, the European Register of Exercise Professionals (EREPS), the International Fitness Academy IFAA and European industry association EuropeActive.

GROUP FITNESS

The question of how to strengthen group identity and prevent churn will be explored in the new Group Fitness World in Hall 4.1. Two centrally located stages will provide information for decision-makers on which new classes to add to their club's offering.

For an efficient overview of what's new and popular in the industry, visitors are advised to attend the FIBO Innovation and Trend Show.

Two central stages will present the latest fitness class concepts



FIBO 2017 IN NUMBERS

- 10 halls
- 160,000sq m
- 1,000 exhibitors
- 150,000 visitors

In 60 minutes, studio operators and trainers will get a compact, in-depth look at innovative concepts, presented by product and service providers in short, live demonstrations.

EUROPEAN CONVENTION

The first-ever FIBO European Convention provides a further opportunity for skill development. Powered by FISAF International and supported by EuropeActive and EREPS, it takes place on 8 and 9 April in Hall 5.1. Leading European instructors – including Gil Lopes, Katia Vasilenko, Claudio Melamed and Guillermo G Vega – will be teaching exclusive masterclasses.

Also set to be explored at the convention is aqua fitness, with the first pool stage in FIBO's history featuring a programme that includes cycling and cross-training in the water. Dutch Zumba star Jaromir Cremers will demonstrate the Aqua Zumba Wet N' Wild workout he created by fusing Latin American dance workouts with aqua training.

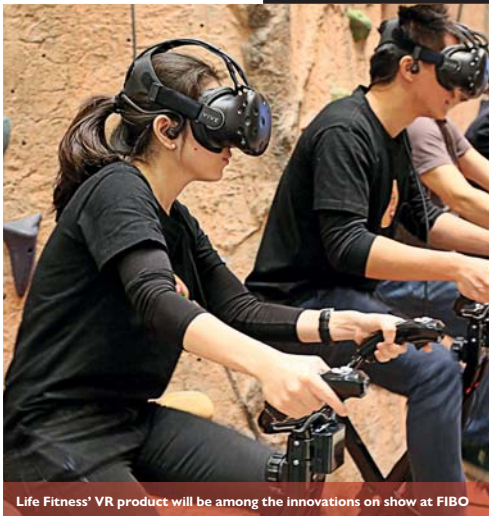
In the supporting programme, seminars will focus on how trainers can develop their own brand, how to successfully deploy social media, and how to motivate themselves and others to perform at the highest level.

The number of participants at the convention is limited to 3,000, so early registration is recommended.

SMART TRAINING

A wide array of equipment will be on show at the event, with leading providers – such as Life Fitness, Technogym, Matrix (Johnson Health Tech), Precor, Star Trac, SportsArt, gym80, Hoist, eGym, milon and Keiser – presenting their latest health and fitness developments.

It's clear that tech is still a top trend. Les Mills will introduce an app that makes it easier for new members to start exercising at a gym; Life Fitness has combined a bicycle ergometer with a virtual reality game to keep people engaged during cardio workouts; and Augletics' new rowing ergometer, which digitally enables group training, will celebrate its world premiere at FIBO.



Life Fitness' VR product will be among the innovations on show at FIBO

eGym and milon will be among the exhibitors showcasing networked training areas at FIBO, with eGym's star attraction being enhanced connectivity: gym members can log in to all connected devices, across a variety of brands.

milon will introduce the Connected Training System (CTS). This links fitness studios with a partner network whose members include healthcare suppliers like cardiocan, easySolution, InBody and Polar. This collaboration facilitates holistic health counselling and EKG-based cardio and stress tests.

A NEW WAY TO NETWORK

FIBO 2017 will introduce a targeted online matchmaking tool to match exhibitors and trade visitors before the show starts. "FIBO is getting larger and larger, and more international", says Scholz. "That's why it's important to make finding

and meeting contacts straightforward, especially for our trade visitors."

The new tool allows you to filter participants by country, topic or trade show and set up meetings. The use of the tool will be automatically enabled for all exhibitors and registered visitors.

Each participant will receive an email with his or her personal schedule on the Friday before the show opens, ensuring effective time management for both exhibitors and visitors.

CAMP OUT

For the first time, affordable accommodation is being offered to all trade visitors. The FIBO Convention Camp features camping facilities, chill-out zones, catering and drinks, and provides a great place to meet other attendees. Packages are available from €121 – for more information, visit www.fibocamp.de

WANT TO ATTEND FIBO?

Dates: **6–9 April 2017**

Opening hours: **Daily from 9.00am – 6.00pm**

Venue: **Exhibition Centre Cologne (Köln Messe), Messeplatz 1, 50679 Cologne, Germany**

Tickets: **www.fibo.com**

- Trade visitor day ticket Thursday or Friday **€34.00 (€40.00 on-site)**
- Trade visitor day ticket Saturday or Sunday **€28.00 (€36.00 on-site)**
- Trade visitors will receive a discount on two-day or four-day-tickets

EHFF 2017

The fourth European Health and Fitness Forum will tackle the topic of customer engagement

► **K**icking off the programme on 5 April will be the fourth European Health & Fitness Forum, which focuses this year on the theme of customer engagement. Organised jointly by FIBO and EuropeActive, the event will be attended by 400 leading representatives of the European fitness sector.

Customer engagement is a highly topical issue in the fitness industry. Many fitness operators and personal trainers focus on acquiring new customers, but a sustainable business must be built around retaining those customers.

Leading business and industry experts – including management guru Luis Maria Huete, Fitness First strategist Christophe Collinet and Equinox fitness director Emma Barry – will explain how studio operators can use emotional marketing to gain long-term customer loyalty.

THE PROGRAMME

Insightful presentations will cover a variety of topics, including:

Karsten Hollasch will present the latest European health and fitness market study by Deloitte and EuropeActive. EHFF participants will be the first to find out which countries led the European fitness market in 2016 – and where there's still potential for growth. The study also reveals upcoming trends and this year's corporate winners.

Luis Maria Huete knows how to turn customers into loyal members. He has developed the theory of 'clienting', which describes how companies can create emotional ties with customers without annoying them – using skilful marketing, optimal service, as well as a good dose of restraint.

Christophe Collinet will share his first-hand, best-practice expertise on customer loyalty and will explain how a combination of specialisation and diversification leads to success. A fitness economist, Collinet works as the marketing and strategy director of Fitness First Germany.



The forum will be attended by 400 key fitness sector representatives



Clockwise from top left: Emma Barry, Christophe Collinet, Karsten Hollasch and Luis Maria Huete

Emma Barry, fitness director of Equinox and SoulCycle, will explain how to turn fitness training into a 360-degree lifestyle experience. Equinox is known for its luxury fitness centres in the US, Toronto and London. The company sees itself not as a gym operator but as a lifestyle brand; as its slogan proclaims, "It's not fitness. It's life."

RECOMMENDED READING

Right on time for EHFF 2017, EuropeActive will publish a reference book on the subject of customer engagement. Customer engagement

and experience in the fitness sector is a collection of the extensive professional knowledge of industry experts such as Ray Algar, Herman Rutgers and Jan Middelkamp. The authors present their views on other industries, highlighting the lessons the fitness industry can take from successful companies such as media conglomerate Disney or transportation company Uber. ●

ONE TICKET, THREE EVENTS

In addition to access to the EHFF itself, delegates at the fourth annual European Health & Fitness Forum will also receive the following:

- Two-day ticket to FIBO international trade show, including FIBO EXPERT, FIBO PASSION and FIBO POWER
- Networking reception
- Lunch
- Coffee breaks
- Networking dinner

For more information and to register, please visit:

www.europeactive.eu/events/ehff2017

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A stimulating subject

Kate Corney rounds up the latest news from the world of EMS (electric muscle stimulation)

For more information, log onto www.fitness-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'



AmpliCube exercises the entire body

NEXT GENERATION EMS

Amplitrain – maker of the AmpliTrain Pro – has created the AmpliCube, which the company calls a 'completely new generation of EMS device'.

The AmpliCube is designed to exercise the entire body, achieving electric muscle activation through a medium-frequency current of 2000Hz. The device connects magnetically with the AmpliSkin suit, allowing up to four people to workout simultaneously with the training device.

The system is operated via a touchscreen interface, with a 15-inch monitor built into a console. Meanwhile, an app – the AmpliApp – manages, documents and plans your training, with Android smartphones able to connect with the system via Bluetooth 4.0.

Presented in an aluminium casing, it measures 13 x 13 x 15cm and weighs only 1.5kg.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **AMPLITRAIN**

MIHA HEADS TO LONDON

miha bodytec is opening a new sales centre in London.

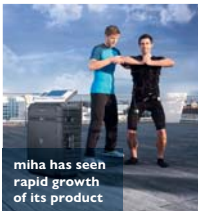
Opening at the start of 2017, on the occasion of the company's 10th anniversary, the UK's wholly-owned subsidiary of miha bodytec will manage all UK sales going forward. MD of miha bodytec, Jürgen Decker, sees the branch office in the UK as a logical step.

"Along with the rapid growth of EMS in Germany, we observe a growing international demand.

Great Britain is one of the most important European fitness markets," he says. "Our own presence here is overdue: it will allow us to offer the fastest delivery possible, as well as the same high-quality support as we offer in Germany."

The EMS expert, based in Germany, has an export share of approximately 75 per cent of its sales volume, across more than 30 countries.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **MIHA**



miha has seen rapid growth of its product

THE FREEDOM TO MOVE

The Easy Motion Skin EMS system gives users the ability to move and train freely while wearing it, whether the goal is explosive strength, endurance, anti-cellulite or body relaxation.

The elastic one-piece wireless tracksuit comes with a MotionSkin PowerBox, which connects to iPads and iPhones via Bluetooth and stimulates muscles with low-frequency electric pulses.

The PowerBox is the heart of the system and acts as an interface between the EMS training app and the MotionSkin, which carries 20 hours of battery charge.

Based on the idea that EMS becomes fully efficient during free movements, Easy Motion Skin is designed to allow the user to do any workout or HIIT training, with or without a trainer.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **EASY MOTION**



Users can even do HIIT workouts in the EMS suit



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Secure style

SWEAT! Gyms decks out new clubs with Safe Space Lockers

SWEAT! Gyms has recently launched two new clubs – Glasgow, Scotland and Denton, Manchester – doubling the number of sites in their portfolio. These clubs are an excellent addition to the existing ones in Sheffield and Walsall.

A significant investment has been made, giving the clubs a high quality appearance. The bright and airy design has received an excellent response from its new members.

One area that has seen a significant investment is the changing rooms, with Safe Space Lockers selected as the preferred partner for the two recent clubs.

Managing director of Safe Space Lockers, Dominic Hyett, said: "This is a great opportunity for us. To have the chance to work with a quality budget operator like SWEAT! is a real joy. SWEAT! has raised the bar by creating a high-end finish in all areas of the club.

"It doesn't matter if you're a low budget gym, there's no excuse for a club not to deliver a hard wearing, quality product. That's exactly what SWEAT! has achieved here.

"We know that when we take on a project like this it's not just the customer that we need to please. The real challenge and ultimate test is when gym users see it, and so far, we've had a 100 per cent satisfaction rate."

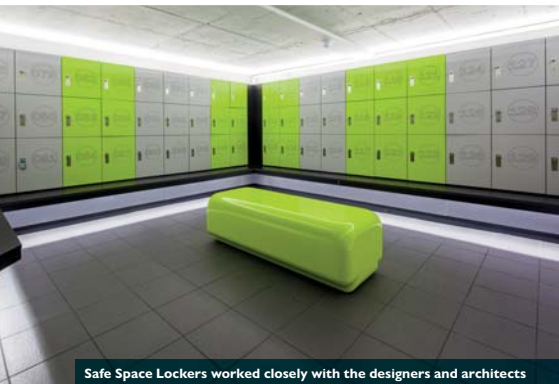


We decided to partner with Safe Space Lockers as their range and finish of products sat well with

our vision – *Jamie Mair, SWEAT! Gyms*



The lockers provide splashes of vibrant colour in the SWEAT! clubs



Safe Space Lockers worked closely with the designers and architects

FRESH DESIGN

Safe Space Lockers has worked closely with the designers and architects to achieve the right look and feel within the changing rooms. The brief was to create a light and airy atmosphere and enhance the brand of SWEAT!

A bold splash of vibrant colour was used for the lockers, bench seating and vanities. Large numbers were etched on the locker doors creating an eye-catching feature. Commercial director, Jamie Mair, said: "We decided to partner with Safe Space Lockers as their range and finish of products sat well with our vision.

"From the initial enquiry to completion of the project, the team has been accommodating, professional and prompt. Their service and attention to detail is outstanding and second to none.

"We've been delighted with the team and we hope to work with Safe Space Lockers again in the future."



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Core strength

Solan Fitness opens its new 15,000ft² site powered by Cybex

In February 2017, Solan Fitness opened its second gym in East Grinstead, West Sussex. Designed to offer its members premium quality, the 15,000ft² facility aims to build on the success of the brand's first gym in Orpington, which opened in 2015 and was voted the UK's Best Strength Training Gym at the National Fitness Awards that same year.

While the gym openings are recent, the team isn't new to the industry; the founders were previous owners of a successful martial arts club in South East London, which counts several national and international champions amongst its alumni.

Central to the appeal of Solan Fitness gyms are their strength training offering. The new East Grinstead club has no fewer than 50 pieces of strength equipment, while the Orpington site is an official Hammer Strength Training Centre – one of only 33 gyms in the UK to have this accreditation. "Our mission is to take strength training facilities mainstream, making them easily accessible to all those who want to achieve serious results," explains owner Rachelle Solan.

Cybex equipment was chosen for its high quality and build-to-order policy, which allowed the Solan brand to be incorporated throughout. Francesca Cooper, regional sales manager for Cybex, says:

"Every piece of equipment was carefully

“Every piece of equipment was carefully selected to ensure it appeals to members of all training abilities and interests — Francesca Cooper, Cybex”



selected to ensure that the gym not only delivers on its focus as a specialist strength training facility but crucially, that it also appeals to members of all training abilities and interests."

AN EXTENSIVE OFFERING

The new gym includes strength equipment from Cybex's Eagle NX and Prestige selectorised series, Big Iron racks and lifting platforms, an extensive range of free weights and plate loaded equipment, a nine-station Jungle Gym and the Bravo Functional Trainer.

The gym's cardio provision is also very extensive, with Cybex's 700 series treadmills, lower and total body Arc Trainers, and 600 series recumbent and upright bikes, all with E3 View

embedded entertainment screens. Life Fitness Powermills, Row GX Trainers and Concept2 SkiErgs complement the cardio provision, while Cybex's self-powered SPARCs feature in the gym's dedicated HIIT zone.

Solan said: "Cybex's heritage lies in sports science and biomechanics and this is something that we're very passionate about – our staff are trained to educate people and the diverse range of equipment supports our aim to build a broad membership demographic."

MEMBER SUPPORT

At the forefront of Solan Fitness' philosophy are its club members.

"We're really passionate about making a positive difference to people's lives and we believe that fitness is central to this," explained Solan.

The gym adopts a holistic approach to training and helping its members get results – the East Grinstead club offers a sports supplements store, restaurant lounge, fuel drinks bar and physiotherapy clinic, all located onsite.

The club also hosts regular social and community events including fundraisers, seminars and DJ nights. Every Friday, members can also 'bring a friend for free' – a popular scheme that welcomes potential new members into the gym.

"We're ambitious and have strong visions of where Solan Fitness will be within the next five years," said Solan. "We aim to expand the number of clubs significantly, with each one retaining the core values of Solan, while offering a unique twist to keep training fun, fresh and motivating."



The gym's cardio provision is extensive, with many ranges by Cybex



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Pure World Energy delivers savings and a reduced carbon footprint for Woughton Leisure Centre

Pure World Energy (PWE), the specialist in energy management, has provided an on-site clean energy solution at Woughton Leisure Centre, which is the largest multi-sport site in Milton Keynes.

The installation of a single C65 Capstone micro turbine combined heat and power (CHP) unit will deliver savings of up to £210,000 for the company over the next 15 years and reduce the facility's carbon footprint.

The installation involved a number of obstacles that the PWE team had to overcome, including the removal of an old boiler, which required special attention due to the asbestos content. A new flue stack was designed after a full site survey ruled out the use of the existing one.

IMMEDIATE SAVINGS

Woughton Leisure Centre's operator 1Life Management Solutions appointed PWE as its preferred energy partner, working in partnership with Milton Keynes District Council. PWE initially carried out a detailed site analysis to identify immediate savings for both consumption and carbon emissions.

The centre recently benefited from a £1.5m investment, including five new group

“Having a progressive energy management strategy puts Woughton Leisure Centre fully in control of consumption and costs - Steve Bambury, Pure World Energy”



exercise studios, new changing rooms and a Costa Coffee café, in addition to the existing 20 metre swimming pool, four-court indoor sports hall, 34-station gym and full-size floodlit football pitch.

This community-focused leisure centre is already achieving immediate savings in energy costs and carbon emissions, without any financial outlay or additional resource.

GENERATING CONFIDENCE

Investment in the new low maintenance energy system, owned and operated by PWE, will reduce up to 130 metric tonnes of CO₂ and generate up to 370,000 kWh of electricity and 680,000 kWh of heat per annum. The new CHP

unit that replaced the defective boiler is also saving the leisure centre additional repair or replacement costs.

Emma Lloyd, contract manager for Milton Keynes said: “The installation of a fully-funded Capstone 65 Gas Turbine is making a significant difference to our utility costs at Woughton. We've valued the expertise provided by PWE and found that the new system, tailored to our requirements, gives us greater control over energy consumption. The CHP unit is seamlessly integrated to act as lead boiler while generating electricity displaced from the National Grid without any disruption to the service that we provide to the local community.”

Steve Bambury, director of operations at Pure World Energy, commented: “Having a progressive energy management strategy gives Woughton Leisure Centre a competitive advantage, putting them fully in control of consumption and costs. Zero upfront costs and immediate risk-free savings mean peace of mind for the team.”

PWE has CHP units in five other 1Life facilities plus a two-year agreement with the leisure operator to deliver outsourced energy management across all 45 facilities within the 1Life estate. ●



The new system has greatly reduced the cost of heating the pool



A defective boiler was replaced by a new CHP system

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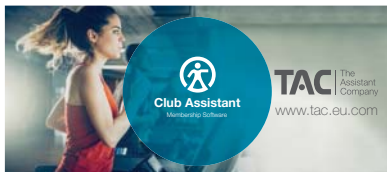
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Exercising while pregnant could protect your children against type 2 diabetes in later life



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A labour of love

Exercise in pregnancy may protect offspring from diseases later in life

While we know that exercise is beneficial for our own health, less is known about the benefits it might have on the long-term health of our children. Studies on mice have shown that pregnant mothers who exercise may be protecting their unborn children from future health complications*.

Dr Kevin Pearson – an associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Nutritional Sciences at the University of Kentucky, where these studies took place – is involved in ongoing research into maternal exercise during pregnancy. He and his team aim to find behavioural and nutritional interventions that improve long-term health outcomes in the next generation.

"Pregnancy in humans is roughly 40 weeks, whereas the average lifespan is close to 4,000 weeks. Thus, pregnancy involves a one per cent investment of time when you can improve your diet and behaviours so that a future child can potentially enjoy a lifetime of health benefits," he says.

"In a mouse study, we observed that voluntary exercise during pregnancy

and nursing protected against chemical-induced carcinogenesis in adult male and female offspring. Markers of oxidative stress and inflammation were also decreased in offspring born to exercised mothers compared to sedentary mothers.

"In a separate study, we found that both male and female mouse offspring born to exercised mothers had significantly enhanced insulin sensitivity during adulthood compared to offspring born to sedentary mothers.

"Enhancing stress resistance and improving insulin sensitivity could help delay the onset of numerous age-associated diseases," says Pearson.

FUTURE BENEFITS

The children of mothers who exercised while pregnant showed these benefits continued into adulthood. According to Pearson, these findings suggest that children could be protected against diseases like obesity, type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease in later life. He hopes that by demonstrating this through research, pregnant women will be more likely to adhere to exercise during pregnancy.

While these studies have been done on mice, Pearson and his team are now in the early stages of human studies. A new pilot study involves giving Fitbits to pregnant women and using these to track physical activity. Then, after birth, the health of the offspring will be tracked. This will, of course, take much longer to produce results than the mice studies and the team is still working to procure funding.

"The use of animal models allows us to control for certain variables that would not be possible in humans, and we can investigate more detailed mechanisms in these samples," explains Pearson.

OF MICE AND MUMS

He is reasonably confident, however, that the results of mice studies are likely to apply to humans. "We know that exercise has a lot of beneficial effects in humans. It's hard to know whether the mechanisms and protections that we see in animals will translate directly to humans, but it's reasonable to predict that that will be the case," he says.

"Epidemiological data exists which demonstrates that human babies born to mothers who exercise tend to have lower body mass indexes during childhood." ●

*Pearson, K. 'Exercise during Pregnancy and Long-Term Impact on Offspring Health'. American Physiological Society meeting: The Integrative Biology of Exercise 7, Nov 2016

In pregnancy, you can improve your diet and behaviours so a future child can potentially enjoy a lifetime of health benefits


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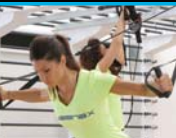
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